

Homes of History: Freeman home saved from extinction by Leslie

Written by By Ava Barlow, Staff Writer
Thursday, 26 May 2011 10:59 -



May 19, 2011 - In 1995, when Lloyd and Debra Leslie bought the structure at 903 N. Cedar St. for \$3,000, it wouldn't have qualified as a home by most people's standards. The house had no doors, no windows, no closets and no working bathroom. Lloyd saw what the house could become, and Debra saw an empty shell of a house that "used to be" and cringed to think they were spending money on the structure. In the next few months, the Leslies would put \$33,000 of supplies into the shell, and make it a home.

By 1995 the structure had been vandalized repeatedly and was a sore sight. There were even rumors that the city was thinking about condemning the structure, so the Leslies saved the house from extinction.

The original home was built in the era where the walls were one-inch thick planks about 12 inches wide. Gauze was nailed into the planks and wallpaper was attached to the gauze. Debra said when she first saw the house, gauze was hanging from the walls. The home had a living room, kitchen, one bedroom and a dining room downstairs and three bedrooms upstairs. A porch ran the length of the south, north and west sides of the home with back doors leading out of the kitchen onto the porches. The floors were hardwood and the kitchen was later covered with linoleum. There were no bathrooms originally.

Lloyd took in part of the south porch for a bathroom and part of the north porch for a pantry. He added closets to each bedroom, added an upstairs bathroom and removed the makeshift bathroom in the front downstairs bedroom and made a connecting bath to the bedroom. He replaced windows and doors, even buying the original front door back from Eddie Sudderth. He applied sheetrock to the inside walls and replaced carpeting and flooring where needed, but the kitchen linoleum floor was left as it was. He also replaced the front porch at least twice and in 2006 they added vinyl siding to the home.

John M. Freeman built the house - probably in the early 1910's - and lived in the home until his

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death in 1943. Around that time, Daisy Blanton had lost her husband, Milt, and decided to sell the farm, buy the Freeman home and move to town. She lived in the home until her death sometime in the early to mid 1950's.

In 1955, the house was sitting empty and Billy Grimes was offered the chance to buy it for \$1800, but he passed up the chance and remembers the house sat vacant for several years.

Kirk Ferguson bought the home sometime before 1976 and lived there with his two daughters, Mary Jane and Martha Nell, but after they moved out, the house sat empty several more years until the Leslie's bought it in 1995.

While these are all facts that can be proven, another story attached to the home cannot be documented. A former neighbor to the home, who is now deceased, remembered a time when the house was built somewhere else, cut in two and moved to the current location, rolled on logs and pulled by a team of mules. Leslie confirms that there are signs in the attic of the house being cut apart and reconnected, but none of the historians in town can remember this happening.