

When Roger Brown was young, he dreamed of working as an archeologist in England, Greece, or Rome. When Anna Siig was a little girl, she dreamed of buying a neighbor's large Italianate Victorian house and "making it all pretty again." That house and another Victorian in her childhood went down to the bulldozers. Much later, Anna and Roger met at the University of Nevada in Reno, were married, and came to Livermore in 1961. In 1969 they moved a house.

The house was built in 1873 by a blacksmith named Nathaniel B. Holmes. When he and his wife, Almira, came to Livermore in 1873, they bought three-fourths of Mendenhall block 29. Holmes built his redwood home on the southwest corner of South L and Third Streets—Casa Orozco is now at the site. They planted apple trees around the house and surrounded the property with a picket fence. Nathaniel Holmes died of gangrene of the foot in 1907. Almira never trusted banks because she and her husband had lost money when the local Farmers' Union went bankrupt. She kept all her cash at home; after her death in 1916, a strongbox containing \$16,000 was found in her flour bin.

Victor and Harris, a men's clothing store, was established in Livermore in 1881. John M. "Jack" Baughman began clerking for the business in 1915. Eventually, Jack became the store owner and changed its name to Baughman's Western Outfitters. The store inventory turned toward western style clothing and boots. Jack married. He bought the Holmes house in 1922. The Baughmans enlarged the parlor of the house so that it included what had been the front porch. They opened up the dining room to the new parlor. The dormer windows and the bargeboard on the gabled

Do You Remember?

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Moving Another House



The house in its site on Tesla Road. (Photo courtesy of Anna Siig).

roof were originally decorated with gingerbread in an acorn pattern. Evidently, Jack did not like the gingerbread. One day while his wife was away, he hired someone to saw it off.

Meanwhile, Roger Brown and Anna Siig were dealing in antiques, enjoying their interest in history. They went to auctions, collected antiques, restored them, and occasionally sold them.

Livermore in the 1960s was a hotbed of changes in real estate. After the death of his wife in 1963, Jack Baughman sold his property at 325 South L Street to developers who wanted to build a Burger Chef Restaurant. In 1968, Roger and Anna bought six-and-a-half acres south of Tesla Road, about seven miles from town. A year later, Roger and Anna were successful in buying the Holmes/Baughman house from the developer for \$1.00 and began making all the intricate plans needed for the move. They learned that they had to remove the roof in order for the house to fit under the existing overhead elec-

tric lines. They had to take down the chimney—that could not be moved with the house. Anna described the community's reaction: "Total strangers drove by and, seeing us out there working, stopped and said how glad they were that the place was being saved, and they'd offer to lend a hand."

During the several years while the house sat empty and was in the hands of a realtor, robbers had come in and removed easily portable things like old doorknobs and chandeliers. Roger and Anna worked very hard to be able to remove the house by a deadline—the bulldozer would be there to tear down the house on a certain day. Fortunately, rains postponed the deadline. When the rain stopped for a while, the move was made. However, the house had to be left at the bottom of their hill because of the mud. Roger bought not one, but three different tarps, trying to protect the roofless building. All of them blew away. The house had considerable

rain damage over the winter, but they managed to have it pulled up the hill to its current site in the spring and repaired the water damage.

Years later, at a Livermore Heritage Guild show of Elliott Dopking's work, Roger and Anna found an early photograph of the Holmes/Baughman house picturing the original gingerbread. Anna realized that what she had thought was part of an old picket fence was actually part of the acorn gingerbread. So Roger used that as a pattern and redecorated the house on the outside. They also decided that their house needed a tankhouse to appear authentic. The owners of the old house at the southwest corner of North Livermore and Walnut Street offered a tankhouse free to anyone who would remove it. This move was different—Roger and Anne took the tankhouse apart, moved it, and reassembled it.

Before I wrote this column, Roger and his second wife, Nancy, invited me for a tour of the venerable old house. Perhaps there is a warmth that inhabits a well-built redwood home after almost 140 years—that feeling was certainly present for me. The second floor had two bedrooms for Roger's son and daughter tucked under the roof. There was a full basement with lots of room for sewing and tools. The main floor was comfortably furnished with antiques in varying shades of old wood. The walls are covered with anaglypta wallpaper, which has an imprinted design. Roger and some of his friends managed to bring the rolls over from England.

Anna Siig's dream came true—she did save a Victorian house. Although Roger Brown did not become an archeologist, he certainly did a great deal of restoration work on his old house.

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