

Texas Historical Commission Staff (FR), 1/13/86

27" x 42" Official Texas Historical Marker with post  
Jefferson County (Job #8418)

Location: 694 Forrest St., Beaumont

HOLMES DUKE HOUSE\*

A NATIVE OF CARTHAGE, TEXAS, HOLMES DUKE CAME TO  
BEAUMONT IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY AND PURCHASED  
PROPERTY AT THIS SITE IN 1898. CONSTRUCTION ON HIS HOME  
BEGAN SHORTLY THEREAFTER, COMPLETED IN 1899, THE HOLMES  
DUKE HOUSE FEATURES INFLUENCES OF THE QUEEN ANNE AND  
COLONIAL REVIVAL STYLES OF ARCHITECTURE. PROMINENT  
FEATURES INCLUDE THE TWO SEMI-CIRCULAR BAYS ON EITHER  
SIDE OF THE FRONT DOOR AND THE PROJECTING GABLE OVER  
THE ENTRY THAT IS DECORATED WITH SUNBURST MOTIFS.  
COLUMNS ARE SET IN GROUPS AT EACH CORNER OF THE PORCH,  
WHILE THE SIDE GABLES FEATURE FISH-SCALE SHINGLING.

HOLMES DUKE WAS A PIONEER RESIDENT OF BEAUMONT  
AND FOR MANY YEARS WAS ACTIVE IN THE CITY'S POLITICAL,  
CIVIC, AND BUSINESS AFFAIRS. IN 1901, HE BUILT THE DUKE HOTEL  
ON LIBERTY AVENUE AND MANAGED IT UNTIL 1910. DUKE SERVED  
AS AN ALDERMAN ON THE BEAUMONT CITY COUNCIL FROM  
1905 UNTIL 1908 AND LATER HELD OFFICE AS THE CITY HEALTH  
INSPECTOR. DUKE ALSO WAS KNOWN AS AN INVENTOR AND  
OPERATED SEVERAL RESTAURANTS IN THE AREA.

HOLMES DUKE LIVED HERE UNTIL HIS DEATH IN 1946. THE  
STRUCTURE REMAINED IN HIS FAMILY, HOWEVER, UNTIL 1980. IT  
IS ONE OF THE FEW STRUCTURES REMAINING IN BEAUMONT  
THAT PREDATES THE 1901 SPINDLETOP OIL BOOM. \*\*

RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK - 1986\*\*\*

\*3/4 inch lettering  
\*\*1/2 inch lettering  
\*\*\*1/4 inch lettering

APPROVED

Frances Rickard

# APPLICATION FORM FOR OFFICIAL TEXAS HISTORICAL MARKER

**Texas Historical Commission  
Research and Markers Department  
P.O. Box 12276, Austin, Texas 78711**

8418

Title of marker (subject to revision by THC staff) <i>McNeill - current owner LHM</i>		
<i>Holmes</i> Duke <del>McNeill</del> House		
Marker location (street address or highway number; include name of cemetery, building, park, etc., if applicable; if on highway right-of-way or in a small community, briefly explain how to get there from the nearest town)		
694 Forrest Street		
City or nearest city shown on Texas Highway Department road map	County	
Beaumont	Jefferson	
Distance and direction of subject from marker site For example, "Subject is 1/2 mile SW of marker site."	Surface to which marker will be attached (if not on post)	
Front yard		
Owner of marker site	Address	City, Zip Code
Dr. & Mrs. Jack G. McNeill	940 Thomas Road,	Beaumont, Texas 77706
Sponsor of marker	Address	City, Zip Code
" " "	" " "	" " "
Person to whom marker is to be shipped	Address	City, Zip Code
<i>NOTE: Freight companies cannot ship to route or box numbers. If street address is unavailable, please provide a phone number. If marker is to be placed on highway right-of-way, it will be shipped to your district highway engineer.</i>		
" " "	" " "	" " "
Signature of County Chairman	Address	City, Zip Code
"I have reviewed the narrative for this marker and attest to its accuracy."		
<i>Mrs. W.B. Holaway - 6215 Wilchester, Beaumont 77706</i>		

Please consult the back of this page for specifications of the markers available. Check the items desired below. Approval of the application and narrative history *must* be obtained from the county historical commission, as indicated by the county chairman's signature on this form, before forwarding the material to the Texas Historical Commission. Please *do not* send payment if ordering subject or building markers; funds will be requested once the application has been approved by the State Marker Committee.

