

VOL. 16, ISSUE 4

FALL
2020



OLD BRAESWOOD
PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION

Old Braeswood News

Letter from the President by Julie Cohn, President

Nearly one hundred years ago, developer George F. Howard and architects Hare and Hare began designing the neighborhood we now call Old Braeswood. Originally conceived as a “garden subdivision,” this area lay beyond the city limits of Houston, and was imagined to include bridle-paths, “country houses” enjoying cooling breezes off the Gulf Coast, and competition for the new subdivision called “River Oaks.” In just a few years, we will be able to celebrate the centennial of the first sketches for Braeswood (dating to 1927) and the first plat filed for the neighborhood (in 1928). Today, our 300-plus homes represent a wide array of architectural styles from the mid-to-late twentieth-century and the early decades of the twenty-first. We have no bridle paths – and in fact no resident horses – but instead parks, triangles, and walkable streets (some even have sidewalks!!!). Old Braeswood stands on its own as an important Houston neighborhood. And we are now part of the heart of the city. Arguably, our collective front yards comprise a true garden subdivision, though a very modern and urban one.

Within the next several weeks, we will have a chance to participate in some of the activities that make our neighborhood not just a physically extraordinary place, but also a real community. On November 3rd, for those who prefer to exercise their civic duty on election-day, we can walk over to the Brodsky’s garage and driveway for COVID-19-safe voting. This is my favorite time to catch up on the status of everyone’s pets, offspring, extended families, and home improvement projects! On November 15th, we can stroll through the yards of the properties on this year’s neighbor-to-neighbor tour (once again, following COVID-19 safety guidelines). Thanks in advance to the Preservation Committee for organizing and to the generous neighbors for hosting. On November 17th, we can vote again – this time for the slate of officers who will provide leadership for the property association through 2021 (via a Zoom meeting, of course, until we can safely congregate in person again). And, as I mentioned last year, we can enjoy the skeletons, pumpkins, gourds, blow-up turkeys, Santas, reindeer, menorahs, kinaras,

(Continued on page 4)

[*To learn more, check out: *Braeswood: An Architectural History*, Prepared by the Anchorage Foundation for the Old Braeswood Civic Club, 1988. Contact us to order a copy.]

Learn to Love Your Deed Restrictions, #7

Final Installment: Approval of Plans by Julie Cohn

We have arrived at the final topic defined by our deed restrictions – approval of plans. While the idea that the neighborhood association has say over a project on an individual’s property may cause discomfort, this is precisely what the deed restrictions provide. When you bought your property, you acknowledged the existence of the deed restrictions and your obligation to comply with them.

Below are the exact words used in Article No. 3 of the restrictions for Braeswood (Section 1). (For Braeswood Addition (Section 2) and Braeswood Extension (Section 3), virtually the same language is found in Article (e) with “Seller” substituted for “Braeswood” and “Company”):

No building, fence, wall, or other structure shall be commenced erected or maintained, nor shall any addition thereto or change or alteration therein be made until plans and specifications, color scheme, plot, plan and grading plan therefor, or information satisfactory to Braeswood, shall have been submitted to and approved, in writing by Braeswood, and a copy thereof as finally approved lodged with the Company.

(Continued on page 3)

Save the Date for the 2020 OBPOA Annual Meeting

7 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 17
Via Zoom

Watch your mailbox and inbox for the official meeting notice with access links to the meeting. If unable to attend, please return your proxy or ballot.

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Your House Has a History by Susan Froehly Teich, OBPOA Historian

Like jigsaw puzzles? How about one as big as a house? How about one that IS a house? Old Braeswood has one at 2442 Glen Haven Blvd., put together in 1941 from numbered “puzzle pieces” delivered to the site by the Houston Ready-Cut House Company!

Ready-cut house kits were popular in the first half of the 20th century and included as many as 10,000 to 30,000 numbered pieces, each cut to fit its particular place in the house. Unlike prefab houses and modular houses, the ready-cut house was not manufactured off-site either as a whole or as modular pieces, and it could have as many as three floors. Once the pieces were put together, the resulting structure was an immovable, permanent house and indistinguishable from houses built in the usual way. That would explain why one fit in so well in Braeswood, as did those in other fine Houston neighborhoods where they still can be seen, such as Avondale and Cherryhurst.

They also fit in well at Los Alamos, New Mexico, where Houston Ready-Cut House Company made the winning bid to supply housing kits during the Manhattan Project of World War II. Completion of these puzzle kits allowed scientists to come together to solve the bigger puzzle of creating an atomic bomb! (Truslow, Edith C., with Kasha V. Thayer, ed. *Manhattan District History: Nonscientific Aspects of Los Alamos Project Y, 1942 through 1946*, at page 19.)

