

**Harris County Archives
Houston, Texas**

Finding Aid

CHARLES R. BRACE PAPERS

Dates (1877 - 1975)

Manuscript Collection: MC004

Size: 85 items

Restrictions on Access: None

Restrictions on Use: None

Acquisition: Laura Linn Warren, 2004.

Accession Number: 2004.009,
2004.011, 2004.014

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Citation: [Identification of Item], Charles R. Brace Papers, MC004, Harris County Archives, Houston, Texas.

Creator Sketch:

The eldest of son of Calvin Abbott Brace and Mary Alice Stack, Charles Richard Brace was born in Lincoln, Nebraska, on August 31, 1881. In 1893 when Brace was 12 years old, the family moved to Houston, Texas. Almost immediately upon arrival, he went to work to support his family as a newspaper delivery boy and collector. Forced to end his schooling prior to high school, Brace educated himself using the facilities of the YMCA. He continued to support his family and pay their debts until 1926, ten years after the deaths of his parents.

Brace held a series of jobs between 1901 and 1919 with the Southern Pacific Railroad, Barber Plumbing Company, Nelson Plumbing Company, Fisk Company and Reed Roller Bit. In 1919 he established his own company, Brace Sales. In 1923 he became associated with E. L. Crain and Crain Ready Cut House Company. With Crain Brace subdivided and built Pineview Place followed by Southside Place in 1924, and East Baytown in 1925 for the Humble Oil and Refining Company. In 1935, without severing his connection with Crain, Brace served as Division Director for the Resettlement Administration. Among the projects he supervised was Houston Gardens. He resigned due to the extensive travel required to cover three states. Brace also subdivided Old River Terrace for W. T. Carter during this time.

In 1936 Crain and Brace began work on Garden Oaks, a subdivision located north and northwest of Houston on a large wooded tract. It took eight years to fully develop the subdivision at which time Crain retired. Brace then built homes in four sections of Oak Forest. He purchased 450 acres of land from the University of Texas and developed Timbergrove Manor (1951) and Merchants Park Shopping Mall (1955). He created

subdivision plans for acreage on Memorial Drive (later Lakeview and Sandlewood) but was forced into retirement due to poor health.

Brace received the “Builder of the Year Award” from the Houston Home Builders Association in 1951, the only person to receive a unanimous vote.

Charles R. Brace married Bertha Buchanan in 1911 and had one child, a daughter, Laura Linn in 1919. He was a member of the South Main Baptist Church. He died in 1960 at the age of 79.

Bibliography:

“Charles Richard Brace (1881 – 1960),” Laura Linn Warren. Available in the holding record for MC004.

Collection Summary:

Maps, printed materials, newspaper clippings and legal records document the professional work of Charles R. Brace (1881 – 1960), a real-estate developer and builder in the Houston area from the mid-1920’s until the early 1950’s. The collection is divided into three series; maps and blueprints, printed materials, and legal documents. The bulk of the collection is maps, most illustrating Brace’s real-estate ventures.

Inventory

Series: Maps and Blueprints

Size: 70 items

Range of Dates: 1917 – 1975

Scope and Contents Note:

Maps and blueprints document subdivisions, including Cherryhurst, Humble Houses (in Baytown), Lakeview, Garden Oaks, Oak Forest, and Timbergrove Manor and record the growth of the developments in several stages as construction progresses. Blueprints show the design of streets, sewer systems, and parks. Map surveys by Harris County, the federal and state government, and private land developers record information about soil, land grades and water tables. Maps and blueprints are divided into sub-series by their geographic type: the City of Houston, Harris County, and the Gulf Coast region. Many of the maps are annotated in Brace's handwriting, especially on the back.

| Series: Folder | Date | Location |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Harris County | 1922–1957, n.d | 0001-M-11 |
| Harris County (Blueprints) | 1940 | 0001-M-16 |
| Houston, Municipal | 1925 - 1975 | 0001-M-17 |
| Houston, Municipal | n.d. | 1256-B-03 |
| Regional | 1917, n.d | 0001-M-20 |
| Subdivisions: | | |
| Cherryhurst | 1921, 12 | 0001-M-18 |
| Cherryhurst | 1931, 01/11 | 1256-B-03 |
| East Baytown (Blueprint) | 1923 | 0001-M-16 |
| East Baytown | 1923 | 1256-B-03 |
| Lakeview | 1951 - 1957 | 0001-M-18 |
| Lakeview | 1951 - 1956 | 1256-B-03 |
| Garden Oaks | 1939 – 1945, n.d. | 0001-M-18 |
| Oak Forest | 1946 | 0001-M-18 |
| Timbergrove Manor | 1950 - 1956 | 0001-M-18 |
| Timbergrove Manor | 1956 | 1231-B-04 |

Series: Legal
Size: 4 items
Range of Dates: 1877 - 1943

Scope and Contents Note:

Legal records contain two abstracts of title concerning the ownership and sale of a tract of Houston Independent School District land. Also included are a warranty deed from Magnolia Park Land Company (1912), and a contract detailing building specifications for a two-story frame house. The contract is undated, but bears several signatures, including those of Brace and his wife, Bertha.

| Series: Folder | Date | Location |
|---|-------------|-----------------|
| Warranty Deed – Magnolia Park Land Co. | 1912, 02/12 | 0009-V-00 |
| Abstracts of Title | 1877 - 1943 | 0348-X-02 |
| Contract – Specifications for Two–Story House | n.d. | 0348-X-01 |

Series: Printed Materials
Size: 11 items
Range of Dates: 1931 - 1943

Scope and Contents Note:

Map booklets, newspaper clippings, catalogues and brochures document Houston’s real estate industry and history. “Major Street Plan for Houston and Vicinity” (1942) records future plans for the growth of Houston as interpreted by the Houston Planning Commission. The “Harris County Guide and Road Map” documents county roads in 1947. Newspaper advertisements and articles record the opening of Brace’s new real-estate ventures and also chronicle the destructive 1935 flood in Houston. Examples of Brace’s first sales, ready-cut houses, are shown in two catalogues from the Crain Ready-Cut House Company, while two brochures from Garden Oaks subdivision, a development Crain and Brace built in the late 1930’s, reveal housing preferences during that time period.

| Series: Folder | Date | Location |
|--|-------------|-----------------|
| Garden Oaks Brochures | 1941, n.d. | 0348-X-03 |
| Catalogues – Crain Ready-cut House Co. | 1920 - 1941 | 0348-X-04 |
| City Plan and Map booklets | 1942, n.d. | 0348-X-05 |
| Newspaper Advertisements and Articles | 1935 – 1951 | 0008-V-03 |