

Texas Historical Commission staff (CRB), 7/18/2012, rev (BB) 7/25/12, 7/27/12
Official Texas Historical Medallion and 16" x 12" plaque with post
Harris County (Job #12HR02) Subject (Atlas) UTM
Location: Houston, 25 Courtlandt Place

UNDERWOOD & CLARA NAZRO HOUSE

THIS HOUSE, THE ONLY ONE OF GEORGIAN REVIVAL STYLE IN COURTLANDT PLACE, IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY RESIDENTIAL WORK OF FORT WORTH FIRM SANGUINET AND STAATS. THE RED BRICK VENEERED HOUSE FEATURES A FRONT ENTRY PORTICO WITH FULL ENTABLATURE SUPPORTED BY SLENDER COLUMNS WITH COMPOSITE CAPITALS. UNDERWOOD NAZRO, HIS WIFE CLARA, AND THEIR TWO CHILDREN LIVED HERE FROM 1916-28. NAZRO WAS VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE GULF OIL COMPANY AND ALSO DID BUSINESS IN FINANCE AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT. BANKER IKE McFARLAND AND HIS WIFE, PRESERVATIONIST MAE WYNN McFARLAND, LIVED HERE FROM 1940-69.

RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK – 2012

MARKER IS PROPERTY OF THE STATE OF TEXAS

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK MARKERS: 2012 Official Texas Historical Marker Sponsorship Application Form

Valid September 1, 2011 to November 15, 2011 only

This form constitutes a public request for the Texas Historical Commission (THC) to consider approval of an Official Texas Historical Marker for the topic noted in this application. The THC will review the request and make its determination based on rules and procedures of the program. Filing of the application for sponsorship is for the purpose of providing basic information to be used in the evaluation process. The final determination of eligibility and therefore approval for a state marker will be made by the THC. This form is to be used for Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) requests only for buildings or structures. Please see separate forms for either Historic Texas Cemeteries or subject markers.

Proposed marker topic (THC will determine official title): Clara and Underwood Nazro House

County: Harris

Town (nearest county town on current state highway map): Houston

Street address of marker site or directions from town noted above: #25 Courtlandt Place

Marker Coordinates:

If you know the location coordinates of the proposed marker site, enter them in one of the formats below:

UTM Zone 15 R Easting 269281.43 m Northing 3292709.84 m

Lat: 29 44' 35.39" Long: 95 23' 08.56" (deg, min, sec or decimal degrees)

Otherwise, give a precise verbal description here (e.g. northwest corner of 3rd and Elm, or FM 1411, 2.6 miles east of McWhorter Creek):

NOTE: RTHL markers must be placed at the structure being marked.

RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK MARKERS

Definition: Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) markers are awarded to buildings and structures deemed worthy of preservation for their historical associations and architectural significance. RTHL is a legal designation and comes with a measure of protection; it is the highest honor the state can bestow on a historic building or structure, and the designation is required for this type of marker. The RTHL designation becomes effective upon approval by the THC. Official Texas Historical Markers signify the RTHL designation, which comes only through application to and approval by the THC and must include public display of an Official Texas Historical Marker. Owners of RTHL-designated properties must give the THC 60 days written notice before any alterations are made to the

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

exterior of the structure. RTHL status is a permanent designation and is not to be removed from the property in the event of a transfer of ownership. Only the THC can remove the designation or recall the marker. The marker must remain with the structure and may not be removed or displayed elsewhere until or unless the THC gives express approval in writing for such action. Once designated as RTHL, properties are subject to provisions of Texas Government Code, Section 442.006(f).

Criteria:

1. **Age:** Properties eligible for the RTHL designation and marker must be at least 50 years old.
2. **Historical significance:** Architectural significance alone is not enough to qualify a property for RTHL designation. It must have a significant historical association, which can come from an event that occurred at the site; through individuals who owned or lived on the property; or, in the case of bridges, industrial plants, schoolhouses and other non-residential properties, through documented significance to the larger community.
3. **Architectural significance:** Properties deemed architecturally significant are outstanding examples of architectural history through design, materials, structural type or construction methods. In all cases, eligible architectural properties must display integrity; that is, the structure should be in a good state of repair, maintain its appearance from its period of significance and be considered an exemplary model of preservation. Architectural significance is often best determined by the relevance of the property to broader contexts, including geography. Any changes over the years should be compatible with original design and reflect compliance with accepted preservation practices, e.g., the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*.
4. **Good state of repair:** Structures not considered by the THC to be in a good state of repair are ineligible for RTHL designation. The THC reserves the sole right to make that determination relative to eligibility for RTHL markers.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATION FOR RTHL DOCUMENTATION:

National Register properties

Properties individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NR) under either Criterion A or B **and** Criterion C (Architecture) may not require additional documentation of the building's history or architecture. In such cases, only an RTHL application needs to be submitted. The THC has sole discretion to determine whether such documentation is satisfactory and correct or if documentation needs to be updated.

Check this box if the property is individually listed in the NR. Year listed:

Courthouses

Historic county courthouses with documented master plans accepted through the THC's Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program (THCPP) may not require additional documentation of the building's history or architecture. In such cases, only an RTHL application needs to be submitted. The THC has sole discretion to determine whether such documentation is satisfactory and correct or if documentation needs to be updated.

Check this box if the property is a courthouse with a master plan accepted through the THC's THCPP.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Any individual, group or county historical commission (CHC) may apply to the THC to request an Official Texas Historical Marker for what it deems a worthy topic. Only complete marker applications that contain all the required elements can be accepted or processed by the THC (for RTHL markers, the required elements are: sponsorship application form; narrative history; documentation; legal description; site plan; floor plan; historic photograph; and current photographs clearly showing each side of the structure—please resize digital photographs to 1-2 MB, or approximately 1024 x 768 pixels).

- Completed applications must be duly reviewed, verified and approved by the county historical commission (CHC) in the county in which the marker will be placed. Paper copies of applications, whether mailed or delivered, cannot be accepted in lieu of the electronic version.
- The sponsorship application form, narrative history and documentation must be submitted as Microsoft Word or Word-compatible documents and sent via email attachments to the THC by no later than November 15, 2011. THC email accepts mail no larger than 10 MB.
- Required font style and type size are a Times variant and 12-point.
- Narrative histories must be typed in a double-spaced (or 1.5-spaced) format and include separate sections on context, overview and significance.
- The narrative history must include documentation in the form of reference notes, which can be either footnotes or endnotes. Documentation associated with applications should be broad-based and demonstrate a survey of all available resources, both primary and secondary.
- Upon notification of the successful preliminary review of required elements by the THC, a non-refundable application fee of \$100 is required. Please send payment with the invoice which THC provides.

APPROVAL BY COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The duly appointed marker representative (chair or marker chair) noted below for the county historical commission will be the sole contact with the THC for this marker application. To ensure accuracy, consistency and efficiency, all information from and to the THC relative to the application, throughout the review and production processes, will be by direct communication with the CHC representative. All other inquiries (calls, emails, letters) to the THC will be referred to the CHC representative for response. By filling out the information below and filing the application with the THC, the CHC contact is notifying the THC that the application and documentation have been reviewed and verified by the CHC, and that the material meets all current requirements of the Official Texas Historical Marker program.

As chair or duly appointed marker chair, I certify the following:

- Representatives of the CHC have met or talked with the potential marker sponsor and discussed the marker program policies as outlined on the THC web site. CHC members have reviewed the history and documentation for accuracy and made corrections or notes as necessary. It is the determination of the CHC that the topic, history and documentation meet criteria for eligibility.

CHC comments or concerns about this application, if any: Approved by County Commission on August 17, 2011.

Name of CHC contact (chair or marker chair): Paul R. Scott

Mailing address:2103 Knollbrook **City, Zip:** Spring, Texas 77373

Daytime phone:(713) 368-0039 **Email address:** Paul.Scott@itc.hctx.net

PERMISSION OF PROPERTY OWNER FOR MARKER PLACEMENT

Property owner: Charles and Nathalie Roff

Address:#25 Courtlandt Place **City, state, zip:**Houston, Texas 77006

Phone:(713) 655-5330 **Email address:** croff@RoffResources.com

Legal Description of the property (metes and bounds, lot and block, etc.): LT 14 & TRS 15A B21 & D9, COURTLANDT PLACE, Houston, Harris County, TX

Upon receipt of the application, the THC will provide the owner with a letter that outlines the legal responsibility of ownership under the Recorded Texas Historic Landmark statute. The letter must be signed by the owner and returned to the THC before the evaluation can be completed.

NOTE: The property owner will not receive any additional copies of correspondence from the THC. All procedural correspondence (notice of receipt, request for additional information, inscription, shipping notice, etc.) will be sent by email to the CHC representative, who is encouraged to share the information with all interested parties as necessary.

