

4019 Inverness

History of LEGEND

The City of Houston Protected Landmark residence at 4019 Inverness, “LEGEND,” the Mrs. Knox B. Howe House, is a metaphor for a Houston that has mostly vanished. Completed at the end of the Eisenhower administration in 1959, its intertwined architectural and ancestral provenance begins much earlier in the first quarter of the 20th century in Houston and travels backwards in time to the heady days of the Republic of Texas.

LEGEND was designed for the Howe-Briscoe family by Birdsall Parmenas Briscoe, FAIA. LEGEND’s original owner, Dorothy Virginia Trone Howe, later Mrs. Edmund McAshan Dupree, was the widow of Knox Briscoe Howe, Briscoe’s cousin who shared his Briscoe-Harris lineage. The architectural historian Stephen Fox wrote in the City of Houston Landmark Designation Report that “[the home] possesses character, interest, and value as a visible reminder of the development, heritage, and cultural legacy of mid-twentieth-century Houston. It was designed and built as a private monument to the distinguished Texan family heritage of [Knox Howe]...”

Dorothy descended from a ranching family in Fort Bend County famous for raising champion Santa Gertrudis cattle and fine horses. After a Houston childhood, she graduated from MacMurrey College for Women in Jacksonville, Illinois in 1932 where she was a member of Belles Lettres, reputedly the first women’s college literary society in the United States. Dorothy wrote the society column for the Houston Post until her marriage to Knox Howe in 1941. A horsewoman of note who bred champion Saddlebred horses, Dorothy and her horse Blue Beau Starr won the Houston Pin Oak Charity Horseshow Ladies Fine Harness Division championship for three consecutive years and in 1988 won reserve world’s championship (second place) in the World’s Championship Horse Show Ladies and Amateur Fine Harness Division in Louisville, Kentucky.

Dorothy’s commitments included the Houston Symphony, The Alliance of Pan American Roundtables, Houston Museum of Natural Science, Houston Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Texas and Southwest Cattle Raisers Association, Friends of Mount Vernon, Fort Bend Museum, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Friends of the Houston Public Library, and the First Presbyterian Church of Houston.

Dorothy Howe Dupree’s children, Dorothy Knox and her brother Harris, lived at LEGEND through their adolescent years. Dorothy Knox and her husband, Thomas Woodward Houghton, moved into the house in 1985 and raised their family there. Thomas died in 2002, and Dorothy Knox died in 2018.

A fierce advocate for historic preservation within Houston, Dorothy Knox co-authored the book, *Houston’s Forgotten Heritage: Landscape, Houses, Interiors, 1824-1914*, Texas A & M University Press, 1991. The expansive archives that she and her co-authors assembled are now housed at the Houston Public Library in the Houston Metropolitan Research Center (HMRC). Dorothy Knox also authored *The Houston Club and Its City: One Hundred Years*, published by The Houston Club, 1994.

Dorothy Knox was pivotal in the creation of Friends of the Texas Room, the organization formed to support the HMRC and the 1926 Julia Ideson Building, Houston's original public library. A cofounder and lifelong president of FTxR, she played an important role in ensuring the restoration of the Ideson Building. As president of the National Society of The Colonial Dames of America in Texas (NSCDA-TX), she spearheaded a major restoration of the Neill-Cochran House Museum in Austin. Additional memberships included the Texas Arts Alliance, The Junior League of Houston, Houston Ballet Guild, Rice Design Alliance, River Oaks Blossom Club, The Forest Club, The Houston Club, Houston Assembly, The English Speaking Union, the Sulgrave Club (Washington, D.C.), San Jacinto Museum of History, National Cathedral Association, Daughters of the Republic of Texas, and Daughters of the American Revolution.

Dorothy and Dorothy Knox graciously opened LEGEND for many home and historical tours over the past 60 years. In recognition of the home's significance in the historic, social, and architectural fabric of Houston, the Rice Design Alliance included it on a tour of Briscoe architecture in 1988 and on a tour focusing on the architectural history of River Oaks for the national meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians in 1999. LEGEND also featured prominently in the Museum of Natural History Guild (now the Museum of Natural Science Guild) Kitchen Tour of 1961.

