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7546 Oak
Dow Baccaus House
photo by Bob King

Historic Ho



FEATURE

A few weeks ago, when the e-mail went out to members of the Heritage Association of Frisco (HAF) noting that Lurline Smith, chairman of the HAF home tour committee, had suffered a fire at her own historic home the reactions were predictable – folks were reassured to read that Lurline and her family had escaped unharmed and their second question was whether the house, which dates from 1911, was totally lost.

by jane whittedge

mes of **FRISCO**

THE HOUSE IS STILL STANDING AND A WEEK AFTER THE FIRE Lurline Smith’s son, David, was hopeful the family would be able to repair it to the point they can return. The Smith family lives in what has been called for many years the Wagoner House. It was far from being a museum piece with velvet cords draping off restored rooms at the time of the fire. It is home to a 2004 family complete with a teenager, a preschooler, computers, and a dog. But it has also been a living testimony to the early years of Frisco, a time when a front porch was a necessity for escaping the Texas heat as well as chatting with neighbors; its decoratively etched windows indicating to guests that the house was built by an up-and-coming family of gentility.

During Frisco’s first 100 years, historical preservation was not high on many people’s agendas – with wars, the Great Depression and the everyday challenges of bugs, drought and disease that made life in small Texas farm towns hard work – houses came and went. So while Dallas has Swiss Avenue with Victorian mansions, Frisco has its tree streets – Oak, Maple, Walnut, Elm, Pecan and



7090 Maple, W. J. Wagoner House

photo by Bob King

Ash with homes ranging from fully-restored Victorians such as the Dow Baccus House to more modest houses that have aged and grown right along with the families that lived in them, sometimes reaching a point they do not at all resemble their original designs.

PRESERVATION AND RENOVATION

The three oldest houses built in Frisco have not been restored to their past glory. The Leon Garner House at 8721 Sixth Street was once a Victorian house with a wraparound porch. It has had several additions and is currently for sale. The second, located at Fifth and Oak was once the home of Dr. I.S. Rogers, respected physician and Frisco pioneer. The old Rogers House has been modified many times but is not restored. Construction actually started on the third house, the Hill House at 7111 Elm Street before the other two, making it the first house on which ground was broken in Frisco although the other two homes were completed more quickly, designating the Hill House the third to be

completed in town. It has been reclaimed after years of disrepair for use as an antique store now called After All These Years by Vince and Joan Covert of Frisco.

Covert says she and her husband Vince share a love of old things and that they have both been thrilled it only took six months to bring the neglected Hill House back to some sense of style and elegance. Joan, an avid viewer of Home and Garden Television, says she thinks the house represents what is called Cottage Victorian but in its day was probably just called a Texas farmhouse. “We have had so many people stop by and tell us

about things that happened when they lived in the house. The house was in the Marion family since the 1930s (until the mid-1990s) passed down from aunts and uncles. One woman showed us where she broke her collarbone for the second time,” Joan Covert said pointing to a spot at the base of her stairwell, “One man remembered when he had to go to a neighbor to take a bath because the house

didn’t have indoor plumbing. He said he couldn’t wait to go into the service so that he could take a bath!”

Today, the Coverts have covered the walls in rich fabrics, hung beautiful light fixtures and filled the building with antiques and collectables. The house has been painted in shades of teal and cream after years of traditional white. The milk cans and push lawnmower (not gas-driven) being offered for sale on the porch make it appear as if a small town Texas homeowner still resides there. The Coverts are working with HAF on getting a local heritage association historical marker for the building – something they both consider to be a great honor.

“...while Dallas has Swiss Avenue Frisco has it’s tree streets — Oak, Maple, Walnut, Elm, Pecan and Ash.”