SPONSORSHIP PAYMENT INFORMATION

Prospective sponsors please note the following:

- Payment must be received in full within 45 days of the official approval notice and must be accompanied by the THC payment form. The THC is unable to process partial payments or to delay payment due to processing procedures of the sponsor. Applications not paid in the time frame required may, at the sole discretion of the THC, be cancelled or postponed.
- Payment relates to sponsorship of the marker in partnership with the THC, which provides the match for program costs.
- Payment does not constitute ownership of a marker; Recorded Texas Historic Landmark markers and other Official Texas Historical Markers are the property of the State of Texas.
- If, at any time during the marker process, sponsorship is withdrawn, a refund can be processed, but the THC will retain the application fee of \$100.

- The Official Texas Historical Marker Program provides no means of recognizing sponsors or property owners through marker text, incising or supplemental plaques.

Marker sponsor (may be individual or organization): Owner - same as above

Contact person (if applicable):

Mailing address: **City, zip:**

Phone: **Email address** (required):

SHIPPING INSTRUCTIONS

In order to facilitate marker delivery, residence addresses, post office box numbers and rural route numbers are not permitted. To avoid additional shipping charges or delays, use a business street address (open 8 a.m.—5 p.m., Monday through Friday).

Name: Charles and Nathalie Roff

Street address:#25 Courtlandt Place **City, zip:** Houston, Texas 77006

Daytime phone (required): (713) 655-5330 **Email** (required): croff@RoffResources.com

TYPE AND SIZE OF RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK MARKERS

As part of its review process, the THC will determine the appropriate size marker and provide options, if any, for the approved topic based on its own review criteria, including, but not exclusive of, historical significance, replication of information in other THC markers, relevance to the Statewide Preservation Plan and the amount of available documented information provided in the application narrative. In making its determination, however, the THC will also take into account the preference of the CHC, as noted below.

The sponsor/CHC prefers the following size marker:

- 27" x 42" RTHL marker with post (\$1500)
- 27" X 42" RTHL marker without post* (\$1500)
- 18" x 28" RTHL marker with post (\$1000)
- 18" x 28" RTHL marker without post* (\$1000)
- RTHL medallion and 16" x 12" plaque with post (\$750)
- RTHL medallion and 16" x 12" plaque without post* (\$750)

*For an RTHL marker without post, indicate to what surface material it will be mounted:

- wood
- masonry
- metal
- other (specify)

SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION (via email required)

When the CHC has determined the application is complete, the history has been verified and the topic meets the requirements of the Official Texas Historical Marker Program, the

materials should be forwarded to the THC by email at the following address:
markerapplication@thc.state.tx.us.

- The CHC or marker chair should send an email containing the following attachments (see attachment function under file menu or toolbox on your computer):
 - This application form
 - The narrative history (including documentation)
 - Legal description of the property
 - Detailed floor plan for each floor of the structure
 - Detailed site plan of the property
 - At least one historic photograph
 - Current photographs clearly showing each side of the structure

RECORDS RETENTION BY CHC: The CHC must retain hard copies of the application as well as an online version, at least for the duration of the marker process. The THC is not responsible for lost applications, for incomplete applications or for applications not properly filed according to the program requirements. For additional information about any aspect of the Official Texas Historical Marker Program, see the Markers page on the THC web site (<http://www.thc.state.tx.us/markerdesigns/madmark.html>)

Texas Historical Commission
History Programs Division
P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276
Phone 512/463-5853
history@thc.state.tx.us



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories

Application for a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark Marker for the
UNDERWOOD AND CLARA NAZRO HOUSE
#25 COURTLANDT PLACE, HOUSTON, TEXAS

Written by Anna Mod and Grace Cynkar, SWCA Environmental Consultants
for review by the Harris County Historical Commission

I. CONTEXT

Houston grew steadily in the second half of the nineteenth century due to ongoing enhancements to the port and additional railroads. City leaders invested in the city's future and established infrastructure including electric service, streetcars, paved streets and public transportation. The Port of Houston was established in 1841 and steamships plied Buffalo Bayou and unloaded at the foot of Main Street. The railroad arrived in 1860 and by 1922 there were seventeen lines operating in Houston.¹ Buffalo Bayou, straightened and deepened, received her first ocean going vessel in 1876 and this enhancement - coupled with the railroad - propelled the city into a major transportation and shipping center.² The 1901 discovery of oil near Beaumont at Spindletop propelled Beaumont into an oil boomtown overnight, yet Houston was better positioned for explosive growth due to her established infrastructure and better social and cultural amenities; the city absorbed many newcomers over the following two decades as newly chartered oil companies moved their headquarters there.³

In the late nineteenth century, wealthy Houstonians built large mansions along the main avenues south of downtown in the Victorian-era styles that were popular at the time. Sited on large parcels, it was not uncommon for the house, outbuildings and gardens to occupy an entire city block.⁴ Live Oak trees were planted along the lot perimeters and these oaks, now a century old, can still be seen sporadically in what is now Midtown. The city's population doubled in the first decade of the twentieth century⁵ and the residential avenues south of downtown began to

¹ Weiskopf, Douglas L. Rails Around Houston. Charleston, et al: Arcadia Publishing, 2009, p. 2

² *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "HOUSTON SHIP CHANNEL"
<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/HH/rhh11.html> (accessed May 30, 2010).

³ Johnston, Marguerite, Houston: The Unknown City: 1836-1946. College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1991, pp. 129-131.

⁴ Sanborn Maps, City of Houston, 1885-1951, Volumes 1 and 5.

⁵ Morrison and Fourmy, City Directory of the City of Houston, 1910-11, p. 11.

experience commercial encroachment. Homeowners realized the value of a planned community within a city adamantly opposed to zoning, and true to the Houston entrepreneurial spirit, developers responded and provided new neighborhoods with deed restrictions following design principles of the City Beautiful movement: Westmoreland (1902), Hyde Park (1905), Courtlandt Place (1906), Avondale (1907) and Montrose (1911).⁶

II. OVERVIEW

Underwood Nazro and Clara Wheeler Nazro

Underwood Nazro (1875-1935) was born in Bowling Green, Kentucky to Charles A. Nazro and Johanna Louisa “Josie” Underwood.⁷ Born in New York, Charles A. Nazro was working as a clerk in a scythe works shortly after Underwood’s birth in 1875.⁸ Josie Underwood, born in 1840 in Kentucky, kept house for her husband and family.⁹ Josie survived Charles by twenty five years, eventually passing away in her native Kentucky.¹⁰ At the time of the 1880 Saratoga County Census, Underwood was living in Milton, New York with his parents and siblings: Lucy, Edith, and Frank.¹¹ Shortly after the Spindletop gusher in 1901, he moved to Beaumont, Texas as an independent operator.¹² From an interview with Phil Nazro, a descendent of Underwood, it is believed that Underwood moved directly to Texas from New York, never residing elsewhere.¹³ On June 16, 1903, he married Clara Wheeler, formerly of Galveston, Texas, at her home in Houston.¹⁴

⁶ Houghton, Dorothy Knox Howe, et al. Houston’s Forgotten Heritage: Landscape, Houses, Interiors 1824-1914. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1991, preface and introduction.

⁷ Texas Department of Health, *Standard Certificate of Death*, “Underwood Nazro,” July 7, 1875-April 21, 1935, #18969.

⁸ 1880 Census: Milton, Saratoga, New York (Roll T9-928, Page 259A)

⁹ Kentucky Birth, Marriage and Death Records – Microfilm (1852-1910). Microfilm rolls #994027-994058. Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ 1880 Census: Milton, Saratoga, New York (Roll T9-928, Page 259A)

¹² “Prominent Oil Operator Dies,” *Galveston Daily News*, April 22, 1935, p. 2 c.8.

¹³ Phil Nazro, grandson of Underwood Nazro’s cousin, interview with Sallie Gordon, October 27, 2008.

¹⁴ “Nazro-Wheeler,” Marriages, *Galveston Daily News*, June 17, 1903, p. 3 c. 2.

Clara Wheeler Nazro (1882-1942) was born in Fergus Falls, Minnesota to C.O. Wheeler and Mary Brewster.¹⁵ By 1894, Clara and her family had moved to Galveston, Texas where they achieved both prominence and wealth by the time of her marriage to Underwood.¹⁶

Underwood lived the American dream, beginning his working career as a day laborer and eventually becoming vice president of Gulf Oil Company.¹⁷ His rise to wealth was enabled by his wife's money which he used to invest in the J.M. Guffey Petroleum Company, a group of drillers including R. B. Mellon of Pittsburgh and other East Coast investors with interest in the Spindletop gusher.¹⁸ These investors also joined to form the Gulf Refining Company in order to refine and sell Guffey Oil.¹⁹ These companies, in addition to several smaller producers, were amalgamated into the Gulf Oil Corporation in 1907 with A. W. Mellon as president.²⁰ In this same year, Underwood was offered the vice presidency and general managership of this new corporation.²¹ A few years later, despite the division of the firm and subsequent changing of the names to the Gulf Production Oil Co. and the Gulf Pipeline Co., Underwood remained vice president of both companies.²² In 1915, the Gulf Pipe Line Company announced its move to Houston, with Underwood and his family following shortly thereafter. The family chose to build their house in the relatively young development of Courtlandt Place, selecting the architecture firm Sanguinet and Staats as the designers.²³ While awaiting its completion, the Nazros lived in a guest house at the Houston Golf Club, later to become the Houston Country Club, of which they were some of the early members.²⁴ In 1917, Underwood identified himself as vice president of

¹⁵ Texas Department of Health, *Standard Certificate of Death*, "Clara Wheeler Nazro," May 6, 1942.

