

Old Homes of Fair Oaks

Sally Dunbar

The Alvin L. Heim Home - 4940 Minnesota Ave



The history of Fair Oaks is full of intertwining families, and so it is with this month's Old Home feature - the Alvin L. Heim Home at 4940 Minnesota Ave.

Alvin came to Fair Oaks from Indiana in 1909, buying 10 acres on Minnesota, tucked against what is now the North Ridge Golf Course. He married Vena Bishop in 1915, and had three children - Adolph, Alvin W., and daughter Thalia (born 1922).

By 1929, it appears Alvin Heim had built the two-story home which still stands on Minnesota — although it has been substantially added to.

Alvin developed quite an orchard of mixed pecan and almond trees, using the latest progressive methods. He was also quite civic minded, becoming the Assessor of the Fair Oaks Irrigation District, a Socialist Candidate for State Legislature, a candidate for State Superintendent of Education, and a Socialist nominee for Congress.

As we fast forward through time, we witness the home pass to four additional families. The Heim children subdivided the land in 1959, selling the home on 3/4 acre to Jeanette Whittlesey, who in turn sold to Bryant and Marlene Serrao in 1985. In 1996, the home passed to Eddie and Linda Riggs, who are the current owners.

Eddie recalls a day about ten years ago when a woman approached him, curious about the home. It was youngest daughter Thalia, then 88, who recounted her remembrances of the cabin they lived in “over by the golf course”, as her father built the home. She remembers coming up the driveway in a horse-drawn cart to view the progress. She pointed out to Eddie the trees that were planted in honor of each child - trees that are still there today (although storms have taken their toll recently).



Evelyn & Al Heim
1983

But there is another family that is part of this home's history, which many Historical Society members will remember. The Earl Ricketts family lived nearby on San Juan Avenue, and daughter Evelyn Ricketts married young Alvin W. ("Al"), becoming Evelyn Heim. Al, Evelyn and Thalia all went to San Juan High School together — with Evelyn and Thalia in the same class. Evelyn and Al later built their home on 2 acres on Kentucky Lane in Fair Oaks, in 1947.

Today, Eddie and Linda still tend to the pecan and almond trees Alvin planted. During various remodeling projects, they have uncovered old oil cans and bleached driftwood used as fire blocks. They have kept the old claw foot tub, and some original windows, and have stripped layers of paint off the original fir flooring and clear-heart redwood baseboards. A few rooms still have the original lath and plaster, as well. Of particular interest is the fireplace. We know from Evelyn Heim's memoirs that Alvin was a bricklayer, proficient in building fireplaces. His original fireplace is still in use, with vents much like the modern Heat-O-Lator.

The Riggs still cook on the Chambers Pastel Yellow Gas Range. In 2005, The Riggs added a 2800 square-foot addition, which necessitated the removal of a 300-year-old oak tree which had blanketed the property, but was dying. As the rotted limbs came down, Eddie realized how lucky they were to take the tree down before its weight crushed what was underneath.

