

Caroline and Fred Mason, the builders and first owners of this home were first listed in the Sacramento City Directory at 1931 - 21st Street in 1900, which indicated that the house was built in 1898.

The area bounded by 20th to 23rd and K to W Streets was originally known as Poverty Ridge because of the abrupt hill just east of 21st Street where this home stands. Huddled masses whose property was inundated by flooding waited on the hill until the water receded, thus giving it its name.

Mr. Mason passed away about 1906 but Mrs. Mason continued to live in the home until 1937. She was very active in Sacramento business and social activities and known as a very self sufficient independent woman. Mrs. Mason married a younger man after Mr. Mason died. The marriage didn't last and created a bit of a scandal at the time.

Mrs. Mason owned the first "horseless carriages" in Sacramento, an electric automobile which she kept in the "carriage house" in back of the main house (still standing today). At the time, the Masons first lived in the house the main means of transportation, of course, was the horse and buggy. A large cement block with MASON inscribed on it is still on display in the back yard. This was originally displayed in front of the home and was used as a stone for ladies and gentlemen alighting from their carriages to avoid stepping into the muddy streets.

Alice and Bill Smith are the fourth owners, having purchased the home in 1967 from Mrs. Agnes Dyer, a widow who had lived in the house alone for 20 years, having purchased it from the Didion family. The house was completely "run down" when the Smiths purchased it and it had deteriorated to the point that it was on the market for about two years. "Victorians" were not exactly the rage in the sixties and the community was not as concerned with preserving this portion of our heritage as they are today.

The first phase of the restoration of the home (not remodeling) was primarily structural . . . a new foundation, "jacking" up the house and installing steel beams to support it, new wiring and plumbing, a new roof, new shingles and a complete exterior paint job which took two months. The leaded glass windows were repaired, air conditioning was installed and the "butler's pantry" was converted into a modern kitchen maintaining the Victorian decor with the installation of colorful tile and leaded glass windows.

The furniture and other "nick-nacks" have all been acquired by the Smiths since they purchased the home. The old phonographs and other musical instruments reflect Bill's hobby and it is obvious he has not been too successful in restraining Alice in her pursuit of art glass, old lamps and other "goodies".

The following information on the home is from the book "Vanishing Victorians", published by the Sacramento Branch of the American Association of University Women . . .

The home of Mr. and Mrs. William Smith at the corner of 21st and T Streets, 1931 21st, is a beautiful monument to the elegance of Sacramento's past. It is a magnificent house, one which has been lived in through most of its seventy-three years.

Carpeting and wallpaper are original, as are the "crayoned" ceiling designs and the marble wash basins. Other features are the Roman Ionic columns which act as partial dividers between living room and parlor, and three charming fireplaces. Ornate wooden corner posts on the stairs and on the balustrade above are notable. In the larger rooms hang iridescent glass chandeliers.

The house reflects the social and financial prestige of its builders, the Fred Masons. At the end of the century, the area between 21st and 23rd, S to X Streets, was considered one of the most exclusive sections in Sacramento.

The Masons could well afford such an expensive home. Fred Mason was the owner of Mason's Haberdashery at 528 J Street (later Dorman's), and also Mason's Steam Laundry at 2030 O Street. Mrs. Mason was an expert horsewoman and a popular hostess.

The Shingle-Queen Anne home is late Victorian, of brick and wood construction. The predominant corner tower is supported by picturesque Tuscan columns. The view from the tower is to the west, over the city toward the river and the Capitol dome . . . with the present addition of a stream of freeway lights.