¹⁶ "Barge Party," *Galveston Daily News*, May 22, 1894, p.3 c. 1.

¹⁷ Board of Directors of San Jacinto National Bank of Houston, "Underwood Nazro Resolution," May 8, 1935; Texas Department of Health, *Standard Certificate of Death*, "Underwood Nazro," April 21, 1935.

¹⁸ Gordon and Jones, Houston's Courtlandt Place, 88.

¹⁹ Gordon and Jones, Houston's Courtlandt Place, 88.

²⁰ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Gulf Oil Corporation," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/dog02> (accessed June 8, 2011).

²¹ "Prominent Oil Operator Dies," *Galveston Daily News*.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Gordon and Jones, Houston's Courtlandt Place, 88.

²⁴ Gordon and Jones, Houston's Courtlandt Place, 90.

the Gulf Oil companies on his WWI draft registration card, a position he held until his death in 1935.²⁵

By 1920 the Nazros had occupied 25 Courtlandt Place for four years. According to the 1920 United States Census they had three servants living on the grounds, all of them African-American: Ella Harvey from Louisiana; Felix Walker, a chauffeur, from Texas; and Lavatoo Walker, a maid, also from Texas.²⁶ In 1929, Underwood personally negotiated the Gulf Oil's lease and naming rights to the newly constructed, soon-to-be-called Gulf Building with real estate and banking tycoon, Jesse H. Jones.²⁷ In addition to Gulf Oil, other tenants in the new building included the National Bank of Commerce and Sakowitz Brothers Department Store.²⁸ Underwood's business activities extended beyond the realm of oil into finance and community investment. Although he was never a paid officer, Underwood served as a director and early organizer of the San Jacinto National Bank of Houston.²⁹ He also invested in the Old Braeswood neighborhood during one of its early development phases. Today Underwood Street commemorates his contribution to the community.³⁰

Underwood and Clara had two children, Joanna and Wheeler, born in 1906 and 1907 respectively. Joanna married an interior designer in New York City, Joe Mullens, and Wheeler married a woman named Elouise Adams from a prominent Missouri City family. Neither couple had any children.³¹ While Underwood worked, Clara developed into an avid golfer, competing in golf tournaments as early as 1917 and frequenting the newly formed Houston Golf Club.³²

²⁵ United States, Selective Service System. World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration. M1509, 4,582 rolls. Imaged from Family History Library microfilm.

²⁶ Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920. (NARA microfilm publication T625, 2076 rolls). Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29. National Archives, Washington, D.C. For details on the contents of the film numbers, visit the following NARA web page: NARA. Note: Enumeration Districts 819-839 are on roll 323 (Chicago City).

²⁷ Gordon and Jones, Houston's Courtlandt Place, 89.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Board of Directors of San Jacinto National Bank of Houston, "Underwood Nazro Resolution."

³⁰ Braeswood: an architectural history / prepared by the Anchorage Foundation of Texas for the Old Braeswood Civic Club ; photography by George O. Jackson, Jr. Houston: Old Braeswood Civic Club, c. 1988.

³¹ Elouise Jones and Lucy Cheadle, nieces of Elouise Nazro, interview with Sallie Gordon.

³² Gordon and Jones, Houston's Courtlandt Place, 90.

The Nazros lived at 25 Courtlandt Place until the late 1920s. As of the publication of the 1926 Houston City Directory, the family still resided there.³³ By the 1930 city directory however, the Nazros were listed as living in The Warwick Hotel.³⁴ Finally, by 1935 they had moved to the new development of River Oaks where Underwood passed away on April 21, 1935.³⁵ Clara passed away seven years later on May 6, 1942.³⁶

In 1928, Underwood and Clara sold their house at 25 Courtlandt Place to I.S. Masterson and his wife for \$50,000.³⁷ According to the Houston City Directory, by 1930 J.H. Tallichet, attorney-at-law with Baker, Botts, Andrews & Wharton, owned #25 Courtlandt Place; however, he remained in the house only a year. From 1932 to 1933, the house was vacant with no new tenant or owner listed until the publication of the 1935 Houston City Directory. William W. Dickinson, president and treasurer of the Superior Milk Company Inc., purchased the property at this time, inhabiting the house with his wife and son until 1939.³⁸ Once more, #25 Courtlandt Place stood vacant for a year until new residents could be found.³⁹ In 1940, Ike and Mae Wynne McFarland owned and resided there.⁴⁰ Ike was president and manager of the Houston First Federal Savings and Loan Association while Mae Wynne McFarland (1884-1962) became a noted preservationist. As a representative of women's patriotic societies such as the Daughters of the American Revolution and the United Daughters of the Confederacy, she successfully lobbied for the protection of wildflowers along public highways as well as the placement of historical markers along the state's highways.⁴¹ Finally, Mae also served on the Harris County Historical Survey Committee.⁴² The McFarlands remained at #25 Courtlandt Place until 1969, with Ike

³³ Houston City Directory, 1926.

³⁴ Houston City Directory, 1930-1931.

³⁵ Houston City Directory, 1935.; Texas Department of Health. Texas Death Indexes, 1903-2000. Austin, TX, USA: Texas Department of Health, State Vital Statistics Unit.

³⁶ Texas Department of Health, *Standard Certificate of Death*, "Clara Wheeler Nazro," May 6, 1942.

³⁷ "Harris County Legal Record," *Galveston Daily News*, August 12, 1928, 11 c. 2.

³⁸ Houston City Directory, 1935, 1939.

³⁹ Houston City Directory, 1939.

⁴⁰ Houston City Directory, 1940.

⁴¹ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "McFarland, Mae Wynne," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fmc52> (accessed June 9, 2011).

⁴² Letter from Arthur Lefevre, Jr. to the Committee Members, February 18, 1958, Harris County Historical Commission Records, Folder 522-X-03, Harris County Archives.

remaining long after Mae's death. During the 1970s and early 1980s, the house passed through a series of renters punctuated with vacant years. From 1971 to 1972 the house sat vacant until Anslie Walters, a publisher with the *River Oaks Times*, leased it from 1973 to 1975. After another vacant year, Donia McLemore, a technician at Medical Arts Hospital, rented the house from 1976 to 1980. In 1981, a tenant listed only as 'Whitehead' lived at #25 Courtlandt Place until Ed A. Kopinitz took over the house in 1983. In 1985 Dr. Sidney Anderson purchased the house, living there with his family until the 1990s.⁴³ The current owners have lived here since 2000.

Courtlandt Place

A. L. Hamilton, T. A. Cargill and Sterling Myer incorporated The Courtlandt Place Improvement Company on August 8, 1906 for the purpose of creating a neighborhood with “residences of good class” as far as possible from the “noise, dust, constant traffic and other annoyances” of a growing city.⁴⁴ Plans for the new Courtlandt Place neighborhood were announced in the *Houston Post* a month later with a report on the purchase of 15 acres of land by the Courtlandt Improvement Company from Terry Smith of New York and plans for a subdivision named “Courtlandt Place . . . one of the finest residence sections in the South.”⁴⁵ On the 1907 plat map, the land is described as “situated within the city limit of Houston, Texas north of and adjoining Westmoreland, being the south one third of Lot 23 of a subdivision of the Obedience Smith survey according to a map recorded in Vol. Y, page 15, Harris County Deed Records.”⁴⁶

The neighborhood was surveyed by A. J. Wise, a civil engineer, who laid out a 110 foot long boulevard with four central medians and a total of 26 lots: 24 measuring 100' x 170' and two polygonal shaped lots (lots 1 and 26) adjacent to the east entrance.⁴⁷ The vision of the developers was to establish an exclusive neighborhood with houses of high quality. Six primary restrictive

⁴³ Houston City Directories, 1930-31 to 1991.

⁴⁴ Agreement Creating Courtlandt Association, dated June 29, 1912. James L. Autry papers, “Courtlandt Place,” box 20, file 15, Woodson Research Center, Rice University.

⁴⁵ “New Residential Addition Planned,” *Houston Post*, Sept. 6, 1906.

⁴⁶ Deed Records of Harris County, Map Book 2, page 26.