The Houston Ready-Cut House Company was founded by James Harvey Suttles, and in December 1940 his nephew J. E. Suttles took out a City permit to build 2442 Glen Haven Blvd. with one of its kits.

J.E. was an oilman, acting as vice-president of Zeni Oil Company before joining Union Oil of California. His wife, Maurine, became active in the Braeswood Garden Club, serving as president from 1954-1956. In those days, Garden Club meetings were written up on the society page of the *Houston Chronicle*, and Maurine appeared there many times. Their children were Joe C., James N., and Sandra A.

It is worth mentioning that J.E.’s mother opened Houston’s first public, free kindergarten. The school was located at historic Shearn Methodist Church in the Second Ward. The church itself first opened in 1844, moved several times, and is now located at 1320 Main St., renamed First United Methodist Church. (Obituary of Vera Billow [Suttles] DeLesdernier. *Houston Chronicle*, 09 DEC 1937, page 14.)

J. E. died in 1964 and in 1966 the Suttles family sold the house to Dr. August Hordur Helgason and his wife Margorie. Dr. Helgason left his native Iceland to study medicine at Johns



2442 Glen Haven Blvd.

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“HOMES OF TOMORROW”—PLAN NO. R-300

Continued on page 3

Form 599
INVESTIGATE

Map
Vol. 62
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5/13 . 194 2

Suttles, J E Owner

Lot 29-W10'-30 Block 24

Braeswood Addition

No. Houston Ready Cut House Co Street

Imp. Constructed

Cost Price

Ant. of Fire Ins.

Company Insured with

Reduction requested by

County Value \$ 2990

Owners Value \$ 2740

Reason of Reduction Request

Harris County
BUILDING ASSESSMENT
Houston, Texas

Map No. 62 Page 28 Permit No. 2014

Owner: J E Suttles

No. 29-W10'-30 Street or Avenue

Addition: Braeswood

Block 24 Lot 29-W10'-30

Size of Building 52'6" wide 40'6" deep 2 stories

Size of Garage

Material: Frame, Brick, Concrete, Stucco.

Inside Finish: Rough Plank, Ornamental, Hardwood, Pine, Plaster.

Roofing: Slate, Tile, Tin, Shingle, Copper, Composition, Iron, Tar and Gravel, Paper, Asbestos.

Permit Value, \$ 2500

No. Sq. Ft. 2136 Per Sq. Ft. 175

Assessed Value of Building \$ 2990

Rendered in name of Rice, Wm M Int

Hopkins, married, and then moved to Houston in 1965 to join the faculty at Baylor College of Medicine. Later, he left Baylor to join Memorial Pathology Consultants. Their daughter Kolbrun recalls that Marjorie was a nurse anesthetist who worked at several hospitals in Houston, including Hermann Hospital when it was only a three-story building with Drs. Michael DeBakey and Denton Cooley practicing cardiology on the third floor. Like the previous mistress of the house, Marjorie served as president of the Braeswood Garden Club, 1975-1976 and 2000-2002. (In 1975-1976, Glenn McCarthy's wife, Faustine, was a regular at the Garden Club.)

By 2010 Dr. Helgason was a widower, and he died that year while on a visit back to Iceland. His three daughters kept the house, with Kolbrun living there until recently. Her sisters are Thorunn and Sigridur. All their names reflect their father's Icelandic heritage.

2442 Glen Haven is currently is on the market. The buyers will be only the third family to own Old Braeswood's two-story jigsaw puzzle.

[This is the 63rd article in a continuing series on houses and people in Old Braeswood. Suggestions for future columns are welcome.]

Meet Officer Star by Dee Murray

Star Vagne, our current Patrol officer from SEAL Security, has impressed the Old Braeswood community with her thorough and consistent scrutiny of the neighborhood. She watches, reaches out to neighbors, and has a passion about keeping the neighborhood safe. When she patrols after dark, she uses the flashing lights on top of her car several times per evening, as she says, "To let the bad guys know to stay out of our neighborhood." It seems to be working because we haven't had any crime at night for several months. Officer Star wants to know you, so please introduce yourself and thank her for her service.



Restrictions" continued from page 1

Article No. 3 goes on to give Braeswood the ability to consider a project's suitability, harmony with surroundings, and "outlook" from neighboring properties. The **Architectural Review Committee (ARC)**, comprised of volunteers from the neighborhood, carries out project reviews.

