

Edmonds Historic Preservation Commission

Then and Now #2

The Powers House

By Andy Eccleshall

In this latest in the series of “Then and Now” articles by the Edmonds Historic Preservation Commission we are featuring “The Powers House”, otherwise known as 524 Main St., The Joan Longstaff Gallery.

The house was built in 1890 by an unknown builder and is one of the oldest surviving pieces of architecture in the downtown core. It has been well cared for over the years and remains a delightful feature of Main St.

The house appears to have been one of a pair of similar houses, built side by side. The only early photograph of the property I have been able to find is an “accidental” one. The quintessential photograph of Edmonds which shows the town in 1909 is taken around 3rd and Main looking East (shown below). As our eyes follow Main St. back through the image, past the present location of the fountain, we can just make out the house which is the sister of the Powers House, and behind it, the Powers House itself.



The house was owned by J.S.Powers in 1900 (born in Indiana 1846). He was a physician with nine children. They moved around a lot and most of the children were born in Texas. After they left town around 1904, Anne and Louis Shreuder became the owners by 1906.

The Rynerson family lived there from 1910 and it remained in the family until it was sold in 1976 by Myrtie Rynerson Otto to the Hammersla family. Winfield S. Rynerson was a blacksmith as was his father, Lemuel, who lived in the house till his death in 1916. Lemuel was from Pennsylvania and immigrated west to Oregon with a few years in Indiana. Lemuel married Elizabeth C. Eberhard in Oregon (1854) and had 4 sons. When she died, Lemuel moved along with Winfield and his family to Edmonds.

Winfield and his wife Martha (Ellie) Rambo had 4 children; John, Roy, Walter and Myrtle. In 1910 Winfield was a blacksmith working for Standard Oil, while his son Roy was working as a blacksmith at the Yost Garage.

Myrtle married William Otto in 1912 but later divorced him and they had a daughter Arleen. Winfield died in 1936 and his wife Ellie in 1940. The house went to Myrtle and her daughter and Myrtle continued to live there until 1976 when she sold it to the Hammersla family. Myrtle passed away in 1981 in a retirement home in Lynnwood.

Mr. and Mrs. Hammersla ran the house as a gallery until it was sold to Longstaff Realty in 1983. Today it is the well known Joan Longstaff Gallery (shown below).



It can be hard to imagine how the town appeared when the house was first built. Predating the Bettinger house by 17 years, it is hidden by the barn like structure of the Odd Fellows Hall, seen in this photograph taken from the schoolhouse in 1895.



The Odd Fellows Hall can still be seen on Main St. a little further east of the Powers House. Quiet and unassuming gems such as these can often be the most vulnerable historic pieces. Somewhat overlooked as we go about our busy lives, they are the links that connect us to the fledgling years of our town. Buildings for which trees were cleared and roads extended. Buildings constructed for specific purposes and for specific people, sometimes for reasons lost to the passing generations. They stand as sentinels to the past, reminding us of our collective roots. People from somewhere else, making a home in the west, banking on the promise of the new world.