⁴⁷ Wise, A. J. 1907 plat of Courtlandt Place. James L. Autry papers, “Courtlandt Place” box 20, file 15, Woodson Research Center, Rice University.

covenants were incorporated into each deed *in perpetuity* and included: no business or commercial houses; only one house, not less than two stories, per purchased lot; setback footage required to maintain uniformity; fences in the rear only; front hedges can be no higher than three feet high in the front 50 feet of the property line; and, no house may cost less than \$10,000.⁴⁸ In 1912, the Courtlandt Place Improvement Company created the Courtlandt Association, still in existence today under the new name ‘Courtlandt Place Civic Association’, appointing ten trustees and deeding the street to them as joint tenants.⁴⁹

The neighborhood ran the equivalent length of three standard city blocks from Taft on the west to the entrance, with a semicircular bend at Brazos and Stuart Avenue. The eastern entry was one block south of Elgin and two blocks west of the South End streetcar stop.⁵⁰ The initial development was successful and the first two houses (#s 4 and 6) were completed in 1910. By the beginning of World War I four years later, nine houses were completed on the street. Four more houses were completed by 1920 and an additional four by the decade’s end. In 1937, the eighteenth house was built on the street and construction ceased until 1979 when the house at #13 was built. In 1985, #1 Courtlandt Place was built, the last house on an undeveloped lot. Thirteen years later in 1998, another new house, #3, was built on the side yard of the Autry house (#5) replacing an iron frame greenhouse, designed by the Lord and Burnham Company of Philadelphia, and a tennis court, both demolished after the 1980 City of Houston survey.⁵¹ These three non-contributing houses respect the setback, a requirement of the restrictive covenants, and massing of the other houses on the block, and do not detract from the historic character of the street. Today, there are a total of 21 houses with no remaining vacant lots: eleven houses on the north side and ten on the south side of the street.

The neighborhood reads as an architectural and social history of early twentieth century Houston. Architects Sanguinet and Staats of Ft. Worth designed six houses (#s 5, 9, 25, 4, 6 and 8); Birdsall Briscoe also designed six (#s 11, 19, 13, 16, 18 and 20) including one (#18) with Olle Lorehn; New York architects Warren and Wetmore, architects of Houston’s Union Station

⁴⁸ Autry papers, “Courtlandt Place.”

⁴⁹ Autry papers, “Courtlandt Place.”

⁵⁰ Baron, Steven M. Houston Electric: The Street Railways of Houston, Texas. Houston: Steven M. Baron, 1996, p. 41.

⁵¹ Autry papers, “Courtlandt Place.”

(NR, 1977), Villa de Matel and the Texas Company building (NR, 2003) designed #17. John Staub and Alfred Finn each designed one house, numbers 2 and 24 respectively.⁵²

The eastern entry gates to the neighborhood, paired masonry pylons, were in place by 1908. As home sales increased in the adjacent Montrose subdivision to the west, there was an increase in traffic down Courtlandt Place towards Main Street. In 1912, William Ward Watkin (brought to Houston in 1909 by the architectural firm Cram & Goodhue for the design and construction of the earliest buildings for the Rice Institute [now Rice University]) designed and oversaw the construction of the western wall as well as curbs, sidewalks, iron entry fencing, rear wooden alley gates and the plantings in the medians.⁵³

Later the same year, Montrose developer J. W. Link, claiming that the western wall and the private street were illegal, lobbied city hall to tear down the wall and reopen the street so as to provide car traffic from Lovett Blvd. with direct access to Main Street via Courtlandt Place.

The city agreed; the western wall was removed and the city took the street from the Association, paved it and installed streetlights. While this was a loss to the exclusivity of the Courtlandt Place development, it was still buffered to the north by the Westmoreland subdivision (1902) and on the west by Montrose (1911), both contemporary City Beautiful residential neighborhoods of similar quality and with similar restrictive covenants until after World War II.

In addition to its architectural significance, Courtlandt Place was home to many of the city's early businessmen and their families. A. S. Cleveland (#8) was a wholesale grocery owner and cotton factor whose civic activities included service as president of the Houston Chamber of Commerce and the Houston chapter of the American Red Cross. Cleveland was also a trustee of Rice University. James Lockhart Autry (#5) came to Texas from Mississippi to claim a family land grant in Navarro County, where he worked on a ranch. He apprenticed with a lawyer in Corsicana and was admitted to the bar. There he became the attorney for J. S. Cullinan who left Corsicana to establish the Texas Company, later Texaco, in Beaumont following the discovery of oil at Spindletop. Autry was of counsel to the Texas Company, and a pioneer in petroleum law in Texas.⁵⁴ Another important household on the block was that of Charles Ludwig Neuhaus (#6), a

⁵² Landon, Marie D. Courtlandt Place Historic District, National Register of Historic Places nomination, 1979.

⁵³ William Ward Watkin papers, 1903-1956, Woodson Research Center, Fondren Library, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

⁵⁴ Air, Murray and Sallie Gordon, Recorded Texas Historic Landmark application for #5 Courtlandt Place, 2009.

director of the Texas Rice Mill Company, Union National Bank and an investor in the Courtlandt Improvement Company.⁵⁵

The houses were large and were staffed by servants, many of whom lived in the second story apartments above the garages. It was not uncommon for a household to have three or more servants, including a housekeeper, cook, grounds keeper and chauffeur. Study of the city directories prior to 1950 clearly shows that African-American staff lived in the rear above the garage, while an Anglo nurse or housekeeper would sometimes live in the main house with the family, following the segregated customs of the time. Other servants would commute from their own neighborhoods nearby.

The area to the east of Courtlandt Place was predominantly residential in use due to its location away from the commercial center. However, without deed restrictions it was not immune to commercial encroachment. The 1924 Sanborn map shows the beginnings of commercial development creeping into the two blocks directly to the east and southeast of the Courtlandt Place entry gates. By 1951, a dry cleaner was in business at the corner of Brazos and Elgin, directly north of the Courtlandt Place entry gates. This same map shows the two-block area to the east bordering on 50% commercial in use.⁵⁶

Early plans for the city's freeway system show a dotted line on the 1959 Key Map for the proposed location of SH 59, known locally as the Southwest Freeway. It was completed by 1965. The initial freeway construction removed direct access from the neighborhood to Main Street and in 1968 the Bagby-Brazos ramp (Spur 527) cut into the eastern edge of the neighborhood,⁵⁷ necessitating the removal of the twin entry pylons, electric iron and glass lamps and "several of the largest Cottonwood trees in Harris County."⁵⁸ The bricks were saved from the pillars and the existing pylon in the eastern median is constructed of the rescued bricks.⁵⁹ Between 1995 and 2001, during an expansion of the Brennan's parking lot, lawyers discovered a small sliver of land still owned by the Courtlandt Place Civic Association on the opposite side of the spur from the

⁵⁵ Gordon and Jones, p. 100.

⁵⁶ Sanborn map, 1924-51, Vol. 5, sheet 544.

⁵⁷ *Houston Post*, 17 May 1965, Section 2.

⁵⁸ *Houston Post*, 17 May 1965, Section 2

⁵⁹ "Courtlandt Place." *Houston Post*, 11 December 1974, page 3AA.

neighborhood. This land was sold to the restaurant, yet its previous ownership reveals the extent of the neighborhood's original footprint.

The neighborhood suffered from the suburban flight in the 1950s and 60s as younger generations sought new houses with modern appliances away from the city as the older generation was dying off. By this time the deed restrictions in neighboring Montrose and Westmoreland began to expire and small apartment buildings began to sprout up in place of single family dwellings. Beginning in the 1970s there was a small renaissance of the inner city, and young families began to move back.⁶⁰ By the early 1980s the neighborhood had stabilized and the individual homeowners cooperated to buy the street back from the city. After coming to a unanimous agreement, each homeowner purchased the street in front of his or her property.⁶¹ Today, the street remains broken up, with each property owner retaining ownership of the street directly in front of their house.

Neighborhood residents applied for listing Courtlandt Place on the National Register of Historic Places as a district in 1979 but this effort failed. Later that year, eleven houses were listed individually on the National Register. The following year Courtlandt Place was successfully listed as a National Register Historic District. In 1996 Courtlandt Place became the City of Houston's first locally designated historic district following the establishment of the city's historic preservation ordinance in 1995.

There are also thirteen listed (nos. 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 15, 16-19, 22 and 24) Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks and four individual City of Houston Landmarks (nos. 5, 18, 19 and 24) in the neighborhood. Today Courtlandt Place is a well-preserved neighborhood and reads as an architectural and social history of early twentieth-century Houston. Arcadia Publishing released a neighborhood history, *Houston's Courtlandt Place*, in 2009 written by neighborhood resident Sallie Gordon and Penny Jones, a local real estate writer.

