

Register of Old Buildings
Macon County Historical Coordinating Council

Address: #7 Montgomery Place
Legal description:
Lot 7, Montgomery Place

Date of original construction: 1923

Name of Original owner: Barkley S. Brooks

History:

1. A partial chain of title follows:

August 3, 1917 - R. R. Montgomery and wife to Barkley S. Brooks -
Lot 7, Montgomery Pl.
May 10, 1954 - Barkley S. Brooks inventory Lot 7 & 8
Nov. 29, 1954 - Maud E. Brooks (wid) et al to Lorenzo E. Cloyd & wf,
Lot 7
March 17, 1955 - Letter, District Director Internal Revenue to
Don Barkley Brooks, executor. Lots 7 & 8
June 6, 1961 - Howard L. Wibbels & wf, Dorothy. Lot 7

2. Data from available city directories:

1924-1954 Barkley S. Brooks
1955- Vacant
1956-1962 Lorenz E. Cloyd Linotype Op - Huston-Patterson
1963- Howard L. Wibbels

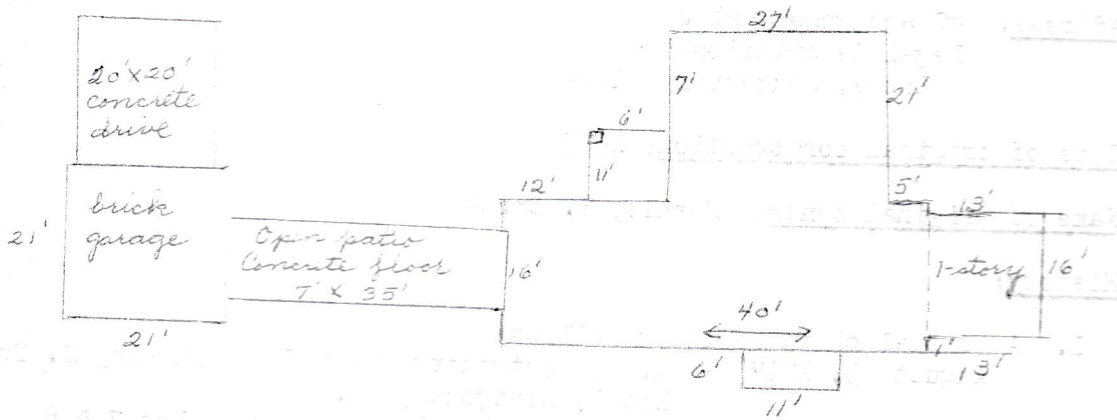
3. Data from assessor's office:

2 story, 10 rooms
Brick foundation, brick exterior, hip roof, med pitch, tile
Interior trim hardwood
Central air conditioning
Natural fireplace
Tile roof 2 car garage

See sketch on opposite page.

Present owner: (Howard L.) Dorothy Wibbels

3. Sketch:



4. The Brooks home built in 1923 at #7 Montgomery Place is a home which incorporates several architectural influences in its style. Its unusual roof line could be contributed to a Japanese influence with its Wrightian influences can be seen in the treatment of the entrance flanked by urns, ribbon windows in the two wings and their placement directly under the eaves. The arcade which links the garage with the home was used by Wright in several of his homes; however, it is a Venetian characteristic.
5. See the following attachments:
 - a. Copy of page 266 from Mabel Richmond's Centennial History regarding the development of Montgomery Place.
 - b. March 8, 1930 obit of R. R. Montgomery who laid out Montgomery Place.
 - c. August 31, 1924 Decatur Review article regarding the grounds at the B. S. Brooks home.
 - d. March 4, 1954 obit, Barkley Brooks (Decatur Review).
 - e. Jan. 23, 1972 Decatur Diary column, His Accomplishments Evident, story of Barkley Brooks.

#7 Montgomery Place



100
100



100
100

Decatur industry ever since. He built a corn sheller, one which would work. It is now used wherever corn is grown. The plant has always been located at Morgan and William streets. A. R. Montgomery entered the employ of the Union Iron works about 1875 as bookkeeper. By 1884 he had risen to the position of secretary-treasurer and general manager, a position he occupied until his death in 1908.

Conrad Ammann began making brick in 1864. So did H. M. Whitmer. William T. Traver that same year began manufacturing tile.