These restrictions are sometimes more difficult for the neighborhood association to apply and confirm with the property owner, as individual owners may not agree with the assessment of ARC on seemingly aesthetic matters. To minimize confusion, OBPOA developed, adopted, and published Architectural Guidelines, which are found at www.OldBraeswood.com under "Restrictions." Most importantly, it is incumbent upon property owners to touch base with ARC first, before commencing any project. It is easy and quick to find out whether or not review will be required, and how extensive that review will be. The ARC, chaired by Paul Sanders, is eager to learn about projects and help owners align their vision with neighborhood restrictions.

As you can imagine, any new construction project and many remodeling projects will definitely call for a review. Note that the authority covers only exterior matters; no interior designs are reviewed by OBPOA. By consulting with ARC first, you can end up with a project that looks fantastic, serves your needs, and keeps our neighborhood whole!

Here are just a few examples of projects that might need review:

- Replacing windows
- Replacing a roof
- Replacing entry doors and garage doors
- Adding or replacing a fence
- Adding a gazebo or porte-cochere
- Exterior paint color changes including doors/trim
- Adding a pool
- Expanding a driveway/altering footprint of paved surfaces
- Adding retaining walls

Well, we've done it! We've walked through every provision of the three sets of deed restrictions that govern property use in Old Braeswood. I hope you feel confident that you now know what's in the restrictions and where to find them. All of the newsletter articles on the deed restrictions are archived on the website (2019-2020 issues), and the restrictions themselves can be found at www.OldBraeswood.com.

President continued from Page 1

lights, and other holiday decorations that will be popping up all over.

This is a great time to take stock of why we love to live here and to imagine what we want Old Braeswood to be in its second century. Each of us is an important contributor to our community – through our dues and fees contributions, through our volunteer commitments, and through our friendships with each other. If you haven't already done so, help us reach this year's goal of 75-80% member participation in dues and patrol subscriptions by making your contribution online or mail to our PO Box listed on page 10. As I wrap up my second term as president of the association, I will take this opportunity to thank all of you for the privilege of collaborating with you to make this a great place to call home.

Susan & Len Teich

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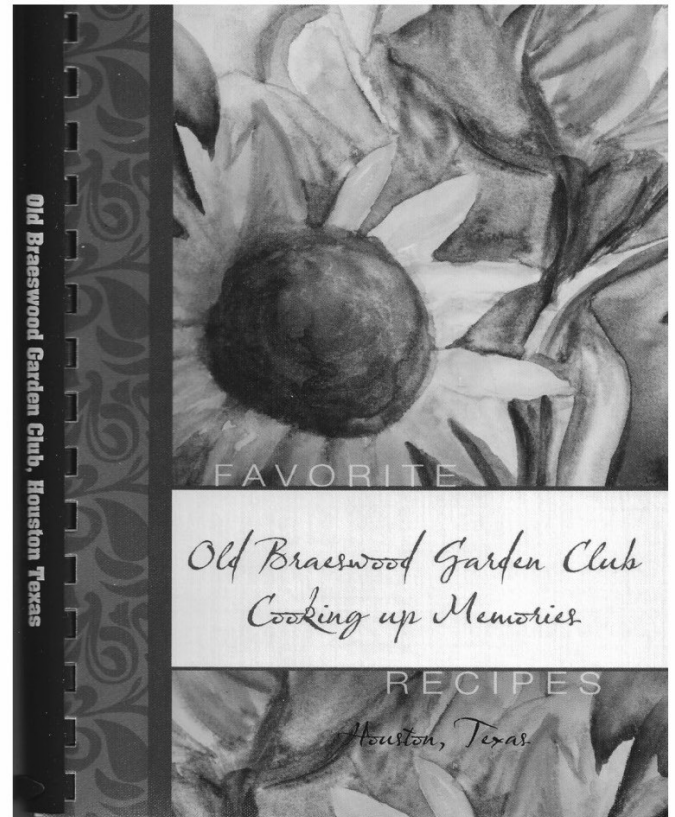
*November 28, 1970
to*

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More subscriptions are needed to fund the Patrol through the end of the year. If your name is not listed below, please send in your subscription payment to the address on page 8. This list reflects payments received through October 6, 2020. Subscriptions received between October 7 and December 31 will be listed in the next edition of the Newsletter.

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Thank You for Supporting Our Parks! by Annette Eldridge

On behalf of the Old Braeswood Park Corporation, a word of thanks to all of our current (and future!) donors. Through your generosity, we are able to continue to provide for ongoing weekly mowing and maintenance, which includes keeping all irrigation equipment in working order. We also hire our maintenance crew to control fire ants in the park and to remove moss balls from our many crape myrtle trees.