5% state sales tax must be added to the price, except if purchased by a tax-exempt organization.

## SUBJECT MARKERS

- 16" x 12" grave marker (comes with mounting bar) . . . . \$175 <sup>With tax</sup> \$183.75
  - 27" x 42" subject marker with post . . . . . \$575 <sup>With tax</sup> \$603.75
  - 27" x 42" subject marker without post . . . . . \$525 \$551.25
  - 18" x 28" subject marker with post . . . . . \$325 \$341.25
  - 18" x 28" subject marker without post . . . . . \$250 \$262.50
- I(We) request RTHL designation be considered for this marker.

## BUILDING MARKERS

- 16" x 12" building marker with post . . . . . \$225 <sup>With tax</sup> \$236.25
- 16" x 12" building marker without post . . . . . \$175 \$183.75

Applications for building markers will automatically be considered for the RTHL designation. Please read carefully Texas Marker Policies 11 through 15, and indicate that you have done so by signing below.

Signature of owner

## PAPERWEIGHTS

Please indicate quantity desired.

- 3" x 4" plastic paperweight  
mounted with replica of marker . . . . . \$75 <sup>With tax</sup> \$78.75  
*Allow 2 months from completion of marker  
for receipt of paperweight.*
- Medallion paperweight . . . . . \$25 <sup>With tax</sup> \$26.25  
*Allows four lines of engraving; please indicate desired wording.*

## DIRECTIONAL SIGNS

Please indicate quantity desired and give location(s) on form above:

- 24" x 24" Historical Markers In City sign . . . . . \$65 <sup>With tax</sup> \$68.25  
*These will be shipped to and placed on your town's city  
limits signs by the District Highway Engineer.*

- Black and White (for farm-to-market roads, state and U.S. highways)
- Green and White (for interstate highways)

- 18" x 22" Historical Marker directional sign . . . . . \$65 <sup>With tax</sup> \$68.25  
*In black and white only. For city and county roads.  
Applicant must supply post and be responsible for placement.*

- With arrow pointing straight ahead
- With arrow pointing left
- With arrow pointing right

## OTHER

- National Register plaque . . . . . \$ 35 <sup>With tax</sup> \$ 36.75
- 12" x 6" supplemental plate . . . . . \$ 65 <sup>With tax</sup> \$ 68.25
- 16" x 12" building marker plate only (see policy 11) . . . . \$110 <sup>With tax</sup> \$115.50
- Replacement medallion (see policy 11) . . . . . \$ 65 <sup>With tax</sup> \$ 68.25
- Bronze stars (for replacement on 1936  
granite markers) . . . . . \$ 10 <sup>With tax</sup> \$ 10.50
- Bronze wreaths (for replacement on  
1936 granite markers) . . . . . \$ 10 <sup>With tax</sup> \$ 10.50
- Bronze seals (for replacement on  
1936 granite markers) . . . . . \$ 50 <sup>With tax</sup> \$ 52.50
- Bronze plates (for replacement on  
1936 granite markers) . . . . . \$135 <sup>With tax</sup> \$141.75
- Certificates of commendation . . . . . 50¢ each

## THE HOLMES DUKE HOUSE

The Holmes Duke House at 694 Forrest Street, Beaumont, Texas is one of only two known residences remaining in Beaumont, Texas which are reminiscent of the prosperity that existed in this community before the Spindletop oil boom in 1901 (the other being the Sanders House at 479 Pine Street). It was the abundance of timber that brought settlers and workers to southeast Texas and to Beaumont. Holmes Duke was one of these men. The house is best described as a vernacular interpretation of Queen Anne architecture. Mr. Duke purchased the site in July, 1898.<sup>1</sup> Family members state that construction began immediately after purchase and was completed in 1899.<sup>2</sup> The frame house is located in the area known as the Calder Addition to the City of Beaumont. This subdivision was platted in 1889<sup>3</sup> and was developed as an attractive residential neighborhood. The house has survived in remarkably unaltered condition. While the neighborhood remains mainly residential in nature, most of the remaining houses are of a later period than the Duke House. The unusual character of the architectural ornamentation of the house distinguishes it from its neighbors and from many of its contemporaries in other locations.

