

HISTORY OF WASHBURN HOUSE
“THE HOUSE THAT MOVED TO REDLANDS”
Redlands Heritage Award 1987
Dr. Sherman H. Washburn Home
454 Cajon Street
1893

The Dr. Sherman H. Washburn Home, also known as “The House that Moved to Redlands”, was constructed in 1887 and 1893. Actually a combination of two separate houses from two different areas, combined to form what is seen today, the current establishment has gained a rich history. The back portion of the house is the original home, consisting of three rooms on the first floor and three rooms and a bath on the second floor ... all of which totaled a cost of \$600. Dr. Washburn, needing more room, transported a second house some forty miles from Elsinore and placed it in front of the original building. This added two more rooms to the second floor and two to the first, plus a staircase.

The house can now best be described as a two-story Victorian with a truncated, medium hip roof. The construction is of redwood and Douglas fir. In the process of restoration, asbestos shingles were removed, revealing fish-scale shingles in the gables and under the second story sleeping porch. Above the sleeping porch is mill work and the balustrade is in a keyhole pattern. The same mill work extends across the open veranda porch above the steps, with spool and spindle across the top of each side. The balustrade of the veranda is plain stick work. The step piers are cutstone.

The history of the house is equally as interesting as its inhabitants, with its first being Dr. