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**The February meeting will be held
Wednesday Feb 20th
7:30 p.m.
Willmore Community Police Center
910 Daisy Ave.**

THE WILLMORE CITY ENTERPRISE
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THE WILLMORE CITY ENTERPRISE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WILLMORE CITY HERITAGE ASSOCIATION FEB 2008

February 2008 Meeting

Even though it still seems like the middle of winter, Spring is just right around the corner and some of you will probably be thinking of doing a little gardening soon. Many have asked to have someone speak on gardening tips and we are very fortunate that Kathleen Irvine, a landscape designer from Blue Gecko Landscape, has offered to share some of her gardening wisdom with us. Do you know what type of plants are more suitable to an Arts & Crafts home compared to a Victorian style? Neither do I. But Kathleen does and she is also very experienced in which plants are more drought tolerant and which types of irrigation systems work best for which types of landscaping. Kathleen has also offered to write a short article for the newsletter each month with some other gardening tips. (See page 3) Please join Kathleen and your neighbors on Wednesday February 20th at 7:30 p.m. at the Willmore Community Police Center (910 Daisy Ave).

A Code Enforcement meeting will be held for all Block Captains at 6:30 p.m.

"School House" update

Progress on our seemingly never ending project, the "School House" at 419 Daisy Ave. is actually coming along quite nicely. The contractor is working pretty steadily. The interior walls actually no longer have gaping holes, all the rough plumbing and electrical is done, bathroom tile has been installed, kitchen cabinets are being installed as I type, some of the interior doors will go in next week as well as the kitchen tile, and so on and so on. Lots of progress! And the good news is that apparently the new roof did NOT leak. Yeah! Those of you who have been in Willmore less than 7 or 8 years may not fully appreciate our enthusiasm at this progress but trust me when I say that it is HUGE. When you have worked on your own home as long as Willmore has been working on this project you will definitely appreciate the perseverance (or insanity) of those involved. We will be having a landscaping work party as soon as the interior work is nearing completion so get those gloves and work boots ready.

Historical Personality of 517 West Ninth

I got a message from my neighbor that someone who had lived in my house many years ago had stopped by around New Year's. My neighbor knew that I'm trying to restore my porch and had questions about it, so he took the guy's number. I called, and what followed was a long, fascinating conversation with Marty Erickson, and answers to many of the puzzling questions about my house. His parents, the Ericksons, lived in the house for 50 years. It was Marty's understanding that the house was the first one on the block in 1910 and was built by the superintendent of schools.

According to Marty, his parents bought the house in the spring of 1945 for a purchase price of \$11,000 when he was about 9 years old.

His parents eventually moved out of the house in 1995 when Marty and his siblings convinced them that the neighborhood was just too dangerous...gang members had taken to running through the backyard and hopping the fence to get away from police on a regular basis, and it was scaring the bejeezus out of them.

Marty's folks moved out here from the Midwest with a bunch of rabbits and chickens which they kept in pens in the backyard for awhile.

Marty's dad owned a gas station on the corner of Anaheim and Cedar, and his mom kept the garden beautiful, including lots of roses (many of which are still here).

T H E W I L L M O R E
Historical Personality of 517 West Ninth cont.

Marty's dad was an avid do-it-yourselfer, and did most of the "updating" to the house. Marty says his dad didn't quite have an eye for design or decoration though, and painted over the beautiful oak front door (apparently original), removed the round half-columns, poured a concrete porch and moved the stairs to open to the driveway on the side for convenience. In fact, Marty was describing some of the things that they had left in the garage (like tools...and table legs)...and some of them are still there!

His dad also pulled out the clawfoot tub from the bathroom, which had come to rest in the garden when I bought it...along with several old sinks. That, along with the plumbing pipe used as handrails and conduits (and even bent into an outdoor light fixture) in various places in the house led me to believe a previous owner had some kind of interest in plumbing.

The garage/bonus room was added some years later, and cost all of \$1,250. They also added the plastic-roofed pergola in the backyard at some point. Once in the 90's, a guy running from the police jumped onto the pergola and his foot went through the plastic roof and he got stuck...which is how the cops caught up with him and arrested him.

Marty is 71 now and lives in northern California with his wife, who also remembers the house. He lived in the house through his college years when he claimed the unheated bonus room as his bedroom. It must've been some cooold years with that room (currently my office) as a bedroom.

When the neighborhood started really going downhill, a tragic thing happened. A kid who lived in the apartments behind the garage apparently used to run down the driveway, climb up the fence onto the garage and jump from the garage to his apartment to avoid the wrath of his father by going in the window instead of the front door. All the kids using the yard as a pass-through at night was scaring Marty's parents, so he and his wife decided to go to the apartments and chat with the parents. Marty and his wife spent 21 years living in Ecuador, so they spoke fluent Spanish and were able to politely ask the parents to tell their son not to run through the yard and disturb his aging parents.

About an hour later they heard sirens and a commotion by the apartments. The kid was found hanging in the garage. They found out later that he had been regularly beaten by his dad and it was determined he had hanged himself in order to avoid another beating.

Even as the neighborhood was getting scary (and I assured him that it's no longer how it was in the 90's...he said they heard gunshots every day), he always called the house "the oasis," because it was like a little green island in the middle of the mess. Even now, when things look a little dodgy in the 'hood, that's how I look at it as well.


But the best story he told me was about the fertile garden in the backyard. In the 90's, the other apartment building behind the house was a drug flop house, and the tenants used to sit on the upstairs porch and flick their roaches into the Ericksons' backyard. After awhile, there were beautiful 6-foot tall plants growing back there.

Mrs. Erickson thought they were lovely so she left them. The Ericksons were friends with the a top guy in the Police Dept. at the time, and one day while they were in the back garden he noticed the huge marijuana plants back there and joked to Mrs. Erickson that he could arrest her...she had no idea what they were and was SO embarrassed!


As I was talking to Marty, it dawned on me that Jill Black had talked about knowing the family that lived in my house for 50 years, and knew the son who played football in her high school...so as we're talking I asked him, "Were you on the high school football team by any chance?" He asked how I knew. I told him I'm psychic. I didn't tell him I saw a photo of him in his yearbook and he was a hot ticket!

He and his wife are going to come down for a visit the next time they're in the area (his sister lives close by) - if anyone knows the Ericksons, let me know and I'll invite you over to join us!

Patty Lund



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C I T Y E N T E R P R I S E
Gardening Tips from Kathleen

So! You've repainted, refinished, refurnished and have a wonderful historic property to enjoy. You gaze out your perfectly stripped mahogany window and yikes! There is your unlovely, unhistorical (except in the broadest sense!) uncontrolled garden. By reconsidering your landscape, you can add to the beauty of your home, community and nature in general. Your new garden will be sustainable and historically appropriate with low water needs. An organic home to birds and insects, the garden can be a welcoming place to all. Where to begin? At the bottom of course! Your landscape is like your closet - all things have their time and place and when it's over, it's over. Having looked at all improvable elements such as soil, food and water, if it is too big for the space, too lanky, too small for the space, languishing or weedy - rip it out! Be brutal. Life is too short to have a garden you do not love! If your lawn tree has roots invading your pipes and ruining your foundation, shading everything except the lovely green moss growth on the roof, seriously think about removing it. Mother Nature corrects herself all the time - do not feel guilty about helping her out. The end result will be more ecologically sound as well as beautiful. Next month: Improving Your Soil - It's a Smelly Business.



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The Willmore City Heritage Association is committed to the preservation, protection and improvement of the physical environment and quality of life in the Willmore City/Drake Park neighborhood.

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