Several marble works were established in 1865. W. H. Grindol began business that year, as did also Peniwell, Brown & Co. In 1867 John Strohm began the same line of business.

Elwood & Co. started making doors, sash, blinds, etc., in 1865. The same year Fred Pahmeyer started a cigar factory. Andrew Kepler began making cigars in 1867.

The Decatur Bottling works was established in 1866 with Fred Kuny as proprietor. D. W. Brenneman started in the liquor business in 1866. That same year H. E. Foster established a lumber business.

In 1867 the linseed oil mill was established at the foot of East Main street by William and Benjamin Sawyer. Later it was run by Hatfield, Taylor & Co. The mill developed rapidly and in a few years was consuming 50,000 bushels of flax seed, doing \$75,000 worth of business annually. This business was finally closed about 1900 due to changes in the industry.

R. R. Montgomery established a real estate, insurance and loan business in 1867, and continued in the same office until his death in 1930. For many years the firm was Montgomery & Shull (F. R. Shull), and later Montgomery & Sons, as it is known today. For years that firm was busy platting and selling real estate additions. In later years Mr. Montgomery developed Montgomery Place, one of Decatur's most beautiful residence districts. Mr. Montgomery served as member of the city council, was a member of the library board, and otherwise was active publicly.

In 1868 Young and Norman established a steam laundry and barber shop. Afterwards it became Norman's laundry.

Taylor and Bradley began making carriages, wagons and buggies in 1869. Their factory was at Water and Cerro Gordo streets. This business came in control of the Wayne brothers, John B. and William J., in 1872, and was a well known establishment for a generation.

Some stores which were in existence for many years had their beginnings in the '60s, among them B. Stine's clothing store, started in 1866, and Dr. A. J. Stoner's drug store on South Park, opened in

*Richmond, Mabel S., Centennial History of
Decatur and Macon County, published
by The Decatur Review, 1930*

R. MONTGOMERY PROMINENT HERE FOR YEARS, DIES

Life Long Resident of Decatur Passes Away After Apoplectic Stroke

ACTIVE IN AFFAIRS

By Mrs. J. C. ...

R. R. Montgomery, aged 86, life long resident of Decatur, died at 5:40 o'clock Friday evening in his home in Montgomery Place following a serious illness lasting more than a week.

About a week ago he suffered an apoplectic stroke from which he never rallied. He had been in a semi-conscious condition for the last three days and several times life was despaired of.

Robert R. Montgomery was born in Decatur in 1843 and except during the years that he served in the Union army in the sixties, all of his life had been passed in this city.

Many Sub-Divisions

For many years he was in the real estate and insurance business, associated with F. R. Shull under the name of Montgomery & Shull. The records disclose that individual by R. R. Montgomery sub-divided and platted several additions to the city of Decatur and that during the years of the life of Montgomery & Shull as a firm, they platted several additions. When they retired from business they had a record of continuous years of business life in their field at that time unequalled in the annals of Decatur. When that firm was dissolved the sons of Mr. Montgomery under the firm name of R. R. Montgomery & Sons, continued the business.

To his acquaintances of many

Apoplexy Fatal



Photo by VanDerwerker.
R. R. MONTGOMERY

seeming splendid physical condition up to the time a week ago when he was stricken with apoplexy. Only a few days before that stroke when the motor of his car was cold and did not respond to the impulse of the starter, he tried to crank the car and in that effort sustained a broken arm when the crank got away from him. Up to the time of the accident he drove his own car although he was 86 years old.

Was Alderman

During the period when the administrative form of municipal administration prevailed in Decatur, R. R. Montgomery served a number of years as second ward alderman. During such service he was regarded as one of the ablest men in the council. The chairmanship then most desired was the finance committee. For not a few reasons, among aldermen, it was regarded as a distinction outstanding to be chairman of the finance committee, for upon the work done by the committee largely depended the success of the administration from a financial standpoint. The mayor had the committee appointed and the chairman of

quently was regarded as the chief lieutenant of the mayor among the aldermen, and often his confidential advisor. F. R. Montgomery probably served as many years as chairman of the council finance committee in proportion to the years that he was an alderman, as any man ever in the city council of Decatur.