Architectural description

The Underwood and Clara Nazro residence is a two-story, wood-framed, Georgian Revival style house with red brick veneer and hipped ~~terra cotta tiled~~ roof. Although the original garage still exists, this RTHL application only includes the house. Interior renovations in 1980

⁶⁰ "Courtlandt Place." *Houston Post*, 11 December 1974, page 3AA.

⁶¹ Grace Cynkar, Personal Interview with Sallie Gordon, July 13, 2011.

did not compromise its original foot print. The house faces north onto Courtlandt Place and is the last house on the south side of the block. Two side gates grant access to Taft, the western boundary of the neighborhood. The north or main façade is symmetrical with a series of six double-hung wood windows on each floor, divided in the center by the front entry portico with full entablature supported by slender columns with Composite capitals, and a surmounting French door with multi-light sidelights. The front door is wooden with a single light upper and lower panel flanked by three quarter sidelights and divided transom. Brick arches above the windows of the first floor form the principal decorative element of this façade. Cast stone lintels and keystones offer relief from the red brick, while slightly recessed brick in a basket weave pattern embellishes the interior of the arches. A cast stone belt course wraps the house just under the sills of these first floor windows. The upper windows are much less elaborate with masonry subsills providing the only ornament. Three gabled dormers with arched windows rest on the roof; the second of which sits directly over the front entrance, further emphasizing the median of the house. Unlike the primary façade, the south, or rear, elevation is an asymmetrical three bay composition with a small ell projecting from the first bay. Originally a double-height porch, the first floor of this ell has been enclosed to provide interior space for the kitchen and laundry. An enclosed sleeping porch, opening onto a balcony encompasses the second story. The lower floor continues the red brick veneer of the rest of the house and white wood paneling with a series of abutting white, wood casement windows enclose the second floor sleeping porch. A wooden balustrade encircles the small balcony accessed through the sleeping porch. The center bay is composed of quadruple grouping of double-hung windows resting on the belt course of the lower story and two asymmetrically placed windows, similar to those of the front façade, on the second story. The final bay is symmetrically composed of four floor-to-ceiling casement doors with wood panels on the bottom and tall single panes on top; the first and last of these openings serve as operable double doors, while the center two are inoperable. Above these openings, two typical second story windows provide light to an upstairs bedroom. The uneven spacing between these two and those of the second bay serve to accentuate the asymmetry of this façade compared to that of the north elevation. Three gabled dormers, identical to those of the north façade, crown the south façade.

The east elevation is dominated by a two-story porch. Screens set between brick piers provide the only enclosure of the first floor, while on the second story white wood paneling and

casement windows, similar to that of the south ell, encase the porch. A full entablature divides the porch's first and second stories. An interior chimney is centered with the porch to continue the symmetry of the north façade. A simple, brick pier, flat-roofed porte-cochère dominates the west elevation and a white balustrade, similar to the south elevation, encircles its roof. Two exterior chimneys flank each side of the elevation and a single, central gabled dormer rests between them, emphasizing the symmetry of the main facade.

The interior of the house continues the subtle grandeur of the exterior. A rectangular foyer, mimicking the larger rectangle of the house's massing, opens onto the sitting room and library on either side and proceeds directly back through an arched opening into the dining room. A back hallway, beginning between the dining room and foyer, leads to the kitchen and various storage spaces. A grand stair rises from the southeast corner of the foyer leading to a large landing onto which open all the bedrooms.

Sanguinet and Staats

The house was designed by the noted Ft. Worth architectural firm Sanguinet and Staats. The firm, founded in 1903 by Marshall R. Sanguinet and Carl G. Staats, was one of Texas' largest early twentieth century architectural firms. They designed civic, religious and residential buildings. The firm is most widely known for their early twentieth century skyscrapers that remain in the skylines of Waco, Ft. Worth, Austin, Houston and San Antonio.⁶² The firm designed six houses on Courtlandt Place, two in association with Alfred Finn. The firm's earlier works on Courtlandt Place, including the Sterling Myer (#4) and the John M. Dorrance House (#9), convey definite Tudor or Mediterranean influences. Sanguinet and Staats departed from this stylistic tradition with the Georgian Revival Underwood Nazro House.

III. SIGNIFICANCE

The Nazro Underwood house at #25 Courtlandt Place is significant architecturally as an example of the early twentieth century residential work of Sanguinet and Staats. The house is a good example of the Georgian Revival style and is the only example of this style on the street of popular revival style houses. The north or main façade is symmetrical with a series of six

⁶² *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Sanguinet and Staats"
<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/SS/cms1.html> (accessed July 16, 2010).

double-hung wood windows on each floor, divided in the center by the front entry portico with full entablature supported by slender columns with Composite capitals, and a surmounting French door with multi-light sidelights. It is also significant for its association with the Nazro Underwood family, business and social leaders in early twentieth century Houston.

IV. DOCUMENTATION

Fall, Mrs. Henry, ed. *The Key to the City of Houston*. Houston, 1908.

Gordon, Sallie and Penny Jones,. *Houston's Courtlandt Place*. Charleston et al.: Arcadia Publishing, 2009.

Harris County Appraisal District, <http://www.hcad.org/>

Jones, Penny, *Postcards from Texas*, Channel 55, Houston Texas, March 2009, [www.houston55.com.postcards-from-Texas/stories/2009-03-courtlandt-place.jsp](http://www.houston55.com/postcards-from-Texas/stories/2009-03-courtlandt-place.jsp)

Landon, Marie. *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for #18 Courtlandt Place*, 1979.

National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, Courtlandt Place Historic District, National Park Service, February 19, 1979.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1984.

-----, *A Field Guide to America's Historic Neighborhoods and Museum Houses: The Western States*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1998.

Special Collections and Clipping Files

Courtlandt Place Clipping File, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.

Houston City Directory, Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research, Houston Public Library.

Maps

Bracey's Block Maps, City of Houston, Texas, 1942 and 1950.

Key Map of Houston, Texas, 1959-1969.

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

RECEIVED

Authorization for Recorded Texas Historic Landmark Designation FEB 02 2012

Date of RTHL designation: January 27, 2012

Texas Historical Commission

Property Name: Nazro House
Physical Address: 25 Courtlandt Place
City: Houston County: Harris Zip: 77006
Property reference number (Appraisal District/Tax Office property number, etc.): HCAD Auct 010249000014
Legal Description (Lot and block, metes and bounds, etc.): Lt 14 + TRS 15A B21 + D9 Courtland Place

Additional description ("property encompassing the bridge and abutments," "the 1936 portion of the County Consolidated High School building," "the historic homestead, including the main house, barn, windmill, smokehouse and water well," etc.): The historic homestead

The Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) designation is awarded to historic structures deemed worthy of preservation for their architectural integrity and historical associations. Authorized by the Texas Legislature under Texas Government Code, Chapter 442, RTHL is the highest honor the state can bestow on historic structures in Texas. Designated properties are afforded a measure of legal protection and become part of the recorded history of the state's built environment.

Benefits of the RTHL designation:

- Recognition that a property is of local, regional or state significance.
Protection for up to 90 days from exterior alterations, including demolition or relocation.
Ad valorem tax exemptions, where granted by local taxing authorities.
Inclusion in the Texas Historic Sites Atlas.
Technical preservation assistance through the THC.

Handwritten notes: 2-2-12, 8081284, #8006, \$750.00, PLW

Responsibility of the property owner under the RTHL provision, as noted in Texas Government Code, Chapter 442.006 (f):

A person may not damage the historical or architectural integrity of a structure the commission has designated as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark without notifying the commission at least 60 days before the date on which the action causing the damage is to begin. After receiving the notice, the commission may waive the waiting period or, if the commission determines that a longer period will enhance the chance for preservation, it may require an additional waiting period of not longer than 30 days. On the expiration of the time limits imposed by this section, the person may proceed, but must proceed not later than the 180th day after the date on which notice was given or the notice is considered to have expired.