Holmes Duke, a pioneer resident of Beaumont was active for many years in the political, civic and business life of the community. He was a native of Carthage, Texas and came to Beaumont from Sour Lake, Texas where he had operated a cafe.<sup>4</sup> He is listed in the 1900 City Directory as proprietor of the Ogden Hotel at 427 Pearl Street.<sup>5</sup> The following year he had opened Duke's Restaurant at the corner of Pearl and Crockett Streets.<sup>6</sup> In 1901, the year of the discovery of oil at Spindletop near Beaumont, Mr. Duke built a three-story brick building at 760 Liberty Avenue where he managed the Duke Hotel until 1910.<sup>7</sup>

Business success led to a career in local politics, as Duke served as Alderman on the Beaumont City Council under Mayor Emmitt Fletcher from 1905 to 1908 and was Mayor Protempore in 1907-1908.<sup>8</sup> He also served as City Health Inspector.<sup>9</sup>

According to an article about him which appeared in The Beaumont Journal at the time of his death in February, 1946,<sup>9</sup> Mr. Duke gave most of his time to inventing things that ranged from the first vacuum cleaner\* which went on the market to the street markers which still can be seen on some streets in Beaumont and other cities. During World War I, he served as a dollar-a-year man who joined a group of technicians to perfect a hand grenade. During World War II, he served as a naval inspector and won two citations and also won recognition from the War Department for having successfully put the finishing touches on bombs which, aboard one of the navy's crafts, sank three Japanese ships during the battle of the Coral Sea. He also worked as a tool and die maker for the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe Railroads. Mr. Duke was a member of the First Methodist Church in Beaumont, and he was a charter member of the El Mina Shrine Patrol. He was a life member of Lodge No. 286 Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of which he was at one time Worshipful Master.

\*No documentation

After Mr. Duke's death in 1946, the house remained in the possession of his heirs until 1980. It was then purchased by O. S. Sexton who initiated some needed maintenance. In 1984, Mr. Sexton gave the house to The Beaumont Heritage Society who deeded it to Dr. and Mrs. Jack McNeill for preservation. Dr. and Mrs. McNeill have carefully restored the house following guidelines set out by the Department of the Interior. The unfinished attic space has been converted into an apartment and a stairway added in the central hallway. Mrs. McNeill, a knowledgeable decorator, has selected wallpaper and finish paints to closely simulate those used at the time the house was built. The restored house was first presented to the public by The Beaumont Heritage Society in its 1985 Preservation Tour. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Holmes Duke House is a one-story frame residence which reflects the popularity of the Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles in turn-of-the-century Beaumont. The house features two semicircular bays on its west elevation, which also displays an elaborate gabled dormer.

The house faces west, with that elevation being the most elaborately detailed of all. It is of frame construction, is one and a half stories in height, and has a hipped roof. The west facade is dominated by the front porch and the slightly projecting portico aligned with the front door. The porch, which extends across the full width of the facade, is supported by a series of curious columns, whose shafts feature slightly spiraled fluting. The columns are placed in groups, with four set beneath the portico, and three located at each corner of the porch, with a single column located at the point at which the porch returns into the mass of the structure. All of the columns are set on paneled bases, with turned wood balusters forming the porch railings between these bases. The porch cornice is decorated with a simple course of small medallions. The projecting gable which forms the entry portico is highly decorated. The outer face of the gable contains three sunburst panels which flank the large round-arch opening which frames the beveled glass window that is somewhat recessed from the front plane of the gable. This window is framed by a band of ornament which further suggests a sunburst motif.

Entry to the house is provided by a double doorway, with each door containing a large panel of glass in its upper section. Among the most interesting features of the house are the two semicircular bays which project onto the porch on each side of the front door. Each contains three one-over-one wooden sash windows, the frames of which are curved to follow the lines of the two bays.

The north elevation, which appropriately faces North Street, constitutes the secondary facade of the house. The elevation is highlighted by the three-sided projecting bay of the dining room. A projecting gable covers this bay, with ornamental brackets supporting the gable corners. The face of the gable is clad in shingles and is pierced by a small window opening. The window, now lost, appears in early photographs as stained glass. The south elevation of the house features a small gabled dormer detailed in a manner similar to its counterpart on the north side of the house. The east features a small service porch. Externally, the structure has not suffered any significant alterations.

