

Memories of the Old White House

By Donna Harvey

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Grandpa, Noble Harvey, built the White House in about 1907/08. There was a devastating fire at the Mill on Decoration Day in 1906. Noble's business was the "Star Dairy", and his barn buildings were located on his property fairly close to his parent's original homestead house. The original homestead house was located along the Snohomish River, just a little ways East of the Mill. The fire burned his dairy buildings, so he decided it was time to move away from the Mill and build a new house and barns for his family and dairy business on a different part of his property. The building site he chose was at the sharp corner where Airport Way turned to the West. This site had formerly been occupied by an old mill run by James Ordway. The Ordway's lived in a large home in Town with acreage at 707 10th Street. The mill had closed in 1892.

The White House was the first building to be built. Noble, Edith and Eldon lived in the White house while they were drawing up plans for a beautiful new Craftsman Style house right next door. They had to move quickly, because to have a fine home built took time. Noble decided to build the barn first, but in such a manner that the family could live in it temporarily. There was a large door on the North side that was meant to be a garage door for his Model T. The middle part was meant for cows or chickens. The door for the hayloft was located near the second story and on the West end of the structure. The garage door was eventually sealed up years later, when it became evident that the "barn" was always going to be a house. Noble later built a separate garage for his car on the West side of the house.

Their new Craftsman Style house would compare with many of the fine, new homes being built in the City of Snohomish during the early 1900's. The architect and builder was N.P. Hansen, who built many of the grand homes including the Johnson house, next door to the West.

About the time Edith, Noble and Eldon were ready to move into their new home, Arthur Johnson, from a neighboring farm to the West, was planning on getting married to Alta Cochran of Snohomish. He went to Noble and asked him if he could rent the "barn" so that he would be able to live close to his father's homestead. Arthur was helping his father run their dairy farm. The water for the house came from a well, and there was an outhouse. Arthur and a friend

fixed up the house very nicely. The newlyweds lived there quite happily for a number of years. Their two daughters, Venetta and Phyllis Johnson were born there and Mrs. Johnson died there. Phyllis remembered standing on the piano one year when the flood waters came. After that flood, the house was raised and put on a foundation.

I am not sure the exact year that Arthur and his two daughters moved out of the White House. Later Arthur remarried a very prim and proper English lady named Emmy. They probably lived in the house until Arthur had a new house built for his bride on the West side of the Johnson homestead house. I think at that time, both Phyllis and Venetta had graduated from the University of Washington. Venetta became a professor/counselor at Richmond Community College and Phyllis, a minister.

Eldon graduated from Washington State University in 1930. It was there that he met Marjorie MacLeod. Eldon and Marjorie were engaged for five years, because Eldon had some health problems and was not able to work. Noble and Edith finally encouraged Eldon to marry Marjorie. Prior to the marriage, an inside bathroom was installed in the White house that included a toilet, sink, bathtub and storage closet. I imagine that water was piped into house from their large water reservoir at the top of an adjacent building/tower. I am not sure what year public water was installed along the County Road in the old wooden pipes

There was a wood stove in the kitchen that was used for heat as well as cooking. The wood stove also heated the water in an adjacent hot water tank that was located next to the stove. We used to have to feel the hot water tank to see if it had enough warm water for a bath. Also, there was a cooler built into the North wall of the dining room that was open to the outside and covered with a screen. It was used to store pies and various other foods before refrigerators were available. I remember we did have a refrigerator when I was young, However, we still used the cooler, too. The kitchen also included a built in cabinet with glass doors on the top and shelved storage with doors on the bottom. It also included a small table and chair set that usually had a red and white checked oil cloth table cloth. One bedroom was located downstairs and three bedrooms upstairs. A clothesline was rigged with pulleys from the back porch to the adjacent shed. There is an old photo of Eldon in 1936, standing on the back porch hanging up diapers on the line.

Eldon added on to the house in the late 1940's or early 1950's. The kitchen was enlarged and a laundry room was added to the South side of the house. It had wringer washer and an area large enough for Marjorie's mangle. The mangle was used for ironing sheets and pillow cases as well as dresses and shirts. It took some practice to be able iron around the sleeves. All linens were so much nicer after they were ironed rather than using items directly from the clothes line. The only dryer we had was the clothes line or the wooden drying rack placed in front of the wood stove in the kitchen..

Marjorie always wanted her house to look nice. She worked for couple of years as secretary to the principal of Central School and hoed strawberries to earn a little extra money. In the early 1940's, she purchased a new Duncan Phyfe Mahogany dining room set along with a matching tall desk with glass cupboard doors on the top. The desk was placed in the living room along with a matching 3-tiered matching occasional table. Dad (Eldon) used to bring his pet squirrel into the house place it on the tiered table. The squirrel gnawed little holes all over the tiered table. Marjorie was not too happy about that but didn't say a lot about it. There was an 9 x 12 Oriental carpet covering the living room floor. Most of the other wood floors in the house were covered with linoleum. The living room was heated with an oil heater. There was still room for a sofa, and a couple occasional chairs.. Draperies covered each side of the windows, with roll down fringed shades in the center.

Marjorie had some very pretty gardens. Our summer birthday parties for the children always included friends and their mothers. Pictures were always taken outside on the lawn by the gardens on the South side of the house. Marjorie's aunt and uncle had a beautiful home and gardens in Pullman. She had lived with them while attending Washington State College. That is probably where she received her inspiration on home decorating and gardening. She was a member of the Snohomish Jr. Study Club in Snohomish. The Study Club was organized in 1935, as a social club that reviewed books and plays. The club was limited to young, married women. When Marjorie was president, they were assisting with Red Cross work. Also, at that time, she was instrumental in recommending that a combined health department be established. The Club felt the City of Snohomish should join the City of Everett to provide one full time health department in larger, better equipped headquarters to serve the citizens of the County.

During the late 1930's and early 1940's, Eldon was farming and clearing land and stumps so that agricultural crops could be raised. The crops he raised were peas, broccoli, corn, hay and White Face Herford beef cattle. Also, he was assisting his father, Noble, in his business of selling blasting powder for land clearing. For a short time, during WWII, Eldon worked in the Rationing office in Snohomish,

In 1945, our brother, Richard was born, which was about the time the Airfield was started. A few years later, Snohomish Airfield went bankrupt. Marjorie and Eldon's priority then was trying to build a new business at the Airfield. In 1952, our grandfather, Noble, passed away. Dad and Mom continued without having Noble to consult. Donna graduated from high school in 1954 and went away to college. She got married in 1957 and moved to California. Marilyn graduated from high school in 1958, and left home to go to college and eventually returned to live in a house in Snohomish that is directly across the road from the Airport.

In about 1958, Marilyn was a senior in high school and Donna was living in California. Marjorie and Eldon decided to build a new ranch style home fairly close to the existing house. (Now, there were three houses on the property. Marjorie had always lived in old homes and wanted a new home with all modern conveniences. That was pretty much the end of anyone living in the old White house. There was a renter there for a short period of time, but the house was virtually used for storage for the next 56 years.

Richard passed away in 1995, after a long battle with Leukemia.

The Old White house was taken down in 2015.