Finally, we can now replace the plants in the center of the Blue Bonnet at Greenbriar triangle, which is home to five recently trimmed live oaks trees. Our park and parkways are the crown jewels of Old Braeswood, providing much needed green open spaces. Thank you again for opening your hearts and your wallets for our parks.

Saving the best for last, a very special thank you to our neighbor Jay Plotkin for his extraordinary support and dedication to our parks over the years. He recently replaced all of the roses at Katie's corner and he maintains them personally.

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Early Morning Safety Reminder for Joggers and Dog Walkers

When jogging or walking your dog in the neighborhood before daybreak, please wear reflective clothing. There have been complaints from residents who leave early for work that they have come close to hitting people wearing dark clothing in the street before dawn.

Feral Cat Update

The all-volunteer Cat Squad has been hard at work for the past few months in and around Old Braeswood. They've trapped, neutered, and returned many cats, caught a couple of raccoons, and adopted out or fostered several kittens. If you are in a position to volunteer, foster or adopt a cat or kitten, or provide financial support for spay/neuter surgeries, please contact the squad. Adam Gottlieb (agottlieb27@gmail.com) will be taking over as fearless leader this fall.



Hittner-ing a Home Run with New Curb Tiles

Erica and George Hittner moved to Old Braeswood with their children Henry and Hazel this year. Some people re-landscape a house when they buy it. The Hittners did. Some people remodel a house when they buy it. The Hittners did. Then the Hittners went further. They remodeled the curb outside their house!

When Old Braeswood was first developed, the curbs were built with blue tile street signs, the latest thing in the 1920s. The City of Houston installed those tiles in curbs until the 1960s. Today, most of those tile signs are badly damaged or missing entirely, due largely to repaving and other road work. They have been replaced by the less lovely metal pole signs. But where they remain, they attest to the presence of Old Braeswood during the early years of Houston's emergence as a major city.

The Hittners sought to preserve the tiles for Glen Haven and Kelving in the curb wrapping around their corner house. Because of the configuration of their lot, there are four tile signs in their curbing. Two were in great disrepair. They knew of someone in England who could supply new tiles of high quality at a cost highly competitive with suppliers in Houston and also of someone who could install the tiles by scraping the curb, implanting them and then grouting them in. Voilà!

In years past the Association had sought fabricators and craftsmen to restore the curb markers throughout the neighborhood but costs were nearly four times what the Hittners paid. We are excited to share this information in hopes that others will take advantage of this wonderful option to preserve a piece of neighborhood history.

Check out the new tiles on your next walk. Thank you, Hittners!

For details about replacing tiles, contact George (george.hittner@thehittnergroupp.com) or contact his supplier directly (Keith Morrigan, Kaamar.com or sales@kaamar.co.uk)



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Alicia von Greisman

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Adopt a Storm Drain and Give it a Fun Name

Adopt-a-Drain is a City of Houston program launched in 2018 allowing Houstonians to “adopt” and maintain stormwater drains near their homes or businesses.

If you adopt a drain, you get to personalize your drain by naming it! How weirdly fun is that? Make it a gift item for the person who has everything!

The Old Braeswood Garden Club has taken the initiative to make this program a neighborhood enhancement. After all, clean stormwater drains, like gardening, is good for our ecology and the Club has a long history of service projects. Join them by adopting a drain on your block. There are plenty to go around! In fact, OB has about 60 drains.

This program is no cost to you and actually saves the City money because it then doesn't have to pay someone to clean the drain. Currently the City spends \$13 M annually to clear stormwater drains.

What are you committing to?

- Adopt at least one storm drain and keep it clear of leaves & trash
- Clean 10 feet on both sides of the drain at least 4 times per year at each location (ideally at least monthly but especially before it rains)
- Compost or place leaves in city-approved compostable bag (City of Houston trash)
- Place any trash in your garbage bin
- Let the City of Houston know if you can no longer support your drain, so that the drain can be adopted by someone else!

Interested? Visit www.HoustonAdoptaDrain.org and follow the instructions.

Notify Garden Club president, Alicia vonGreisman at GardenClub@OldBraeswood.com, if you do adopt a drain so that you can be recognized in the next newsletter.



Man's Best Friend Lived on Blue Bonnet

In the middle of an extensive backyard landscaping project, homeowner Hank Fuselier at 2505 Blue Bonnet came across a small object that looked like an old coin. But after cleaning it, he recognized it as a dog tag with the inscription “A.J. Riddle 2505 Blue Bonnet Blvd, Houston, Texas.”

