

Montgomery Way

The Gateway District



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*NRHP Status Code 5S1

*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder)

D1. Historic Name: South Curtis Oaks #1

D2. Common Name: Gateway District

*D3. **Detailed Description** (Discuss overall coherence of the district, its setting, visual characteristics, and minor features. List all elements of district.):

The Gateway Historic District is comprised of a significant concentration and continuity of associated historical resources. The residential properties are located on both sides of Montgomery Way from East Curtis Drive to Franklin Boulevard in the Curtis Park area of Sacramento. The district contains twenty-three residences twenty-one Contributing properties and two Non-Contributing properties. The District Period of Significance extends from 1922 – 1937. City addresses of Contributing buildings include the buildings on both sides of the street, extending from Curtis Park on the west to Franklin Boulevard on the east. From 3065 and 3071 E. Curtis Drive to 2761 and 2770 Montgomery Way. There are two Non-Contributing properties, constructed after the Period of Significance, which are located at 2654 and 2727 Montgomery Way.

The Contributing resources possess a number of similar and cohesive character-defining features displayed in the District.

Cohesive features within the district:

- Setbacks, front lawns
- Lot sizes
- Massing and form
- Scale
- Materials
- Windows, entries
- Roofs
- Landscaping
- Architectural styles
- Architectural design with same architect for at least 11 of the residences

The building setbacks are consistent throughout the District and most front yards within the setback space are carpeted with lawn and small-scale foliage, providing a sense of organization, spaciousness, and order. Buildings are similar in scale and size, and employ similar principal materials such as stucco, brick, or wood.

Materials primarily utilized in the District buildings include wood, brick or manufactured stone, and stucco or plaster. The structures within the District utilize similar building materials, particularly brick facing on a wood framework, a new construction technique developed during that era that utilized brick and stone facings on a variety of structures. Several of the District residences are surfaced with stucco plaster and utilize terra cotta design accents. Roofs are often covered with clay tiles. Façade window openings that often determine scale delineations are generally similar and compatible.

The predominant building form for most buildings is a rectangular, two story long, box-form that is parallel to the street face. This building form is commonly covered with a side-gabled roof, often tiled. Even one-story houses have tall façade design elements that extend vertically to suggest taller structures, extending building height continuity. Lot sizes are consistent, with

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minor fluctuations, including two double lots with abundant foliage in the central area of the district. The two lots on the east end of Montgomery Way with the two "Gateway" lots, are a little larger to emphasize the beginning of the development. Street sidewalks are consistent, with a couple of variations to allow for large original street trees, now removed.

The predominant architectural styles employed in residences of the District reflect the 1920-1940 era of American architectural design which employed a wide range of eclectic "revivalist" styles popular in the country at this time. These styles reflect various versions of architectural styles from different European countries probably experienced by many military personnel during World War I and recalled after their return. American tourism to Europe at the end of the War contributed to this trend. These Revivalist styles and mixtures of their features became very popular throughout the country during this era and examples are legion in Sacramento. Versions of their interpretations are reflected in the residences within this District. The styles, and the eclectic interpretations and combinations most common to the District include the following: Italian Renaissance, Classical Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, Mediterranean Revival, Tudor Revival, Monterey Style, and American Colonial Revival.

The development of the tract coincided with the national "Better Homes Movement" which received broad support from both government and industry. It was a campaign of home ownership, modernization, and beautification that grew from a critical shortage of homes in the years following World War I. The Movement sought to educate consumers to the values of building, owning, and remodeling their homes. Such activities would improve the quality of domestic living, and the improvement of homes and home life. The Movement generated a Butterick Publishing Co. magazine entitled "The Delineator" and other magazines. In 1923, "Home Designer" magazine featured Sacramento and its homes, and lauded south Curtis Oaks as a successful new community. It commented on improved land while retaining natural resources. In support of the national "Better Homes Movement," the Carly Company built three Dean and Dean designed models, two of which were visited and reviewed by a national entity as part of a national contest. One of the houses in the tract won the sixth prize in the national contest, 2640 Montgomery Way, nick-named the "Ann Hathaway Cottage." The Carly development earned national attention for its successful community design and rich imagery.

The Sacramento architectural firm of Dean and Dean was involved in the design of at least eleven of the twenty-one Contributing residences, providing a high degree of continuity of image for the District. These residences are all located on Montgomery Way: 2640, 2649, 2672, 2681, 2701, 2709, 2730, 2740, 2751, 2757, and 2761.