The interior walls are covered with wainscoting in the front and back hall, the dining room and the kitchen. Immediately inside the front door is a large central hallway leading to the four primary rooms. To the left (the northwest corner of the house) is the formal parlor which has a large semicircular bay on its west wall. Adjoining the parlor, through two large pocket doors, is the dining room. It has a bay on its north wall and a built-in china cabinet on its east wall. To the right of the central hallway, across from the parlor, is a bedroom which also has a semicircular bay jutting onto the front porch. To the rear, in the southeast corner of the house, is a second bedroom. These bedrooms are separated by a double fireplace. At the rear of the house, the central hallway meets a second hallway perpendicularly. The two hallways form a rough "T", with the central hallway serving as a base of the "T" and the second, smaller hallway as the top. The second hallway joins the kitchen (in the northeast corner of the house) to the bathroom and the covered rear entry porch in the southeast corner.

The house has nineteen, wood-frame, double-hung windows, six of which are curved to fit the two semicircular bays on the west wall. In addition, there are five stained-glass windows.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Volume 22, page 191, Deed Records, Office of County Clerk, Jefferson County Courthouse, Beaumont, Texas.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Myron Holmes Duke, III and Mrs. Myron Holmes Duke, Jr. March 22, 1984. Taped by Laurie Hall Leister.

<sup>3</sup>Plat of Calder Addition to City of Beaumont, Volume 2, page 115, Deed Records, Office of County Clerk, Jefferson County Courthouse, Beaumont, Texas.

<sup>4</sup>Beaumont Enterprise, February 11, 1946, Beaumont Public Library, Beaumont, Texas.

<sup>5</sup>Beaumont City Directory, 1900, Tyrrell Historical Library, Beaumont Texas.

<sup>6</sup>Beaumont City Directory, 1901-1902, Tyrrell Historical Library, Beaumont, Texas.

<sup>7</sup>Affidavit, Holmes Duke, Volume 88, page 200, Deed Records, Office of County Clerk, Jefferson County Courthouse, Beaumont, Texas.

<sup>8</sup>Minute Books, Beaumont City Council, 1904-1908, Office of City Clerk, City Hall, Beaumont, Texas.

<sup>9</sup>Beaumont Journal, February 11, 1946, Beaumont Public Library, Beaumont, Texas.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beaumont City Directory. 1900; 1901-1902; 1903; 1904; Tyrrell Historical Library, Beaumont, Texas.

Beaumont Enterprise. "M. Holmes Duke", February 11, 1946, pages 1 and 3. Beaumont Public Library.

Beaumont Journal. "M. Holmes Duke", February 11, 1946, pages 1 and 2. Beaumont Public Library.

Deed Records, Jefferson County Courthouse. Volume 9, page 65; Volume 22, page 123; Volume 22, page 191; Volume 23, page 274; Volume 85, page 200.

Harris, Cyril M., Dictionary of Architecture and Construction. McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1975.

Interview with Myron Holmes Duke, III and Mrs. Myron Holmes Duke, Jr. March 22, 1984. Taped by Laurie Hall Leister, Beaumont, Texas.

Linsley, Judith Walker and Ellen Walker Reinstra, Beaumont A Chronicle of Promise. Windsor Publications, Inc. Woodland Hills, California. 1982.

Minute Books, Beaumont City Council, 1904-1918, Office of City Clerk, Beaumont City Hall, Beaumont, Texas.

Whiffen, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. 1969.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beaumont Enterprise. "M. Holmes Duke", February 11, 1946, pages 1 and 3.

Beaumont Journal. "M. Holmes Duke", February 11, 1946. pages 1 and 2.

Interview with Myron Holmes Duke, III and Mrs. Myron Holmes Duke, Jr.  
March 22, 1984.

Linsley, Judith Walker and Ellen Walker Reinstra, Beaumont, A Chronicle of Promise. Windsor Publications, Inc., Woodland Hills, California, 1982.







HOLMES DUKE HOUSE (RTHL)