On Library Board

His part in civic affairs was not limited to his service as an alderman. He served many years as a member of the library board and as a member of the board of education. Mr. Montgomery was rather averse to personal publicity. He was ever pleased to give his time and thought to public work and preferred the library board and board of education to the city council because in those boards, during the period in which he served, there was less publicity than in the city council.

Lived Retired Life

In recent years, naturally Mr. Montgomery did not actively participate in business affairs, but always he was keenly alive to the general trend of business and was fully informed concerning details in which he might be interested.

Lived Retired Life

In recent years, naturally Mr. Montgomery did not actively participate in business affairs, but always he was keenly alive to the general trend of business and was fully informed concerning details in which he might be interested.

In business life he had been known as a man of action, one who must be employed. His acquaintances of long standing often wondered how it was possible that one so long accustomed to business activities could withdraw from his excitement and inspirations and be contented in a life of idleness.

Superbark Interests

He did not retire to idleness. When seemingly he quit business life he did not surrender the large interest he had acquired. All remained in his control; he supervised, leaving details to his son.

Hours which the unthinking believed he passed in idleness, were given to superintending the work of his son, who was a successful contractor from a financial standpoint. The mayor had the committee appointed and the chairman of

his inheritance to which he added adjacent tracts, many years ago the 40-acre tract known as Montgomery's Stock Farm. As the city expanded to the west and touched the farm, the place more commonly known as "Montgomery's Woods." When platted and sold for building sites it became known as Montgomery Place.

Retained Wooded Tract

For his own building site he retained a wooded tract of several acres. Long before the public anticipated the subdivision of the 40-acre tract, he had considered it from several angles. If had long been one of the places he delighted to visit and enjoy the quiet of the woods.

He never could bring himself to the decision of simply cutting the place into 40-foot building lots, nor could he make up his mind to subdivide in any way that portion which he retained for his home site, because, he said, it would mar the beauty of the tract.

Grows Flowers

When he ceased to be active in every day business affairs he gave much study to the improvement of the grounds about his home where during the growing season he constantly demonstrated in growing flowers. He studied birds and in the grounds there were many bird houses designed to attract such birds as nest in houses rather than in the boughs of the trees.

The coming of visitors to the beautiful grounds was a keen delight to him. All who came to admire and not mar the beauty of the place were welcome even though strangers to him.

The wooded tract about his home was a playground for many children. Many times he joined in their sports. During the winter of 1928-29 when some children were skating on the lagoon at the east end of his grounds, he put on his skates and joined in the games of the youngsters on the ice.

Skating His Favorite

When a boy, skating was his favorite winter sport. When he was 80 years of age he demonstrated that not only could he skate straight away, but could execute many of the fancy movements which interested him when a boy.

Coasting on the hills in Montgomery's woods was a rare sport for some of the children in the west end of Decatur. Last winter Mr. Montgomery said that in recent years he had enjoyed few if any things more than watching the children coasting on the hills about his home.

Leaves Four Children

One of his acquaintances commented upon the active interest of children. An intimate acquaintance replied, "He is not old; he is merely mature." He leaves his wife, who was Miss Evelyn Bixby, and four children: Dufay and R. Jay Montgomery of Decatur; Mrs. Cora M. Black of Cleveland, O.; Mrs. Lola M. Perry of Marshfield, Ore., all children by a former marriage.

Decatur Public Library
Decatur, Illinois
March 8, 1930

DIES



Barkley S. Brooks, 91, Decatur retired architect, died last night in Decatur and Macon County Hospital.

Barkley Brooks, Architect, *March 4,* Dies at 91 *1954*

Barkley Selby Brooks, 91, retired Decatur architect and builder, died at 9:30 p.m. yesterday in Decatur and Macon County Hospital.

Mr. Brooks, for many years associated with the firm of Brooks, Bramhall & Dague, architects, served as an architect on most of the big building jobs in Decatur during his 60-year career.

The projects included Decatur High School, the junior high schools, Millikin University, Decatur and Macon County Hospital, Macon County Tuberculosis Sanatorium, City Public Hospital, Wabash Hospital and Westminster Presbyterian Church.

He also designed Montgomery Place and built his own home at 7 Montgomery Pl. and the William L. Shellabarger residence at 1 Montgomery Pl.

Mr. Brooks was born on a farm near Moweaqua Feb. 23, 1863, a son of Joseph Wright and Martha Damarius Selby Brooks.

