

MONROVIA OLD HOUSE PRESERVATION GROUP
THE BURR HOUSE
1893
150 NO. MYRTLE AVE.
MONROVIA

FRANK W. BURR AND HIS FAMILY MOVED TO MONROVIA FROM ILLINOIS IN 1889. LIKE SO MANY AMERICANS, THEY HAD ENDURED THE FREEZING COLD OF THE GREAT BLIZZARD OF 1888, AND WERE SEEKING A WARMER CLIMATE IN WHICH TO LIVE. IN 1893, THEY BUILT THIS BEAUTIFUL VICTORIAN HOUSE. ORIGINALLY TEN ROOMS AND CONSTRUCTED ENTIRELY OF REDWOOD, THE HOUSE WAS BUILT TO BURR'S HANDWRITTEN SPECIFICATIONS (WHICH SURVIVE TO THIS DAY) FOR A REPORTED COST OF \$2,800.00. THE FAMILY'S IDYLIC LIFE IN THEIR GRACIOUS HOME WAS TRAGICALLY MARRIED IN 1907 WHEN THE ONLY DAUGHTER IN THE FAMILY, GLADYS MAE, DIED FROM A SMALLPOX VACCINATION ON THE EVE OF HER DEPARTURE TO ATTEND STANFORD UNIVERSITY. IN TRIBUTE TO HER MEMORY, HER PORTRAIT HANGS IN THE MUSIC ROOM TODAY. BURR'S DESCENDANTS CONTINUALLY OCCUPIED THE HOUSE UNTIL ITS SALE IN 1975. THE LAST OWNER HAS CAREFULLY RESTORED THE HOUSE AND HAS ADDED ROOMS AND EXTENSIVE STICK WORK GALLERIES AND PORCHES, IN THE ORIGINAL QUEEN ANNE STYLE, TO THE NORTH AND WEST SIDES. THE CARRIAGE HOUSE TO THE NORTH HAS ALSO BEEN CONSTRUCTED BY THE PRESENT OWNERS.

THE ORIGINAL GABLE END ROOF FACING MYRTLE AVENUE IS ELABORATELY DECORATED WITH FISH SCALE SHINGLES, FOUR-PETAL FLORAL ANTIQUES, SUNBURSTS AND CURLING, SAWN WOOD PANELS. MATCHING DESIGNS FILL THE OTHER GABLES, HAVING BEEN DUPLICATED IN THE BACK DURING THE RESTORATION. CURVED PANELS PROJECT OUT OF THE WEST AND SOUTH FACING BAYS AT THE FIRST FLOOR. THEY TERMINATE IN DROPPED PENDANTS AND ARE DECORATED WITH A SUNBURST MOTIF MIRRORING THAT OF THE GABLES ABOVE. A FURTHER DECORATIVE FLOURISH IS THE FISH SCALE SHINGLED SKIRT WHICH DIVIDES THE FIRST AND SECOND FLOORS OF THE HOUSE.

THE THIRD FLOOR OF THE BURR HOUSE, WHICH WAS NOT SHOWN LAST YEAR, HAS BEEN COMPLETED AND INCLUDES A MASTER SUITE CONSISTING OF A SITTING ROOM, BEDROOM, HIS AND HER BATH AND A SAUNA. THE HOME, WHICH ORIGINALLY DID NOT HAVE ANY FIREPLACES, NOW HAS THREE: IN THE LIVING ROOM, STUDY AND A SITTING ROOM.

150 N. Myrtle Avenue

In October of 1889, Frank W. Burr of La Fox, Illinois, brought his family to Monrovia with the intention of staying permanently. Like so many other Americans, the Burrs had endured the freezing cold of the Great Blizzard of 1888, and Frank Burr was seeking a warmer climate in which to live and raise his family. With Mr. Burr came his wife, the former Laura Gordon, his four sons, Walter, Jay, Myron and Clyde, and his only daughter, Gladys Mae, who was an infant at the time. The Burrs rented the Dr. Stewart House at 117 N. Magnolia Avenue upon their arrival, and were comfortably settled by Thanksgiving of 1889. For that comfortable eight room house Frank Burr paid the magnificent sum of \$12.00 per month! The Burrs settled into the life of their new community and made plans for a permanent home.

Early in 1893 Mr. Burr was fortunate in obtaining a parcel of five lots on north Myrtle Avenue for \$350 at a tax sale. Using the form recommended by Samuel and Joseph Cather Newsom in their architectural anthology, "Picturesque California Homes", Burr drew up a set of specifications for a ten room house and personally supervised its construction. The original house was finished entirely with redwood, and its substantial design has contributed to its preservation to the present time. The house cost \$2,800 to build, and the handwritten specifications survive.

The Burrs spent the next fifteen years in blissful contentment in their beautiful home. Early pictures show the house surrounded by open fields, with the San Gabriel Mountains providing a magnificent backdrop. Then tragedy struck. The Burrs' only daughter, Gladys Mae, was scheduled to attend Stanford after graduation from Monrovia High School. Stanford required a smallpox vaccination for incoming freshmen, and Gladys was vaccinated. Then something went terribly wrong. Blood poisoning developed, and the doctors could do nothing that helped. Gladys lingered in agony for weeks before quietly slipping away. The Burrs never recovered from her loss. In tribute to her memory, her portrait hangs in the music room today.

Frank Burr died in 1917, but Laura Burr survived him by thirty years, continuing to live in the house with her son Myron and his family. Myron Burr, the last of his father's family, moved from the house in 1975 and it was then sold after eighty-two years of family ownership.

The current owners purchased the property in 1979. In addition to correcting some earlier misguided efforts at restoration, they have added to the house on the east and created a third floor master bedroom suite. They have also added a Victorian carriage house to the property. All additions have faithfully reproduced the architectural details of the original construction so that the changes are seamless. And carefully preserved in the rear of the house is the only remaining outhouse in Monrovia. Enhancing this Queen Anne gem is a beautifully landscaped yard with mature trees and period roses.

The Burr House

1893 - 1993

