

Old Homes of Fair Oaks

THE CORBITT HOUSE By Sally Dunbar, Old Homes Editor

7957 California Avenue, Fair Oaks

Whenever a Fair Oaks historic home comes on the market for sale, there is always a collective holding of breath that the new owner values historic preservation over the construction of a new Burger King. That breath holding occurred in early 2012 as new owners took title to the Corbitt House on California Avenue, immediately across from the Johnson House, just up from Plaza Park. Built in 1902 or '03, it is one of our early homes of Fair Oaks.

As it turns out, we needn't have worried. Globalvest Corporation, who



purchased the home in January of 2012, has faithfully preserved the historic ambiance of the Corbitt House, with the help of Fair Oaks builder Steve Olsen.

With no foundation, rotted floorboards, resident chickens and a kitchen the size of a matchbox, they had no choice but to substantially rebuild, including a new foundation. “We called it The Birdcage for a while,” said Globalvest Manager Steve Sogard. “You could see right through the studs to the outside.” They rebuilt with the same floor plan, window placements, skylights, front elevation and roofline. They added a wing on the back for a modern kitchen, and a scenic deck under the gigantic Heritage Oak tree with a giant trunk. “We call it The Fairest of Fair Oaks”, says Sogard, speaking affectionately of the tree. While early photos document the home’s birth between ‘02 and ‘03 (that’s it, peeking out from behind the Murphy Building in about 1905), the Corbitt family was not the first occupant. The McMurray sisters, who owned a boarding house nearby and a number of other Fair Oaks homes, likely built it. The sisters appeared to have owned it in the 1910 census. Marcel and Amy Corbitt arrived in Fair Oaks from Tennessee in 1918, first living at the Boone Ranch on Minnesota Avenue, until purchasing the Corbitt

house in 1921. They ran the first ice cream parlor in Fair Oaks. Upon selling the parlor, Marcell did carpentry work around the village, and in 1930 became the custodian of the Fair Oaks Grammar School until his retirement in 1955, when they moved to Illinois.



While the Corbitt House is on its own parcel, the home next door (to the left, at 7953) has always been included with its ownership. Prior to 1940 there were three homes on the two lots. Marcell tore down one, moved another, then built the existing home on the left for daughter Annie Mai Hall. Annie then lived in the left home (7953) while parents Marcell and Amy lived at 7957 – the current Corbitt House. Daughter Annie maintained ownership of both homes after her parents moved until 1980. For the next few



years both homes were owned by the Withrow Partnership, until they were sold to members of the Raphael Medical Group in 1986, who ran a pharmacy in one home and medical offices in the other. This brings us to 2012 when Globalvest purchased both homes from the Raphael Group. Globalvest rents out the home on the left, and their private equity business is housed in the preserved Corbitt House.