Prior to the development of the district, the area was naturally endowed with original mature trees and plantings which community members and new owners strove to retain and incorporate into this District. Exterior gardens have been carefully landscaped and are filled with vegetation that has matured over time. This image of rich landscaping is a principal factor in the visual character of the District.

***D4. Boundary Description** (Describe limits of district and attach map showing boundary and district elements.):

The District boundaries include both sides of Montgomery Way from 3065 and 3071 East Curtis Drive The boundary of the District to 2761 and 2770 Montgomery way. The boundary of

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the District follows the peripheral boundaries of the residences on both sides of the street between Franklin Boulevard and East Curtis Drive.

The subdivision map for the properties of South Curtis Oaks #1 was filed in January 1920. The land for adjacent William Curtis Park had already been granted to the City of Sacramento in 1919. By 1922 residential construction within the tract began. The first two houses were those for J.C. Carly, of the East Curtis Oaks development company, and Curtis Cutter, grandson of the original owner of the ranch land containing the development. (see Map)

Montgomery Way was envisioned by Carly as the grand gateway to the elegant new subdivision that would contain his own residence. The street was planned to be open and expansive, incorporating lush existing landscaping and mature trees, and serve as gateway to the elegant new district. This original development block strongly displays a continuity of design, streetscape features, scale, materials, and landscape elements that characterize it as a Historic District with a particular placement in time.

***D5. Boundary Justification:**

The boundary of the District is governed by the initial designation of Montgomery Way as the distinctive Gateway for development of the Carly tract, and as justification to establish certain regulations to enhance the district's desirable residential image.

This block of Montgomery Way was planned by development owner J.C. Carly to serve as the "grand" entrance to a distinctive residential development that included his own private home. He planned and built his own mansion near the gateway entry to enhance the prestige of the new neighborhood. All potential home designs had to be approved by the company and a minimum expenditure for each house was required.

In the 1920s, the "Better Homes Movement" sponsored a national competition that won a sixth prize national award for a building on Montgomery Way in Sacramento for its quality and character. Another publication complimented Sacramento for its new South Curtis Oaks subdivision. At least eleven of the houses comprising the District were designed by a notable local architectural firm, Dean and Dean, whose work substantially shaped the image of Sacramento during the 1920-1940s era. The Gateway Historic District contains a significant concentration of associated historical resources.

The District at Montgomery Way from Franklin Boulevard to East Curtis Park Drive appears eligible for listing on the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources per Criterion (B) I, a, b, i and ii, and (B)2.a, b. The Historic District contains a significant concentration or continuity of buildings unified aesthetically by plan or physical development. The District has integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship and association, and the collective historic value of the buildings in the district taken together may be greater than the historic value of each individual building. The Gateway Historic District contains a significant concentration of associated historical resources.

D6. Significance: Theme: Residential Development **Area:** Curtis Park

Period of Significance 1922-1937

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Applicable Criteria: City Code

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criteria 17.604.210 B 1,a, b, i, ii (B), c; and 17.604.210.(B) 2.a, b as a district, and 17.604.210.(C) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, as contributing resources

(Discuss district's importance in terms of its historical context as defined by theme, period of significance, and geographic scope. Also address the integrity of the district as a whole.)

Unparalleled growth and prosperity

The twenty years or so that lead up to the success of the South Curtis Oaks subdivision was a period of great change in the Sacramento Valley. At one time Valley agriculture was dominated by wheat production. Successful wheat production required large ranches many of which exceeded a thousand acres or more. It took at least a thousand acres and a \$50,000 investment in equipment for a ranch to show a profit. However, between 1880 and 1900 competition from cheaper wheat production overseas undercut California production. The Valley began a transition from wheat to fruits and nuts. The vast wheat farms were slowly broken up into smaller farms and ranches. Where it would take at least a thousand acres of wheat to turn a profit, a fruit farm of 20 to 30 acres was large enough to support a family. (The return on investment from fruit and nut production was vastly superior to wheat.) Steady improvements in transportation and the canning processes opened up world-wide markets for California products.

At the same time, reclamation of swamp and overflow lands bordering the rivers brought many thousands of acres of river bottom land into production. In 1911 the Natomas Consolidated began a reclamation project just north of Sacramento that eventually opened 60,000 acres to agricultural production. In 1913 the Natomas company produced a marketing brochure announcing the opening of some 20,000 acres of irrigated farmland south of the American River from Folsom to Mills Station (about two miles east of Mather Field Road). The Rancho del Paso was being broken up and sold for farms, ranches and colonization. It comprised 44,000 acres north of the American River—roughly from North Sacramento to Manzanita Avenue in Carmichael.

