

# On Tour

# Morgan's Point: Once Bustling Bay Ridge Survives

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The Bay Ridge community, now a part of the city of Morgan's Point, was established in the 1890's. Thirteen families from the Houston area formed the Bay Ridge Association and purchased an approximately two-mile section of undeveloped waterfront at the north end of Galveston Bay for the construction of summer homes. The homes were originally built to be sleeping cottages, as all cooking and entertaining was done at a central clubhouse. The houses were designed to provide as much exposure as possible to the onshore breeze. They were characteristically one room deep, with an almost equal area of attached porch. More elaborate plans consisted of a narrow wing of service elements like bathrooms and kitchens extended from the living area to form a "T" shaped building.

The entire Morgan's Point area was originally part of the James Morgan plantation, Orange Grove, and later the

home of Commodore Charles Morgan who dug the first cut in what is now the Houston Ship Channel (Morgan's purpose was to stretch a chain across it and charge a toll). The summer bay houses became such a part of the way of life in Houston that by 1920 the Southern Pacific Lines had laid a spur to Morgan's Point and ran morning and evening trains for commuters.

At this time, just prior to the introduction of air conditioning, the development along Bay Ridge reached its final and most exotic phase. The Irvin family had a zoo constructed on the landward side of Bay Ridge with live bears and deer for the amusement of their guests. It was also in this period that future Texas Governor Ross Sterling constructed an extravagant house on four lots in Bay Ridge. Local lore has it that the house is a full-sized replica of the White House which came about when the architect supposedly asked Sterling for some direction

as to the appearance of the house. Sterling, so the story goes, produced a \$20 bill and told the architect to copy it. In fact the house, although grand, doesn't resemble the White House except in the positioning of one portico. Designed by architect A. C. Finn, it is probably derived from Gwinn by the architect Charles Adams Platt.

The Bay Ridge club house has been destroyed, but five of the original 13 homes remain, as well as several significant buildings which pre-date the organization of the Bay Ridge Association. The community contains the best remaining examples of the Texas bay house.