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Preservation and Modernization

Extensive interior and exterior restoration and renovation of this City of Houston Protected Landmark (2021-2025)

Original Architect: Birdsall Briscoe, AIA

Renovating Architect: Joshua I. F. Jones, AIA

Interior Designer: Suzanne Duin, ASID

Construction and renovation: D. L. Doyle Construction Company

- Replaced slate roof on main house and garage/guest house; replaced flat roofs; installed copper roof over breezeway/loggia with summer kitchen
- Complete sewer plumbing replacement beneath the house and extending to the street
- Water supply plumbing replaced throughout the main house and guest house with PEX plumbing
- HVAC systems replaced in main house and guest house
- Full home electrical re-wire and Smart House system installed throughout
- Upgraded gas utility line
- Water meters upgraded
- Installed a whole house generator
- Refurbished original hardwood floors and replaced sections as needed throughout the main house
- Existing fireplaces in the living room, dining room, guest bedroom, and primary suite sitting area were retrofitted with Isokern units
- Repainted all interior walls in main house and guest house
- Installed a two-stop elevator system
- Created a new basement staircase and stairwell connecting the kitchen to a custom-built, temperature-controlled wine cellar (with a separate cooling unit) and adjacent storage room and added a new floor drain
- Reconfigured four bedrooms into three spacious en-suite bedrooms, featuring an expansive primary retreat in the north wing of the second floor. The fourth bedroom was relocated to the third floor.
- Removed the original staircase to third floor and constructed a new staircase to the third floor.
- Added flooring to attic space for additional storage

- Entrance and staircase to the guest house were fully reconfigured and relocated
- Guest house completely redesigned and offers an open concept living, kitchen, dining, and two full bedrooms with en suite baths
- Reclaimed hardwood from the original guest house, now installed as flooring in the newly renovated guest house.
- The garage was rebuilt and finished with durable epoxy flooring
- An exercise room with tile flooring and a mirrored wall was added adjacent to the garage
- The half bath attached to the garage was renovated and reoriented for exterior access
- Restored exterior elements, including lead window accents
- Fresh exterior paint applied to main house and garage/guest house
- Added fully equipped summer kitchen under breezeway featuring a Fisher & Paykel built-in gas grill, Sub-Zero undercounter refrigerator, single-basin stainless-steel sink, and soapstone countertops
- A brick-lined, crushed granite multi-car garage driveway was created, extending under the loggia to connect with the circular driveway
- An extensive landscape and irrigation renovation was completed on this spacious one-acre property, featuring a newly added culinary herb garden adjacent to the summer kitchen.

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Special Features – Main House

Exterior

- City of Houston Protected Landmark
- Situated on an expansive lot in River Oaks' Tall Timbers enclave
- Originally built in 1959 with extensive restoration and renovation (2021-2025)
- Elegant covered front porch adorned with a timeless haint blue ceiling and sophisticated bluestone slate flooring
- Expansive backyard bluestone slate patio, partially covered and thoughtfully designed for elevated outdoor living—featuring a fully equipped summer kitchen with a Fisher & Paykel built-in gas grill, Sub-Zero undercounter refrigerator, single-basin stainless-steel sink, and soapstone countertops
- Culinary herb garden
- Oversized circular driveway at the front of the home, extending beneath the loggia and seamlessly connecting to the multi-car driveway in front of the garage.

Interior

- Exquisite millwork throughout, complemented by rich wood trim accents and refined crown molding, adding timeless architectural character and sophistication
- Hard surface flooring throughout, featuring rich hardwood and timeless natural stone for a seamless blend of warmth and sophistication
- Thoughtfully appointed natural stone countertops and finishes in the kitchen and bathrooms
- Hidden speakers in key living and entertaining spaces—including the foyer, living room, dining room, breakfast area, and kitchen—for an immersive audio experience

Foyer (37' x 14')

- Large solid wood front door
- Crown molding
- Refurbished hardwood floors
- Lacquer painted ceiling
- Steel and glass panel back door to back patio
- Crystal chandelier and recessed lighting
- Antique sconces installed up the winding staircase

Dining Room – (20' x 18')

- Grand-scale room featuring an exquisite designer mural wallpaper
- The Isokern gas log fireplace, framed by a natural stone surround, is beautifully flanked by two alcove windows accented with exquisite millwork
- A custom built-in display cabinet enhances the space, while solid wood double doors provide the option to close off the room from the foyer
- Crown molding
- Refurbished hardwood floors
- Lacquer painted ceiling
- Baccarat crystal chandelier and recessed lighting