The period between 1900 and 1920 was one of great growth and prosperity for Sacramento and the whole north valley region. The population of the valley increased sixty percent during this period. It went from 156,000 in 1900 to 246,000 in 1920. The population of Sacramento increased from 29,282 to 65,908 during the same period.

Then came the outbreak of World War I. Although the United States did not join the fighting until 1917, the country supported its allies with food, material and armaments. While the demand for California food products soared, housing and real estate sales plummeted. Sales at one of Sacramento's largest real estate firms, Wright & Kimbrough went from \$3.7 million in the five years before the war to 2.3 million for the five war years—a drop of about 37%. During the war money from Valley agriculture flooded into the banks—only there was a lot less to spend it on. The stage was set for what would come next.

Curtis Ranch Property

South Curtis Oaks was originally part of the William Curtis ranch property, purchased by him from his brother in 1854. His land holdings gradually expanded over subsequent years due

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to the purchase of additional lands surrounding the ranch that became available from original owners. The Curtis family farmed this quadrangle while the first subdivisions in the area adjacent to the east, Oak Park (1887) and Oak Grove (1888) were created. In 1887, parcels in another subdivision directly north of the Curtis property, Highland Park, were put up for auction. Other parcels in the vicinity of the original Curtis ranch were gradually developed in the early twentieth century, nearby or adjacent to the Curtis property. In 1907, William Curtis deeded the northernmost portion of his ranch to the East Curtis Oaks investment group of Hawk, Hawley and J.C. Carly, just two weeks before he passed away. In 1909, his wife conveyed her remaining lands to the same investors who then formed the East Curtis Oaks company in 1911. J.C. Carly of this group envisioned South Curtis Oaks as an elegant development with park-like streets, winding roads and wide imposing entrance gates. Montgomery Way in South Curtis Oaks was planned by the developer of the thoughtfully designed subdivision in 1920 to serve as a gateway to the elegant new district. In the meanwhile, the Curtis and Carly families had been united by the marriage of their children Curtis and Leita.

The subdivision map for South Curtis Oaks #1 was filed in January 1920. The land for spacious William Curtis Park had been granted to the City of Sacramento by relatives and developers of the original Curtis ranch in 1919. By 1922 residential construction within the tract began. The first two houses were those for Curtis Cutter (2757) and J.C. Carly (2761). Curtis Cutter was the grandson of William Curtis, and Leita was the daughter of J.C. Carly.

According to the Home Designer magazine of 1923, *“Already on Donner Way, Curtis Way and Montgomery Way are homes of the type that have been carefully chosen to characterize this distinctive district – occupying wide lots and governed by restrictions that preclude the building of homes other than those that will be a credit to the district.”*

The Gateway

Montgomery Way was envisioned by J.C. Carly as the grand gateway to his elegant new subdivision at Montgomery Way and Franklin Boulevard. The street was planned to be open and expansive, incorporating some of the notably handsome existing trees and foliage. Several of the new owners either purchased two lots for their individual houses or added



Figure 1 - Home Designer magazine referred to Montgomery Way as the “Entrance” to South Curtis Oaks.

portions of adjacent lots to expand the luxurious image of their homesite. Carly himself planned and built his own mansion near the gateway entry to the development to enhance the prestige of

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the new neighborhood. All potential home designs had to be approved by the company and a minimum expenditure for each house was required. Most of the homes in this neighborhood were designed by master architects Dean and Dean, assuring fine design values and a harmonious cumulative image.

J.C. Carly's plan for Montgomery Way as the gateway to his premier tract development included his own home which was located at the grand entrance to the tract on Montgomery Way and Franklin Boulevard. Additionally, a local committee of the era advocated the retention of the particularly large and handsome trees located within the subdivision in order to contribute to the gardenlike image of the area.

Better Homes Movement

The development of the tract coincided with the national Better Homes Movement which received broad support from both government and industry. It was a campaign of home ownership, modernization, and beautification that grew from a critical shortage of homes in the years following World War 1. Titled the *Better Homes Movement*, it was initiated in the Butterick Publishing Company's magazine, The Delineator, a householder's publication. The Movement sought to educate consumers to the values of building, owning, remodeling and improving their homes including home furnishings and decorations. Such activities would substantially improve the quality of domestic living, and the improvement of homes and home life were widely encouraged.