Additionally:

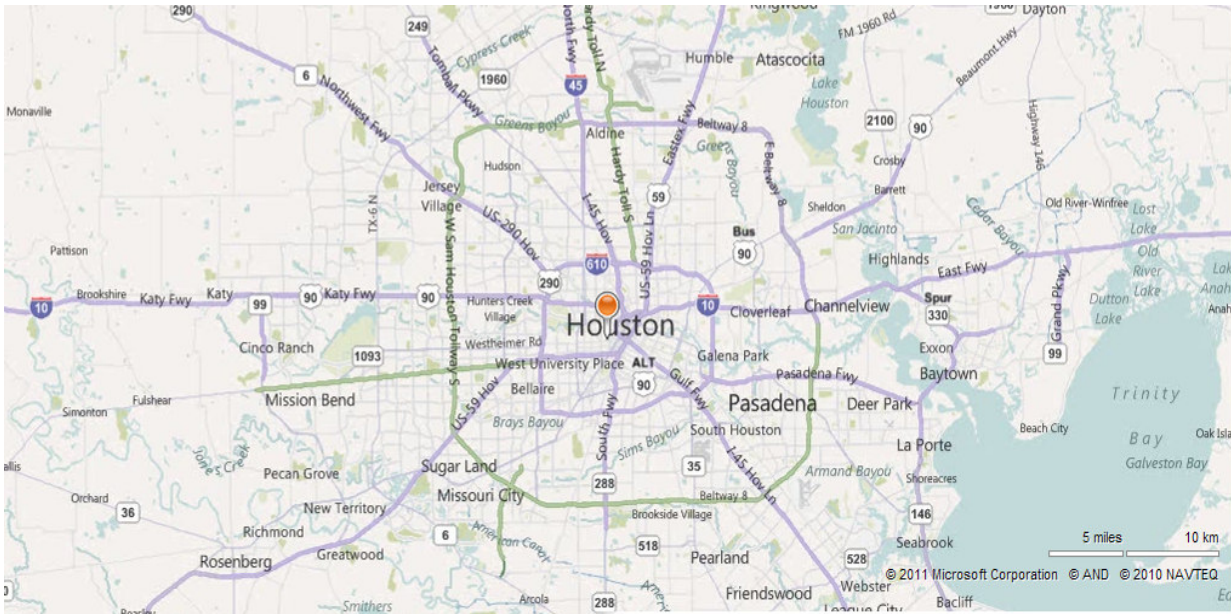
- The designation requires the public display of the RTHL marker. The marker is the property of the State of Texas and may not be removed or relocated without the prior permission of the Texas Historical Commission.
RTHL status is a permanent designation which is retained with the property even upon transfer of ownership. Only the Texas Historical Commission may remove the designation.
Structures designated as RTHLs do not have to be open to the public, but the marker must be accessible to the public.
RTHL designation does not imply eligibility for federal tax incentives for rehabilitation.

I, the property owner or legal administrator of the property noted herein, signify below that I have read the information regarding Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks and that I voluntarily seek the designation for the property. I further promise to comply with the provision noted in the Texas Government Code.

Name (print): Charles L. Roff
Mailing address: 25 Courtlandt Place
City, state, zip: Houston, Texas 77006
Signature: [Signature]
Phone: 713-655-5330 Date: 2/1/12

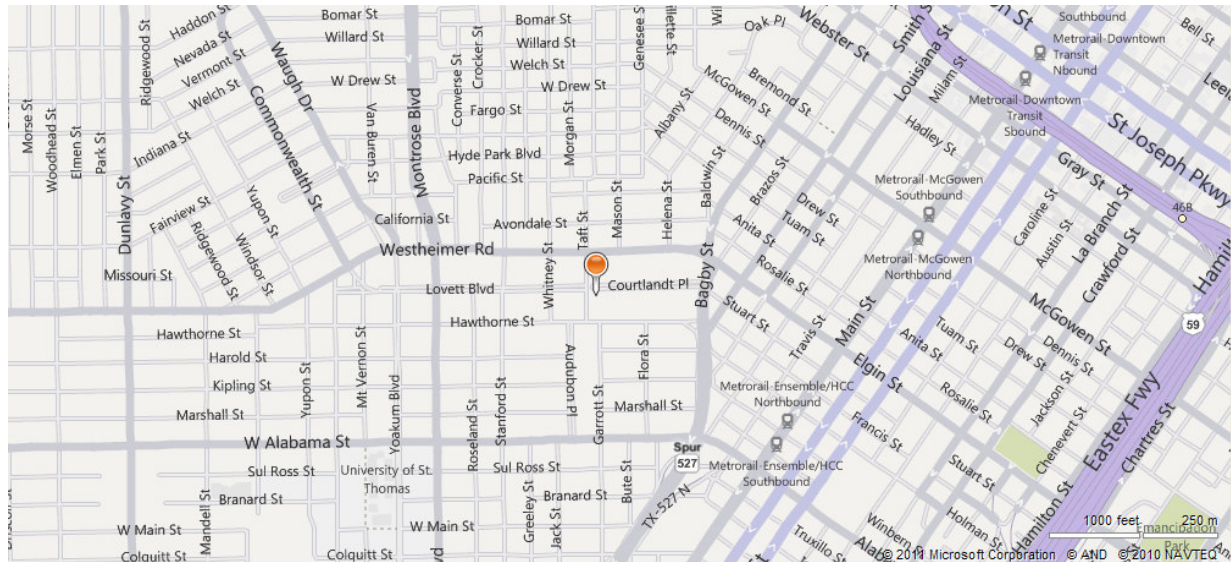
TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories
P.O. BOX 12276 • AUSTIN, TX 78711-2276
PHONE 512.463.6100 • FAX 512.475.4872
www.thc.state.tx.us

Legal Description: Lot 14 and Tracts 15A, B21, and D9 in Courtlandt Place, Houston, Harris County, Texas (Harris County Appraisal District).



