

Old Homes of Fair Oaks

Sally Dunbar

Hauser/Lemmon home, 7772 Magnolia Ave, Fair Oaks



Since the early 1900s, anyone traveling up Magnolia Ave near New York Avenue has marveled at the sweet farmhouse on the hill, under the massive magnolia tree. The home was built prior to 1902, and from the street it remains much as it must have looked back then. It most likely was built by the land's carpenter/owner E. S. Smith. Smith was one of the original investors in the Fair Oaks Colony in 1895, having left his job as postmaster in South Haven Michigan, and with his wife and two children came to seek fortune in the land of opportunity. Already in their seventies when they arrived, the Smiths stayed until June of 1908, when they sold the home on 5 acres to Allen B. Lemmon, and returned to South Haven.

Lemmon was a comptroller and chief accountant for the Fair Oaks Water District. Upon Lemmon's move to Santa Rosa in October 1919, the home was sold to William and Myra Fehr, who owned the Fehr Products Company, makers of mayonnaise, sauces and dressings. During Fehr's ownership the property, which encompassed 13.5 acres of land, produced olives. In 1922, Fehr contracted to deliver all olives produced from 1922 through 1928 to the California Olive Growers Corp, per documents recorded with the County. However sometime before 1927, Fehr sold his 13.5 acres to the Swiss-born Caspar Hauser family, that maintained ownership at least through the 1950s.



Caspar was an acclaimed apiarist— raiser of honey bees— which he raised all over Sacramento, Yolo, Colusa and Tehama counties. He took top prizes at the CA State Fair for his honey, maintaining 1700 separate colonies. He held posts at the State Bee Keepers Association, as well. An interesting side note is that Caspar's son, George, and wife Lucy bought the 5 acres on Magnolia to the West, in 1927. While Caspar maintained the business end, George worked to maintain the hives. George and Lucy worked to fix up their own home, and improved their own orange production from 8 tons per year to 40 tons. Four years later, in January of 1931, Lucy came home from a doctor's appointment to find their home had burned to the ground. All they owned was transformed to charred rubble in their basement. They rebuilt, and by April had a new

home. The following January, however, disaster struck again with the notorious hard freeze of 1932, killing nearly all their beloved orange trees. After many tears, but with a drive to press on, they replanted with grapes, persimmons, and 5 acres of peaches.

By the 1980's the original 13.5 acres had been whittled down to a smaller 2.37 acres with homes along New York Ave sprouting up on the former farm. The John and Janice Speth family owned the home for many years, eventually selling to the current owners in 2006—the Applegate family. Through the years, the various owners have lovingly maintained the charm and character of the early 1900s home. While a newer family room and remodeled kitchen have modernized the rear of the home, the original home remains substantially as it was when new. The front porch and railings exude the original charm of the farmhouse on the hill that has captured passerbys for more than a century.

The Historical Society's recent contact from a firm conducting a cultural resources study for the current owners, indicates an interest in developing the acreage. We can only hope the historic home will remain.



Mr. and Mrs. George Hauser, Sr., with their first two grandchildren, George III and Harold (baby). The faithful red dog was known as "Morey Amsterdam."