

Once Upon a Time in North Park . . .

A New Entrance to the David O. Dryden Historic Neighborhood

In 1911, a talented young contractor, David Owen Dryden moved to North Park from Monrovia in the San Gabriel Valley. Dryden had evolved his own version of the California Craftsman style around Pasadena. He brought his magic in building design to Mission Hills, Loma Portal, and other early San Diego subdivisions in the years between 1911 and 1919. But his most prolific work occurred in North Park. He and his wife, Isabelle Rockwood Dryden, who planted gardens and enhanced interiors, often moved into a newly-built house and lived in it until it was sold. David Dryden's first bungalow at 3120 Granada Street was sold in March 1912. The Dryden family lived for about 15 months in David Dryden's major first quarter project of 1913, a one-story, shingle-sided Craftsman bungalow at 3548 Granada Street. In December of 1915, he completed a bungalow at 3536 28th Street, which would be the family home and center for him to supervise his construction activity for several years.

The five-block area along Pershing Avenue and 28th Street, and between Dwight and Upas Streets encompasses the potential David O. Dryden Historic District. About 16 of Dryden's single-story Craftsman bungalows and gracious two-story homes that typified his style are concentrated in this area. Before this winter, the Pershing Portal Project will be completed, forming an attractive pedestrian entry into the heart of this unique historic North Park neighborhood from Pershing Drive and adjacent park areas. The entry plaza, to be constructed at the Pershing/Upas/28th Street intersection, will permanently terminate 28th Street, and provide a continuous curb line along Upas Street from west to east. The landscaped plaza will be at the same level as the existing sidewalk, contain stamped and colored concrete, and will include plaques commemorating David Dryden and his wife. Concrete towers 7 ½ feet high with copper roofs will mark the entry, and a quote from the late, esteemed historian Donald Covington will be stamped into the pavement between the entry towers.

This project has been years in the making. Mark Weis, City project engineer and North Park resident, said, "I believe the Pershing Portal Project is a realization of the community's efforts to commemorate the uniqueness and historical significance of North Park." A plan to close 28th Street at Upas was initiated in 1987 and championed through the years by many North Park residents. Homeowners gathered traffic data in 1992 to substantiate the heavy traffic on 28th Street from Pershing. In 1993, the City agreed to close 28th Street at Upas if homeowners agreed, and in May of that year, a petition circulated among residents convinced the City to create the cul-de-sac. The original conceptual design of the entry portal was conceived in 1995 and ardently supported, but funding was an issue that took more than 8 years to solve completely. Local residents are providing funding for temporary maintenance and irrigation until the Portal Project can be included in a permanent Maintenance Assessment District.

Submitted by Katherine Hon, History Committee Secretary