He worked a short time in Hastings, Neb., and came to Decatur in 1894. He was married to Maude Ethel Peck in Decatur Feb. 15, 1898.

He was a member of First Methodist Church and the Masonic Lodge.

Besides his wife, Mr. Brooks leaves a daughter, Mrs. Bernice S. Warren, Decatur; a son, Don B., Decatur; two brothers, Stephen, Decatur, and Charles, Stonington, and a sister, Mrs. Alta Middlesworth, Alameda, Calif.

He also leaves one granddaughter. Three sisters and a brother preceded him in death.

The body is in the Dawson & Wikoff Funeral Home. Arrangements are incomplete.

Decatur, Illinois, Sunday, January 23, 1972



This picture was taken in 1948, when the Brookses celebrated their 50th anniversary.

His Accomplishments Evident

By Cheryl D. Peck

The evidence of Barkley S. Brooks' accomplishments is everywhere in Decatur.

One need only drive past Millikin University or Westminster Presbyterian Church or through Montgomery Place to view his work.

Brooks, who was a Decatur architect and builder, was born on a farm south of Moweaqua.

His father died when he was 11 years old, and his mother was left with seven children.

They knew hard times, and young Brooks learned carpentry and studied architecture in his spare time.

The family moved to Moweaqua; and when Brooks had no odd jobs to do, he was sent to school for a few months, receiving the only schooling he ever had in a brick building which long ago stood across the street from Snyder Park.

Whenever Brooks was asked from what university he graduated, he always answered truthfully "Illinois."

For though his name was never written in the registrar's office at the University of Illinois, he learned life's hardest lessons in the state of Illinois.

When Brooks decided to become a carpenter, he went to contractors known as Jackson and Riley and asked for a job.

He was told he could have one when work came in, but it was scarce; and they had no money with which to pay wages.

Brooks then informed them that he was willing to work without pay. His offer was accepted; but after a week's hearty cooperation with the firm, they recognized his value, and he was paid a small sum for his services.

The building season was soon over but the carpenter had no intention of remaining idle.

Being quite versatile, he entered a barber shop and asked for a job. During several winters, he cut hair and shaved chins.

Then life began to look good to Brooks. He was young and strong, he loved work, and used not only his hands, but his brain, spending much of his leisure time studying books devoted to architecture and building.

Surv. 2, and P.

Decatur

Jan. 23, 1972
Diary

He worked a short time in Hastings, Neb., and then came to Decatur in 1894. At that time he was 25 years old.

He went into the office of a Decatur architect where he was fortunate in working side by side with an expert from the University of Illinois.

In time, Brooks saw his own name on his own sign, in varying combinations throughout the years, and then the sign read "Brooks, Bramhall and Dague."

That firm became one of the best known architectural firms of Central Illinois.

The Oakland School was the first school building erected by Brooks, followed by the E. A. Gastman School. Of the latter, however, he was not the architect but found it necessary to remake many of the original plans.

When a slump in business came which caused a cessation of building operations, Brooks went to the Huff Planing Mill as its superintendent.

He held that position until building prospects again became brighter.

Stephen Decatur High School is another of Brooks' projects.

though of all which he erected, he felt more genuine pride in Roosevelt junior high school.

In 1927, Brooks was actively engaged in work on Westminster Presbyterian Church.

Brooks married Maude Ethel Peck on Feb. 15, 1898 in Decatur.

He and his wife lived at 7 Montgomery Place, a home which he built.

He also built the William L. Shellabarger residence at 1 Montgomery Place and designed Montgomery Place.

During his 60-year career, he served as an architect on most of the big building jobs in Decatur.

The projects included all the

junior high schools, Millikin University, Decatur and Macon County (now Decatur Memorial) Hospital, Macon County Tuberculosis Sanatorium, City Public Hospital, Wabash Memorial Hospital and Westminster Presbyterian Church.

Also, Dawson & Wikoff Funeral Home, Monson's Funeral Home, Hamman's storage house, Oakes Mfg. Co. and the Decatur Post Office.

Brooks died at 91 in Decatur and Macon County Hospital in 1954. His wife died a year later.

Brooks was always especially eager to get one point across to young people.

"Boys and girls don't need a college on every corner or wealth to get somewhere," he pointed out.

"You've got to have a gift, but then it's up to you," he said.