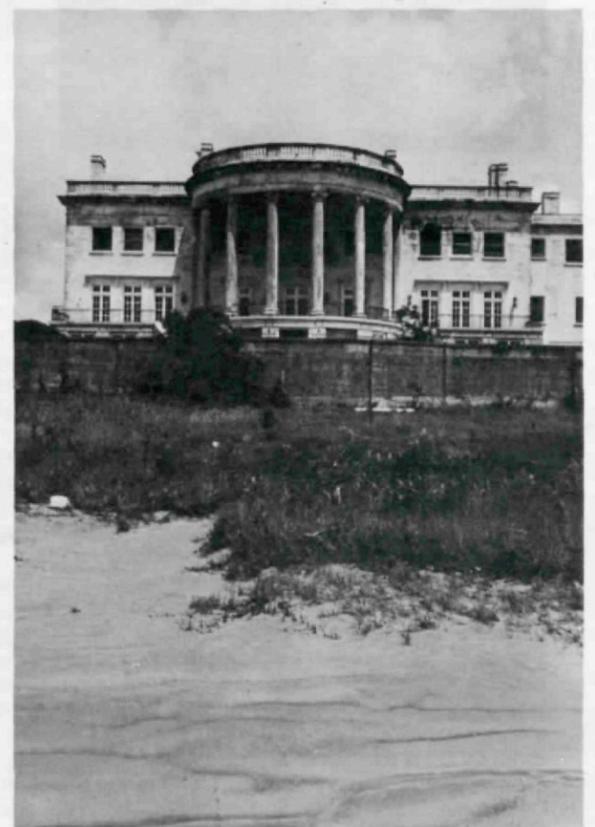
BAY ENTRY, HOFHEINZ HOUSE



HOFHEINZ HOUSE



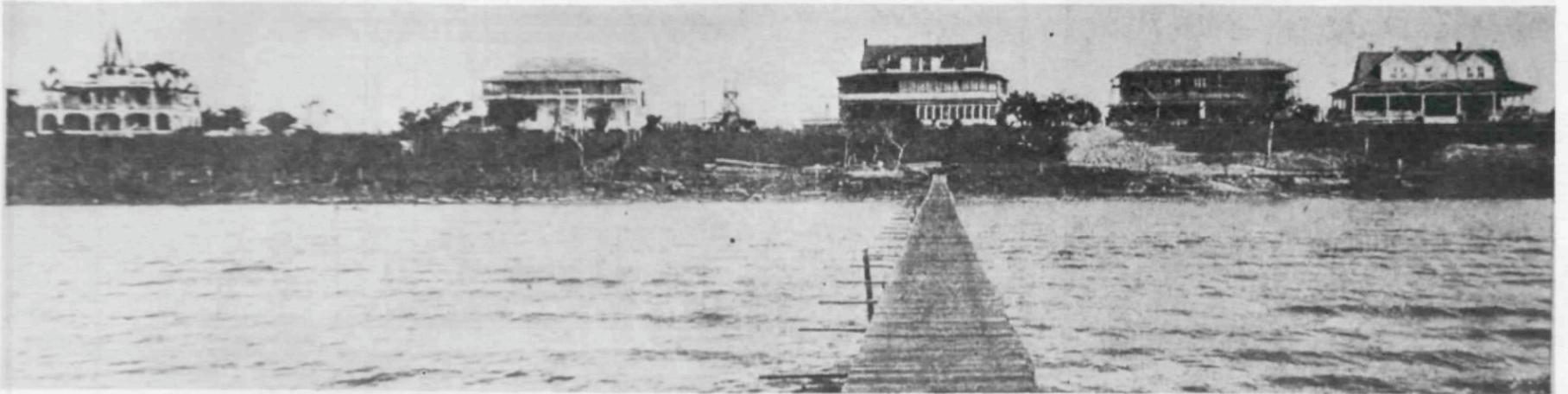
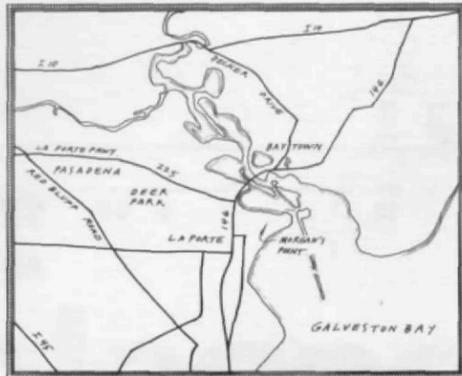
STERLING HOUSE, A. C. FINN, ARCHT.



STERLING HOUSE



BAY RIDGE BEACH



BAY RIDGE FROM THE CLUB PIER, CIRCA 1918



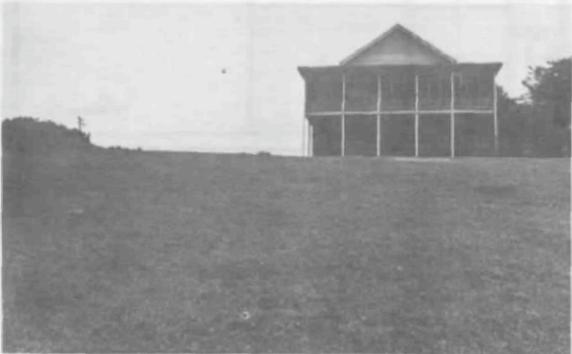
FILSON HOUSE, SANGUINET & STAATS, ARCHTS.



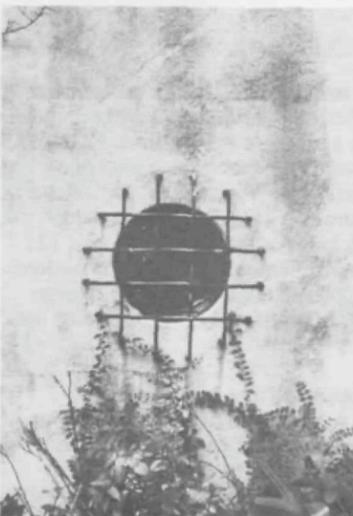
BARNETT HOUSE



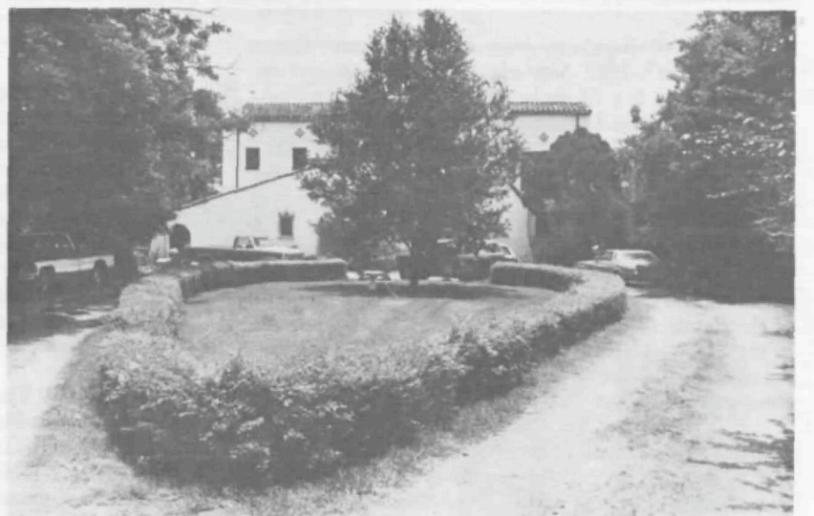
PORCH, BARNETT HOUSE



BATH HOUSE



DETAIL, IRWIN HOUSE



IRWIN HOUSE, JOS. FINGER, ARCHT.



McELVOGUE HOUSE



BULLOCK HOUSE, JOHN F. STAUB, ARCHT.



ENTRY, BULLOCK HOUSE