

Old Homes of Fair Oaks



First house about 1898



Second house about 1914

Style – Farmhouse

Owners – Monson family, 1896 – 1990

Joe Dobrowolski brought these houses to our attention when he discovered a file while moving the contents of the History Center. The file contained photos and documents of an attempt by the Fair Oaks Historical Society in 1990 to save the historic Monson house in the left photo above from demolition. The family was in the process of subdividing and developing the property. Unfortunately, no one could find a taker, so it was torn down. The second Monson house, on the right, burned. The file, along with information from FOHS member Blanche Rosevear, whose husband was Neils Monson's grandson, led to this article.

Neils Monson was born in Sweden in 1872 and emigrated to Illinois in 1891. In January, 1896 he headed west on the second excursion train to the Fair Oaks Colony sponsored by the Howard & Wilson Publishing Company of Chicago. He purchased ten acres just north and east of Kenneth Avenue and Winding Way and planted orchards, which he successfully farmed until his death in 1942.

In 1898 he married neighbor Helena Roediger and started his family in the little house shown above left. He had four children, one of whom died in infancy. In 1913, with his fourth child on the way, he decided that the 16 by 24 foot house was getting a little crowded and built his second house, above right, in front of the small house and closer to the frontage on Kenneth Avenue.

The Monson family owned the property continuously until 1990 when they decided to subdivide. The Kenneth Avenue access was closed off and the eleven lots were made accessible from the east on Rolling Green Way.

Many thanks to Blanche for sharing her family history and photos with us.