Living Room – (23' x 18')

- Generously proportioned front room transitions effortlessly into a sophisticated library, offering versatile space for both entertaining and a quiet retreat
- Large windows offer wonderful natural light and include two alcove windows thoughtfully framed by built-in shelves and cabinetry
- Isokern gas log fireplace serves as a captivating focal point, beautifully framed by natural stone surround and exquisite millwork
- Crown molding
- Refurbished hardwood floors
- Lacquer painted ceiling
- Recessed lighting

Library – (23' x 17')

- Thoughtfully crafted custom millwork and cabinetry, including a cozy media cabinet and beautifully designed 'book' doors
- Wet bar equipped with ice maker
- Steel windows with custom window treatments
- Two stop elevator conveniently located off the library
- Crown molding
- Refurbished hardwood floors
- Recessed lighting

Powder Room – (6' x 5')

- Located just off the foyer near the library
- Custom brass vanity with a marble top
- Designer mural wall covering
- Refurbished hardwood floors
- Antique light fixtures

Breakfast Room – (19' x 13')

- Thoughtfully appointed with custom window treatments and designer wallpaper
- Two elegant arched entrances lead into the kitchen
- Built-in cabinet adds charm and practical storage
- One of two powder rooms offers refined character with a natural stone vanity, antique lighting, and richly textured designer wallpaper
- Crown molding
- Refurbished hardwood floors
- Antique chandelier

Kitchen – (23' x 16')

- Marble countertops paired with a designer tile backsplash imported from London England, custom cabinetry, and elegant glass-front jumper cabinets
- Oversized kitchen island and breakfast bar incorporating salvaged newel posts from the former breakfast room staircase—blending history with craftsmanship
- Large single-basin stainless steel sink and a matching prep sink
- Sub-Zero refrigerator with integrated cabinet front
- La Cornue gas range and oven with pot filler and La Cornue vent hood
- Stainless steel Wolf oven, steam/convection oven, and warming drawer
- Two charming Dutch (stable) doors leading to the exterior
- Office nook featuring custom bookshelves and cabinetry, a built-in coffee bar with sink, and distinctive copper-screen cupboard fronts
- Walk-in pantry with antique entry door
- Custom window treatments
- Crown molding
- Hardwood floors
- Recessed lighting and pendant lighting above island

Wine Cellar – (15' x 9')

- The existing space was thoughtfully repurposed to create a reimagined lower-level access and sophisticated entertaining area
- A custom-designed replacement staircase and stairwell seamlessly connect the kitchen to the wine room
- Added temperature-controlled wine cellar (independently zoned), crafted for optimal preservation and display
- Replaced tile flooring with reclaimed stone
- Segreto hand-finished plaster wall treatment
- Layered lighting scheme, featuring track lighting, recessed fixtures, and under-cabinet lighting

Primary Suite – (17' x 17')

- Encompasses the north wing of the second floor
- Custom window treatments
- Isokern gas fireplace with natural stone surround and beautiful wood trim
- Includes a private sitting room with cozy Isokern gas log fireplace and two alcove windows with built-in window seats. It's finished with designer wallpaper, custom window treatments, hardwood floors, crown molding, and antique lighting
- Two distinct primary bathrooms and two custom-designed walk-in closets
- Coffee bar with natural stone counter, sink, and beverage cooler
- Elevator access from primary suite
- Crown molding
- Refurbished hardwood floors
- Wall sconce reading lights

Primary Bath 1 – (13' x 11')

- Oversized vanity with marble counter
- Bain ultra whirlpool tub with marble surround and trim
- Walk-in shower with marble surround
- Private water closet with sleek TOTO Aquia bidet toilet, offering a dual-flush system, soft-close seat, and elongated, one-piece design
- Custom millwork and wood trim
- Crown molding
- Heated marble floors
- Antique and recessed lighting

Primary Bath 2 – (11' x 10')

- Antique vanity with natural stone counter
- Walk-in steam shower with natural stone surround
- Private water closet with sleek TOTO Aquia bidet toilet, offering a dual-flush system, soft-close seat, and elongated, one-piece design, and a separate urinal
- Crown molding
- Heated, natural stone floors
- Recessed lighting

Guest Bedroom (Second Floor) – (17' x 17')