In 1923, Home Designer magazine featured Sacramento and its homes in an issue of their magazine. The publication lauded south Curtis Oaks as a successful community with natural advantages and architectural aesthetics that included land gifted to the city for a park by the land owners and their development partners. The magazine also displayed a photograph of the recently completed Bret Harte School. The Home Designer magazine enthused, "Acres of unimproved land have been transformed into building community sites while the beauties of nature bestowed upon this section have been preserved..." The district was, not only enhanced by nature, handsome



Figure 2 - In a strong marketing move, the Carly Company provided land for the Bret Harte School as well as the park. The school was designed by Dean & Dean. In their advertising the Carly Company also mentions the impending construction of the nearby Junior College.

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well-designed homes began to occupy the awaiting garden-like parcels, creating a distinctive and elegant neighborhood.

In support of the national Beautiful Homes Movement, the Carly Company built three Dean and Dean designed model homes in South Curtis Park for the public to tour and enjoy. They were furnished by the John Breuner furniture company. These houses were located at 2672 Montgomery Way, 2640 Montgomery Way, and a home on Sixth Avenue especially outfitted with many new modern electric appliances and features. The homes were visited and reviewed by a national entity as part of a national contest. The Kimberlin/Watson/Fallon home at 2640 Montgomery Way, was awarded the sixth-place prize in the national Better Homes contest. This architect-designed home reflected a strong medieval English cottage image and quickly earned the nick-name "Ann Hathaway Cottage." Carly advertised the house as an 'old English' style house. The reflected Tudor Revival style soon became a popular design theme for homes in Sacramento.

Dean & Dean

The success of the winning design encouraged development owners to promote Sacramento architects Dean and Dean as the designers for a number of homes being built within the district. The house was designed by master architects Dean and Dean, meeting City Code criterion (17.604.210(A)1.a.iv) d. The architectural firm of James and Charles Dean was gaining local prominence at the time, and the designs they favored worked well in the evolving landscape. They were born, raised and educated in Texas. Their father R.K. Dean, was an engineer and builder and both boys graduated from Texas A&M University. After A&M, where he took classes in engineering and drawing, Charles Dean went to work in an architectural office in San Antonio for two years. He then moved to Chicago to work for the architectural firm of Englehart & Englehart for seven years. Charles was working in Chicago when 'enlisted' in 1908 by George Sellon, California's first state architect, to come to California and help rebuild the state after the 1906 earthquake. Brother James, who attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology after Texas A&M, joined his brother in the State Architect's Office in 1912. In 1921 the Dean brothers left the State and opened their own architectural office in Sacramento. Charles Dean was the principal designer of the firm and James handled the business matters.

Dean and Dean joined the ambitious school building program and, in just five years, designed the following schools: Fremont, El Dorado, Newton Booth, Franklin, Donner, Bret Harte, Jefferson, East Sacramento, Highland Park, McKinley, Leland Stanford, Sierra and Theodore Judah.

Dean & Dean were also prolific residential designers who influenced residential design in Sacramento. They designed a number of imposing residences in South Curtis Oaks and East Sacramento. Their residential designs in addition to appearing in feature articles in the Architect

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and Engineer in 1922 and 1927, were also featured in a pattern book published by House and Garden Magazine. Architect and Engineer stated, "...their houses are homes – not residences. A charm prevails or mantles them with an air of refinement which never tires. Simplicity in form and detail is most apparent both in

house and garden, and such versatility in execution of the work of modern periods from the Colonial to the modern Spanish. Bits of interest sparkle here and there indicating devotion to each problem as it came to them for solution."

