

## 4. MODESTO ASH TREE

Sierra & 3<sup>RD</sup> Streets (planted before 1911)



**Landmark Preservation Commission Resolution:** October 16, 1989  
**Designated by City Council:** October 9, 1990

**Cultural Significance:** The tree was discovered in 1927 by L. S. Brooks and identified as a new kind of tree a variant of the original ash. The Modesto Ash was one of a group of Arizona Ashes planted by Modesto's first superintendent of Parks, L.A. Rose, who said the tree came from the Francher Creek Nursery. The tree was planted sometime after a visit to Modesto by John McClaren, the founder of Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, who at one time supervised the planting of trees in Modesto Parks. Nearing 90 years of age and well past the expected life span for an ash tree, the tree stands in West Side Park, just a few feet from the Maddux Youth Center at Third and F Streets. Nine steel props support its lower limbs and it rises 80 feet at its highest point the tree has endured hard-hitting storms, a near-fatal "heart attack," a concrete implant, and installation of various ingenious man-made support systems. The Modesto Ash was heavily propagated from the 1930s through the 1960s. At one time, Modesto's street and park plantings boasted 15,000 Modesto ash trees. The Modesto Ash was known as one of the best trees available from 1945 to 1960 and in the 1950s was designated as one of the ten special feature trees on the west coast by a major San Francisco bay area horticulture group. Unfortunately, popularity began to fade as the fungus disease known as anthracnose hit hard, turning leaves prematurely brown and dry in the spring. In addition, roots were more invasive than expected as the trees aged, cracking sidewalks and driveways. Still, many neighborhoods in Modesto are grateful each summer for the shade provided by "our" trees.