

Historical Ramblings

A Moving Experience

In the 1960's and 1970's, during a period of rapid growth in Lompoc, it was more expeditious to demolish buildings than to move or rehabilitate them for other uses. During this time, many stately Victorian homes and downtown buildings disappeared from the landscape. The philosophy of the time seemed to be "It's old, get rid of it." Because of that philosophy, much of Lompoc's character was obliterated to make way for parking lots and nondescript retail centers. If the city fathers had taken a cue from their predecessors, perhaps we would still enjoy some of the elegant structures that met their demise on the receiving end of a wrecking ball.

In the early part of the 20th century, the prevailing philosophy embraced the reuse of buildings. Moving a building or home was cost effective. If a structure was sound, it was moved to a new location, saving their new owners large sums of money. In 1901, for instance, the Andrew L. Huyck home, which had been built at Renwick and Ocean Avenues, was moved into town by a team of 30 horses. It found a new home at Cypress Avenue and I Street and is today the 1890 House, Lompoc's only Bed and Breakfast. In the 1980's Chuck and Barbara Arnold purchased the home and lovingly restored it, saving it once again from certain demolition.

The Odd Fellows building at the corner of Ocean Ave. and H Street was constructed in 1905. To make room, the former two-story Odd Fellows Building was moved less than a block south on H Street to become the meeting hall of the Eagles Lodge.

Lompoc's oldest church building, now the home of Grace Temple Missionary Baptist Church on the southwest corner of Cypress Ave. and H Street is really two of Lompoc's oldest church buildings – the Methodist Episcopal Church South and Methodist Episcopal Church North. The two church buildings stood across from each other on H Street. In 1908, the buildings were united and improved with the spires and stained glass that have made the church a familiar downtown landmark.

The former home of Leo and Ida Archer in the 200 block of North G Street began its life as LaSalle School, one of Lompoc's many country schools. The building was moved from LaSalle Canyon into town in 1911.

The Tutt-Gury home, originally located on the southwest corner of Walnut Ave. and H Street found was relocated to South J Street, when it was moved in the 1920's. The elaborate home still stands at that location.

In 1927, when the Lompoc Theatre was constructed, the Harness Shop of Guadalupe Rojas was moved from its H Street location to the rear of the property, where it still stands, attached to the theatre building. Its relocation preserved it as the oldest building in the downtown area.

The Moore family, enlarging their landmark store in 1927, moved the First Christian Church from the southwest corner of Cypress Ave. and I Street to the rear of their store in the 100 block of South I Street. It was made an integral part of the store. From across I Street one can still see the pitched roof of the original church.

In 1937, Ernest Moore was planning to build a new home on South H Street. The existing home was moved to the 400 block of South F Street to make room for the new structure.

As late as the 1980's some enterprising property owners still recognized the value of moving older structures. The 1880's home of Marguerite Hall which was located near the present site of Lompoc Valley Ford, was moved to Mesa Oaks, where it was placed among a grove of Eucalyptus trees and restored. Today, the home looks like it has been there forever. A short time later, Mesa Oaks was the recipient of another North H Street home, when the McCabe house was moved from its site near the present Baker's Square Restaurant.

Clearly, moving structures is costly but, in the long run, saves money otherwise spent on new construction. The added benefit is the preservation of some irreplaceable history.