9081 6th Street, First Methodist Church Parsonage
photo by Bob King



OLD FRISCO – THEN AND NOW

The Frisco of today extends far beyond the original city limits. The old town of Lebanon (located around the intersection of Lebanon and Preston Roads) was a thriving community for several years. After the arrival of the railroad in Frisco, several houses were picked up and moved on rolling logs to brand new addresses in Frisco. Three of the best-known buildings from the Lebanon era that have been preserved or are in the process of preservation are, the T.J. Campbell House, present location of Randy’s Steakhouse; Lebanon Baptist Church and the Crozier-Covington-Sickles House. The church and the Crozier-Covington-Sickles House have both been purchased by the city of Frisco, moved from their original sites and will be placed in the proposed Heritage Park.



7158 Walnut, Sparks House
photo by Bob King

The Campbell House was the home of native Frisco resident Vivien McCallum for many years. She

and her late husband Bill restored the house, which was built in 1869, and had been moved from Lebanon to Main Street when the city of Frisco was founded. The McCollum’s worked to get the house on the state historic register, the only house in Frisco currently to hold that designation. Mrs. McCallum loved the house and remained in it long after her husband died. The white house with the dainty pink roses blooming in the yard was a showplace on the then-very sleepy Main Street.

“One day my brother asked me *why I keep the house I told him I loved it...*”

“One day my brother, Price Stark, asked me why I kept the house. I told him I loved it and the kids loved it and my grandchildren loved it. He noted that if I took all the money I spent each year keeping the house in good repair and spent it on travel that I could take two or three trips to Europe each year. That’s when I decided to sell it,” she said. And yes, she has been to Europe more than once since then. And the many

people who have dined at Randy’s Steak House on Randy Burk’s delicious steaks have also reaped the rewards of her decision to sell.

McCallum heads up the local HAF landmark committee that selects sites for local historical recognition. The Dow Bacchus House owned by Clyde and Suzanne Kerley recently received its plaque.



7190 Oak, Gordon House
photo by Bob King



9280 N. County, Collinsworth House
photo by Bob King



6911 Maple, Warren House
photo by Bob King

Other recognized sites around town include the old water tower, the Maple Street School Complex, The Designer Group and Griffin & Company at Fifth and Main Street. McCallum and her committee hope to have more sites and historical homes honored in coming years.

Dr. Erwin Pink, chairman of HAF, consistently recognizes the foresight of the leaders of the city of Frisco in preparing an area for an historical park and working to get it financed through a bond issue. He praises Mayor Mike Simpson, the city council and City Manager George Purefoy for plans that call for the park to be a living history area. The recent purchase of a steam engine by the city to be placed in the park is a dream come true for this history buff.

NEW BUSINESSES FLOURISH IN HISTORIC HOMES

Other historical homes have been converted into businesses in Frisco. On Main Street, the Plaid Veranda is housed in the former home of Myrtle and Mary Roach. The bungalow-style house across the street from Plaid Veranda has been a private residence and home to two restaurants and a design company. The brightly painted Art-A-Rama on Main is in the former Curtsinger House. Gertrude Curtsinger was a faithful member of the Frisco Garden Club and in her day the home was kept a pristine white and the lawn planted with huge drifts of old-fashioned iris. The Waimea Group and L. Pearl Morris Real Estate Inc. are in the old Shrader home, built around 1912. Other smaller homes are now professional buildings.

Neighbors who live on the streets of old Frisco take their responsibility as homeowners of historic houses seriously, even if their home isn't restored to a level to rate a state or national historic register designation. Pam Alexander, who lives in the old Methodist Church parsonage at 9081 Sixth Street, says that she thinks the majority of people who live in the older parts of town feel a great responsibility to preserve the ambience of the old town, even if their house doesn't fall within the boundaries of the city's official historic neighborhood. She and her husband have not restored their home to exacting standards. They have however, worked to preserve the bones of the house and the spirit of the old neighborhood. Preservation of the identity of old Frisco neighborhoods is an issue that many residents who live on streets just north or south of Main Street feel passionately about and hope city leaders continue to advance, Alexander said.

“Other historical homes have been converted into businesses in Frisco.”

Jane Whitledge is a freelance writer living in Frisco.