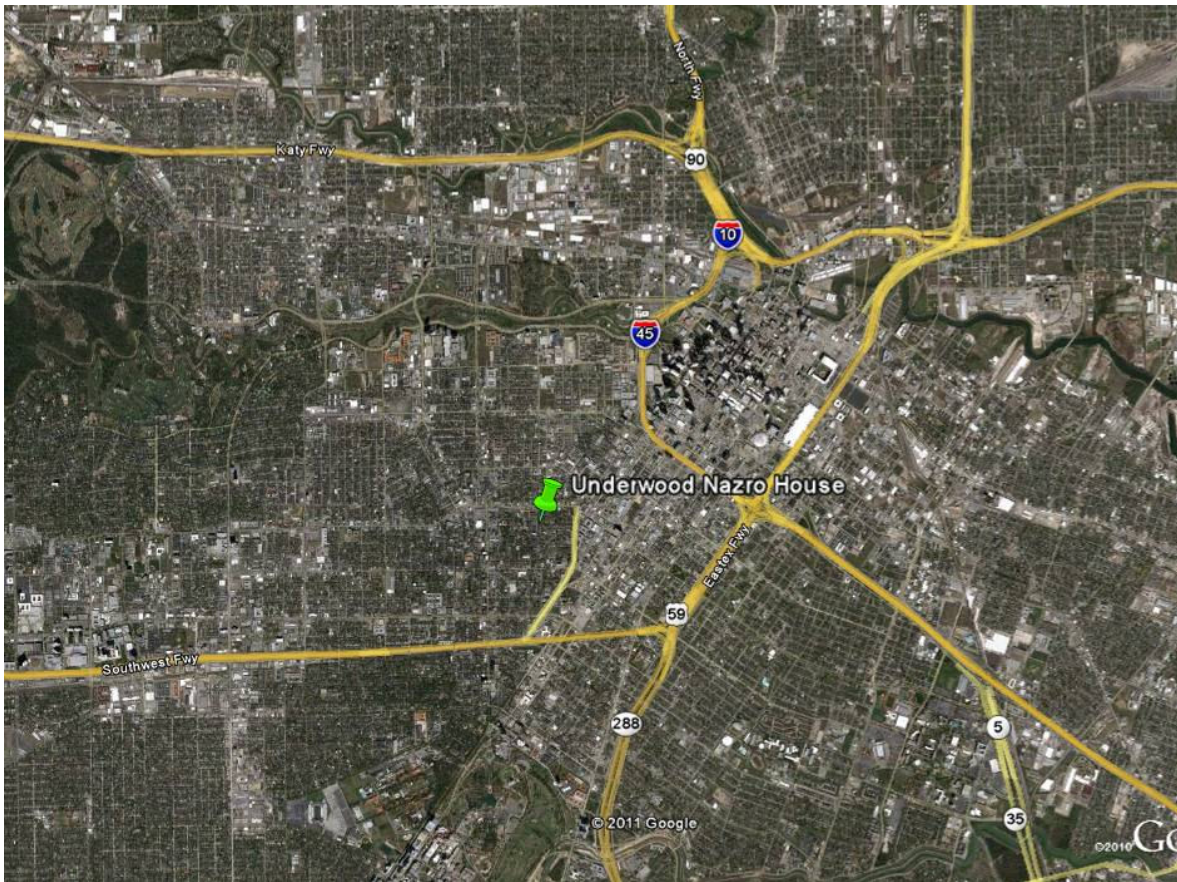
#25 Courtlandt Place, Houston, TX

source: Bing, 2011



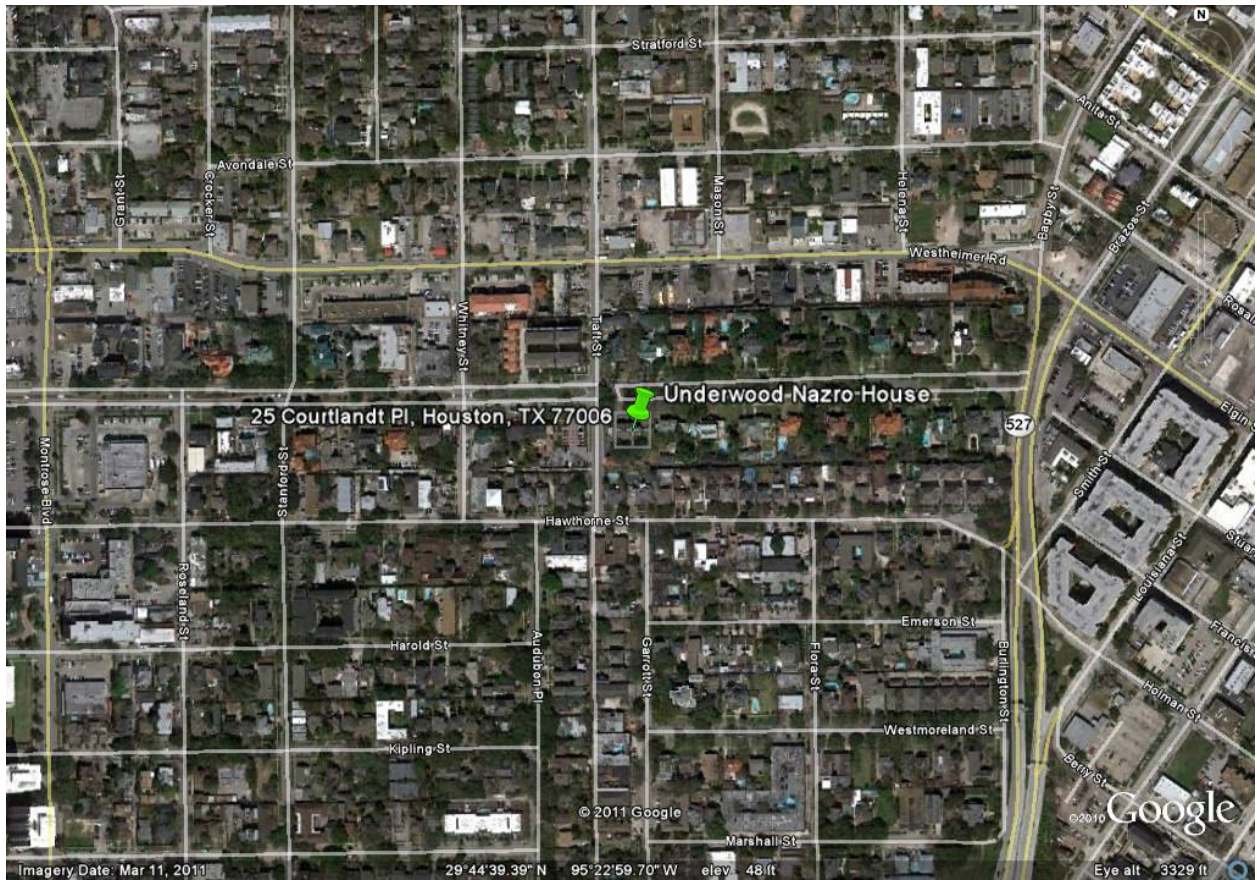
#25 Courtlandt Place, Houston, TX

source: Bing, 2011



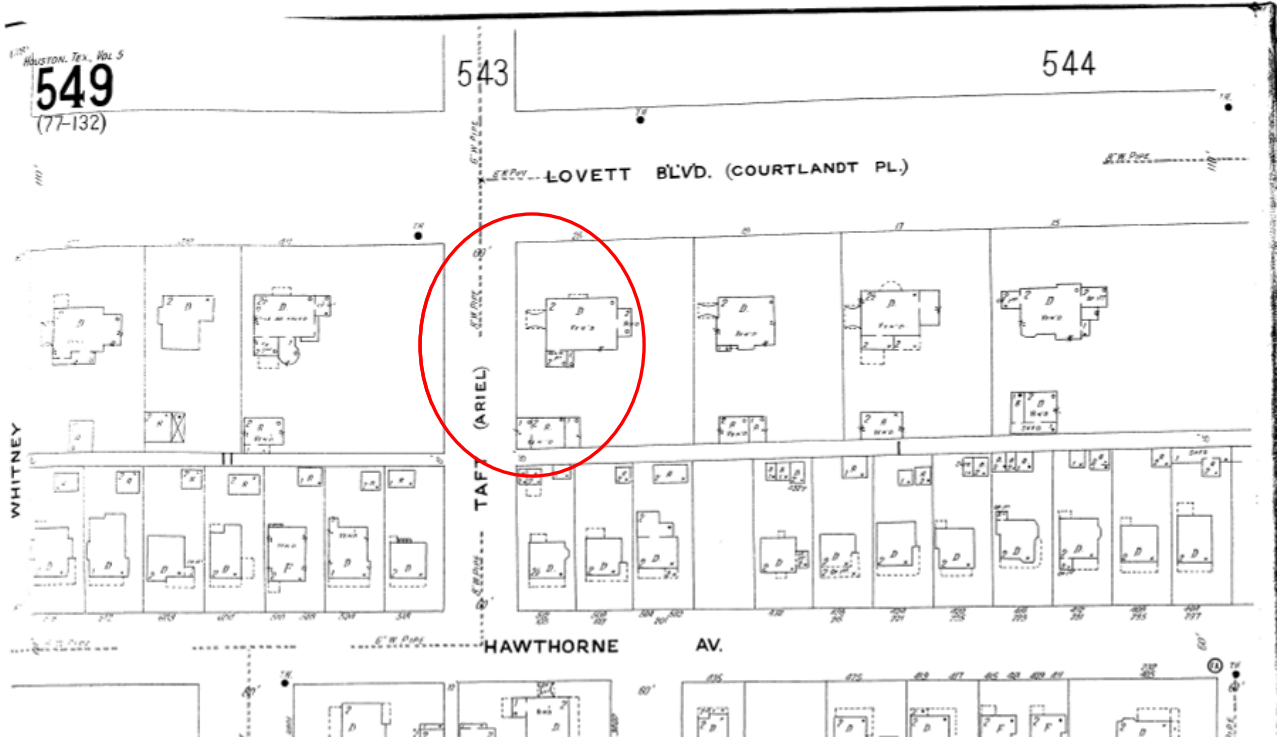
#25 Courtlandt Place, Houston, TX

source: Google Earth, 2011



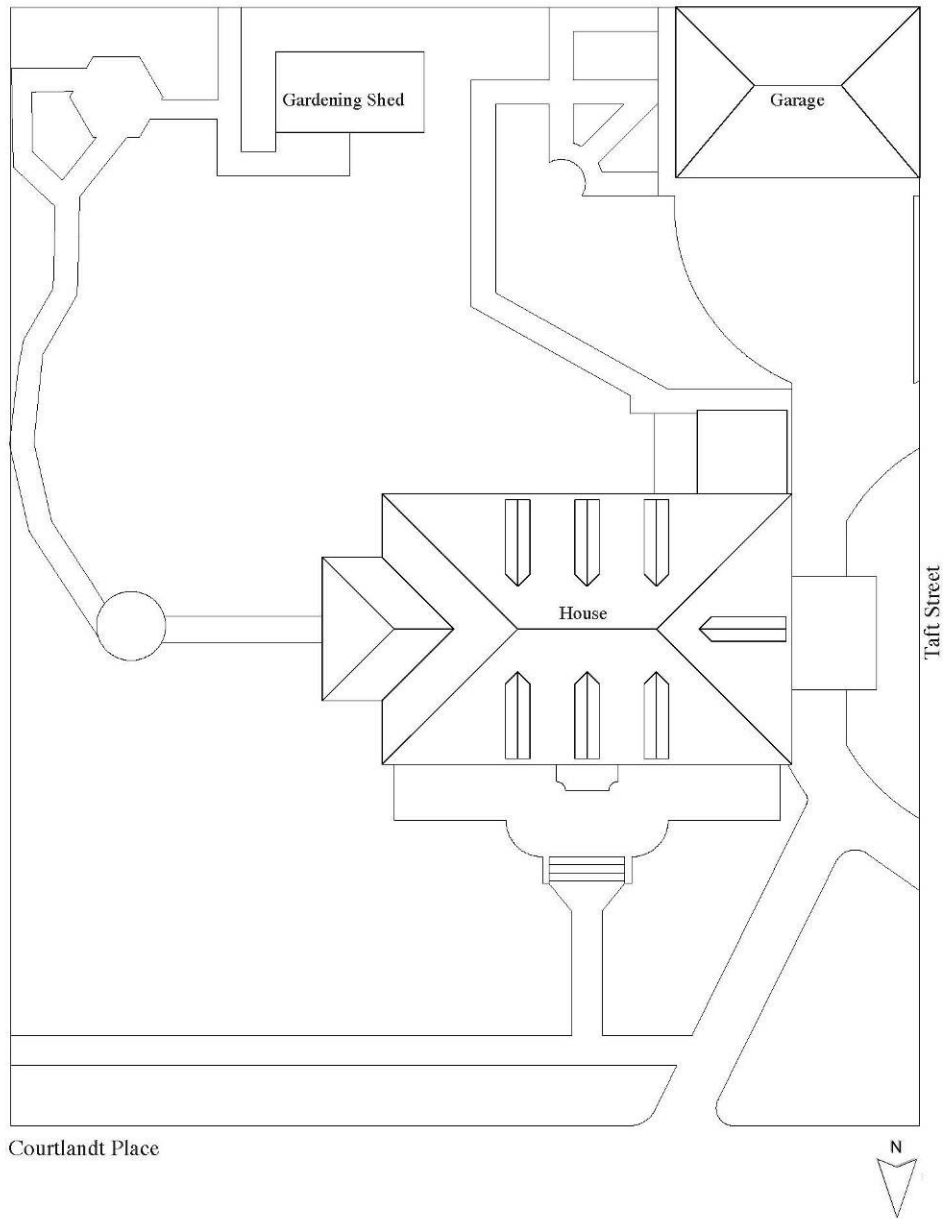
#25 Courtlandt Place, Houston, TX

source: Google Earth, 2011

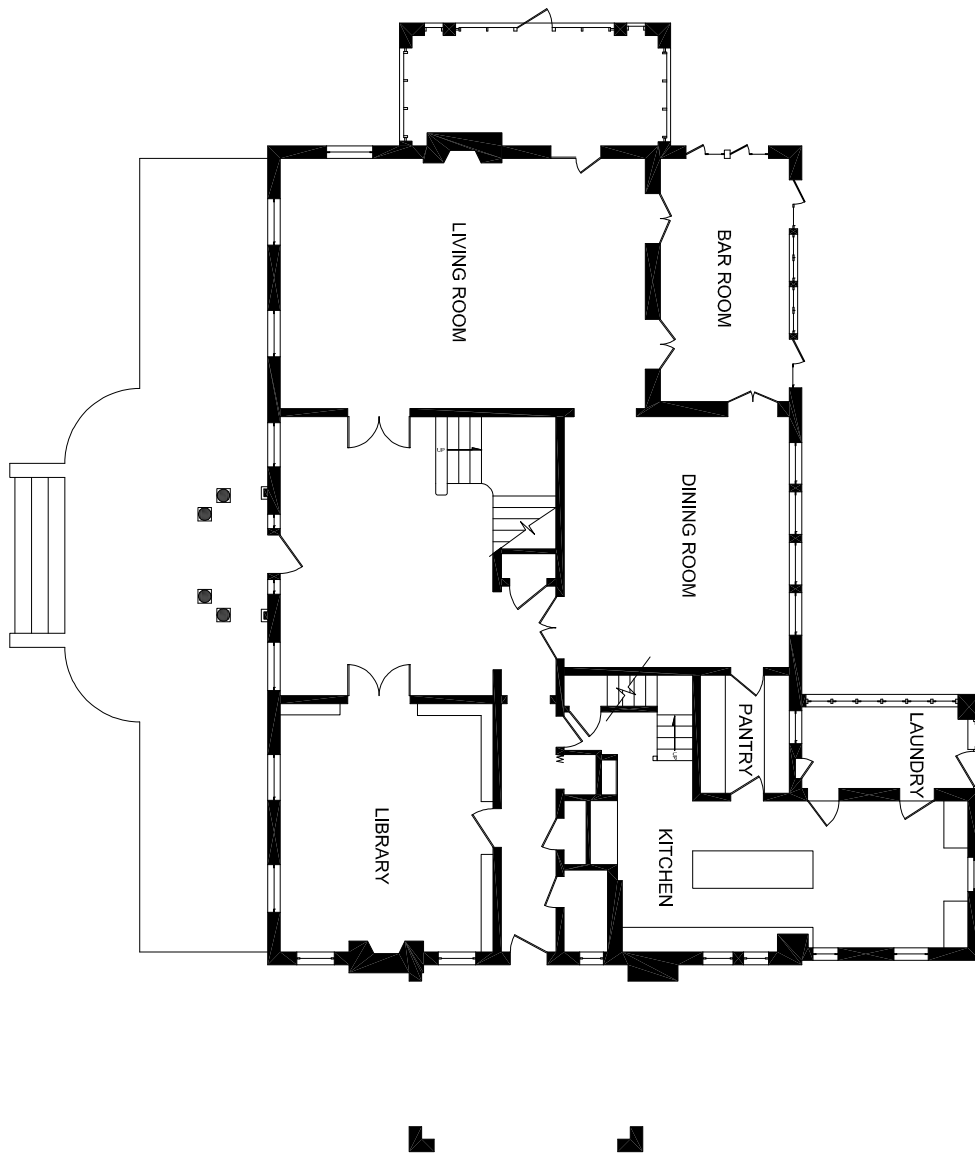


1925 Sanborn Map of #25 Courtland, Place Houston, TX

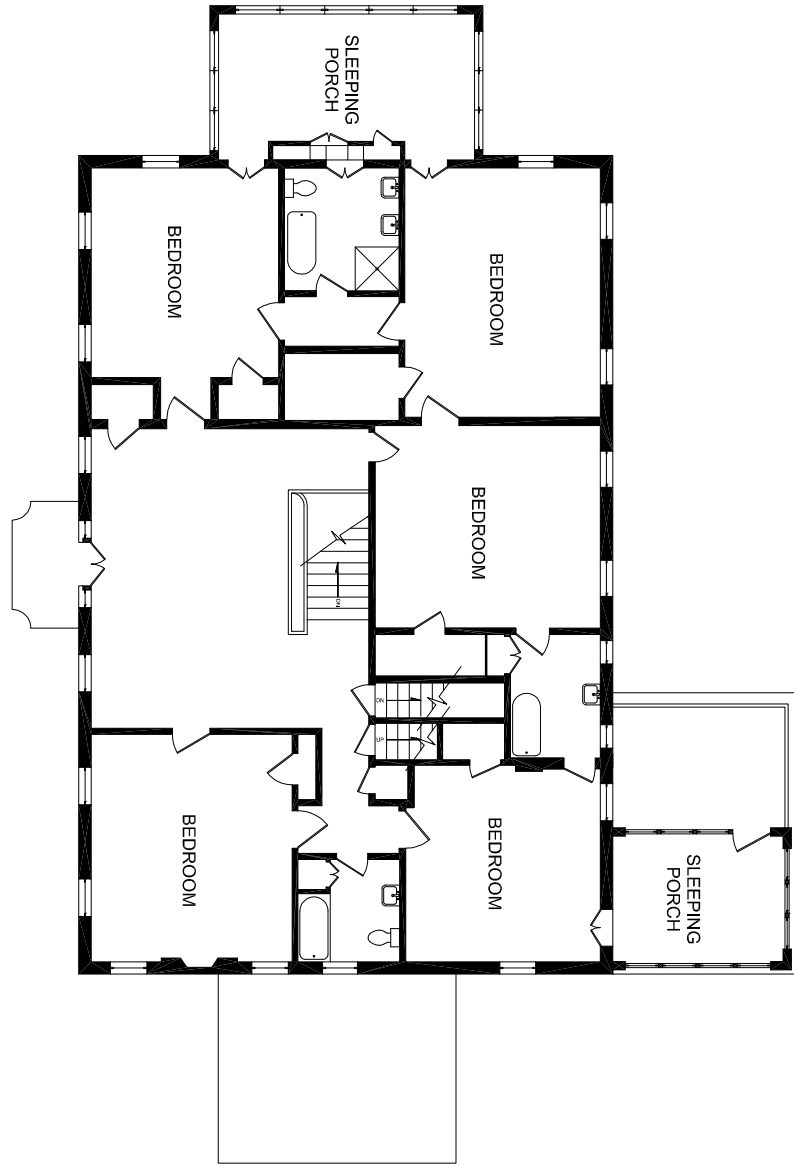
source: Houston Public Library



Site Plan



First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan



#25 Courtlandt Place, north façade, view southeast

Anna Mod for SWCA, 2011



#25 Courtlandt Place, north façade, view south

Grace Cynkar for SWCA, 2011



South façade, view north

Grace Cynkar for SWCA, 2011



Oblique of east and south elevations, view northwest

Grace Cynkar for SWCA, 2011



West elevation, view south
Grace Cynkar for SWCA 2011



West elevation, view north



East elevation, view southwest

Grace Cynkar for SWCA, 2011



East elevation, view west

Grace Cynkar for SWCA, 2011



Oblique of garage east and north elevations, view southwest

Grace Cynkar for SWCA, 2011



Garage, north elevation, view south

Grace Cynkar for SWCA, 2011