- En suite bath and custom designed walk-in closet
- Custom window treatments
- Crown molding
- Refurbished hardwood floors
- Antique lighting and built-in speakers

En suite Guest Bathroom – (15' x 5')

- Spacious vanity with marble counter
- Built-in linen cabinet
- Walk-in shower with marble tile surround
- Marble tile flooring
- Recessed lighting and vanity lighting

Guest Bedroom (Second Floor) – (15' x 11')

- En suite bath and custom designed walk-in closet
- Custom window treatments
- Crown molding
- Refurbished hardwood floors
- Designer lighting

En suite Guest Bathroom – (20' x 5')

- Spacious vanity with marble counter
- Tub/shower combo with marble tile surround and seamless glass frame
- Private water closet
- Marble tile flooring
- Recessed lighting and vanity lighting

Guest Bedroom (Third Floor) – (18' x 18')

- En suite bath and custom designed walk-in closet with attic access to floored attic space
- Dormer window nook
- Refurbished hardwood floors
- Recessed and antique lighting

En suite Guest Bathroom (Third Floor)– (6' x 6')

- Walk-in shower with white subway tile surround
- Natural stone floors
- Recessed lighting and vanity lighting

Media Room – (28' x 25')

- Located on the third floor
- Wet bar with beverage cooler
- Dormer window reading nook
- Floored attic access
- Refurbished hardwood floors
- Recessed lighting and built-in speakers

Laundry/Mudroom (9' x 9')

- Located on second floor
- Built-in cabinets
- Single basin sink and natural stone counter
- Designer wall covering
- Decorative tile flooring
- Recessed lighting

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Special Features – Guest House

Living Room/Kitchen – (23' x 14')

- Open concept living, dining and kitchen
- Oversized kitchen with single basin stainless steel sink and natural stone counter
- Full-size, stainless-steel appliances including dishwasher, oven, gas range, and refrigerator
- Vaulted ceiling
- Shiplap wall treatments
- Reclaimed hardwood floors
- Recessed lighting, pendant lighting, and ceiling fan

Guest Bedroom (Second Floor) – (15' x 11')

- En suite bath and spacious closet
- Reclaimed hardwood floors
- Beadboard wall treatments
- Recessed lighting and ceiling fan

En suite Guest Bathroom – (8' x 8')

- Spacious vanity with marble counter
- Antique bathtub
- Beadboard wall treatments
- Tile floors
- Recessed lighting and vanity lighting

Guest Bedroom (Second Floor) – (14' x 12')

- En suite bath and spacious closet
- Reclaimed hardwood floors
- Beadboard wall treatments
- Recessed lighting and ceiling fan

En suite Guest Bathroom – (9' x 8')

- Spacious vanity with marble counter
- Walk-in shower
- Beadboard wall treatments
- Tile floors
- Recessed lighting and vanity lighting

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Birdsall Parmenas Briscoe

The architect of LEGEND, Birdsall Parmenas Briscoe, FAIA, was instrumental in establishing the country house type as the preferred elite house type in Houston. One of Houston's foremost architects before and between the wars, Briscoe played an influential role in the city's civic and social affairs until his death in 1971. Born in 1876, Briscoe was Texas royalty; he was the grandson of Andrew Briscoe, a signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence and a hero of the decisive Battle of San Jacinto, and the great-grandson of John Richardson Harris for whom Harrisburg and Harris County are named. Briscoe was born in Harrisburg, in the Harris House, built as a replacement for the one burned in 1836 by the army of General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna during the Runaway Scrape of the Texas Revolution.

An architect of exceptional skill and refinement, Briscoe designed the first house built in River Oaks, a "summer house" on Inwood Drive for the Will Clayton family. He collaborated with John Staub on the design of Bayou Bend for Ima, Will, and Mike Hogg, the developers of River Oaks and Tall Timbers. During the Great Depression, Briscoe was South Texas District Officer of the American Buildings Survey and directed the documentation of 82 historic sites in east, southeast, and central Texas. At his induction ceremony as a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1949, he was lauded for the "good taste, elegance, and suitability for locale" of his houses.

The definitive book on Briscoe, *The Architecture of Birdsall P. Briscoe*, was authored by Stephen Fox and published in 2023 by Texas A & M University Press. LEGEND (Howe House) features prominently within its pages.

LEGEND was Briscoe's last commission before his retirement.