Hank knew that the Riddle family had owned the house in the 1970's. So, he texted a picture of the dog tag to neighbors Laura and Fritz Weiss, longtime OB residents, and within 5 minutes he had contact information for the Riddle's son, Albert Julius Riddle IV, a real estate lawyer in San Diego, CA.

Hank texted A.J. a picture of the dog tag and he called back immediately. They talked about the history of the house, what it was like growing up in Old Braeswood in the 70's. A.J. said that his parents installed a burglar alarm in 1970 and were robbed soon afterward. Their dog "Caesar" attacked the intruder and was shot with a .38 caliber pistol. The burglar fled, the police came, and Caesar was carted off to the veterinarian. Miraculously, the bullet was removed from the dog and he made a full recovery.

Around that same time, A.J. came home from the hospital after having his tonsils removed. To his delight, 2505 Blue Bonnet Blvd was full of flowers, get-well cards, and treats. But his delight quickly turned sour when he realized that the flowers, cards, and treats were for the dog and not for him! Caesar was a beloved addition to the neighborhood, and everyone treated him like a hero after his ordeal.

Hank concluded this adventure into Old Braeswood history by mailing A.J. the dog tag.

Seeking Volunteers with Digital Communication Skills

We are reviewing our digital media and communications and would be interested in talking to neighbors who might have appropriate expertise to help on an ad hoc committee? Please contact us at info@OldBraeswood.com if you are interested and available to volunteer to help improve communication among your neighbors and enhance the quality of life in your neighborhood!



Plan Review Required for ALL Exterior Changes to Old Braeswood Homes

Please remember to consult with the Architectural Review Committee in advance of beginning any updates. All exterior alterations must be reviewed by the Architectural Review Committee (ARC). If in doubt, contact us at ARC@oldBraeswood.com to verify what needs to be submitted and for help before and during the design phase to ensure plans will be approvable when submitted. Visit www.OldBraeswood.com/wp/Deed-Restrictions/ for a plan review submission packet.

Home improvement projects requiring ARC review include: changes involving paint color, roofs, fences doors and garage doors, window rehab or replacements, driveways, landscape elements, awnings, solar panels, projections, balconies, additions, new garages, carports and porte-cocheres, outbuildings such as gazebos, green houses or tool sheds. Fines may be levied for projects that are not submitted before implementation.

Welcome New Neighbors

Faezeh Darbaniyan & Ehsan Irajizad

2533 Gramercy

Karen & William Kline

2329 Gramercy

Dipaben & Dhananjay Modi

2517 Blue Bonnet

Blake Allan & Shannon Sisco

2331 Dorrington

Trash & Recycling Schedule



Recycling Every other Tuesday (B)

Dates Oct. 13 & 27 Nov. 10 & 24
Dec. 8 & 22 Jan. 5 & 19

Household Trash Tuesdays (in city provided bins)

Yard Waste Tuesdays (in biodegradable bags)

Junk / Tree Limbs 3rd Monday of each month

Junk Waste (& tree limbs) in Even months
Tree waste only in Odd months

Place household garbage or recycling at the curb in the city-provided automated bins no earlier than 6 p.m. the evening preceding collection and no later than 7 a.m. on the day of pick up. Remove bins from curb no later than 10 p.m. on collection day. Bins left on the street beyond these times are subject to city fines. Ensure bins are accessible and not blocked by vehicles. Space bins a minimum of 3 feet apart.

Yard waste must be contained in city-approved biodegradable bags and placed at the curb. Branches must be tied into 3-4 ft bundles.

Visit www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste for more information.

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FALL 2020
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Old Braeswood Neighbor-to-Neighbor Tour: All Outdoors for 2020! Sunday, November 15, 2020 from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m.

The fourth annual Old Braeswood Neighbor-to-Neighbor Tour is outdoors this year only! The tour provides an opportunity for neighbors to get to know each other and our neighborhood. Stop by to meet the homeowners, enjoy the lovely yards and gardens, learn more about the history of Old Braeswood, and experience its diverse exterior architecture. Social distancing will be observed: please wear face coverings and maintain a distance of 6 feet from other parties.



The tour, organized by the Old Braeswood POA's Preservation Committee, is free of charge and open to all neighbors, their extended families, and their invited guests.

Homes may be visited in any order:

2301 Maroneal,
Vicki & Bob Birenbaum

2335 Blue Bonnet,
Susan & Paul Danziger

2337 Blue Bonnet,
Fred Steves

2341 Blue Bonnet,
Lisa Blume & Robert Burke

2351 Kelving, (Near the Park)
Deborah McCoy & Robert Keenan