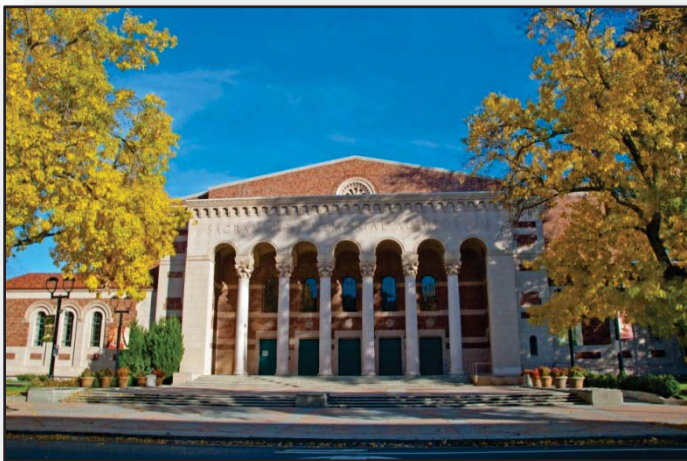


Figure 3-Sacramento Memorial Auditorium designed by Dean & Dean

Children's Home, the Golf Club House at Land Park, the Sutter Club, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Sacramento Memorial Auditorium, Breuner's Furniture Store, Alhambra Shopping Center, Clunie Clubhouse and Library, YWCA, and Dean Apartments.

James Dean accepted an appointment by the City of Sacramento to supervise the construction of the Memorial Auditorium. He eventually became the City Architect and sold his interest in Dean & Dean to his brother. James eventually became Sacramento City Manager and later was Deputy State Director of Finance.

Charles Dean continued the firm under both names until his death in 1956.

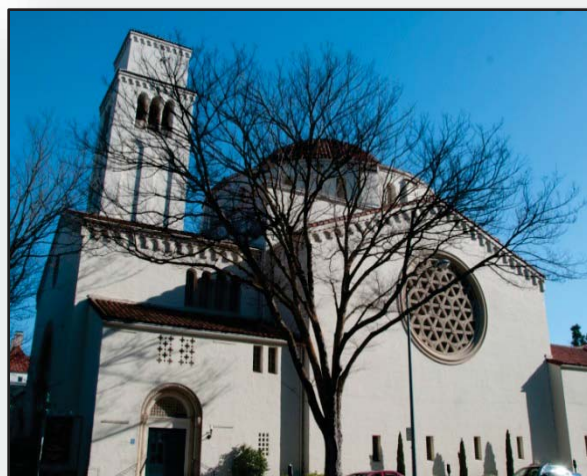


Figure 4-Westminster Presbyterian Church by Dean & Dean

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Discrimination in Housing

The Carly Company was one major Sacramento realtor who used restrictive covenants in their deeds for South Curtis Oaks to practice segregation in housing. One original Montgomery Way deed read: "The grantees...shall not...convey, sell, lease or permit the use of said real property to a person or persons of Hindu, African, Japanese, Chinese or any other Mongolian descent." Such provisions were pervasive in the 1920s and 1930s.

During the 1930s the federal home loan insurance programs HOLC and FHA institutionalized racial segregation by defining neighborhoods according to their desirability for home loans. This practice became known as "redlining." In 1940 the original deed restrictions in the South Curtis Oaks were set to expire and efforts were made to extend them. Deed restrictions were also extended to other neighborhoods that never had them in the first place.

In 1948 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that deed restrictions were not enforceable. However, the real estate industry resisted integration. Locally, in the 1950s a black executive at McClellan AFB, Oliver Ming, sued the local real estate board, homebuilders, several real estate companies and the agents who had rejected his purchase and loan applications. Ming won his case, but informal resistance persisted.

During the 1950s and 60s Sacramento was fortunate in that it had one of the most successful attorneys in the fight against racial segregation in housing on both a local and a national level. Nathaniel Colley was known as a talented attorney who embarked on a prominent and respected legal career that fought for fair housing for African-Americans and all people of color. Colley's former home and office building have been nominated as local Landmarks and are in the process of consideration for the National Register of Historic Places.

Only with the congressional passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968 did racial discrimination in housing become illegal nationally.

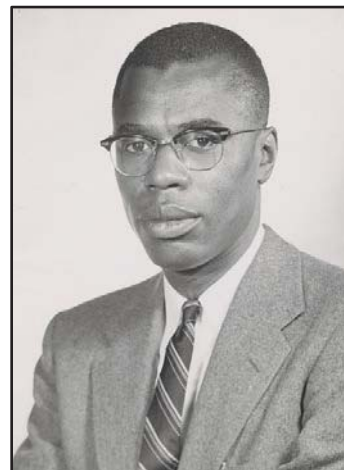


Figure 5 - Nathaniel Colley

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State of California - The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
DISTRICT RECORD

Primary
HRI
Trinomial

#

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Sacramento Building Permits

Sacramento City Directories

Sacramento County Assessors Data

Sacramento Recorders Office Data: Original Deed 2672 and 2640 Montgomery Way

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

Thomas Brothers Map Books (1937-41)

The Home Designer Magazine, March 1922

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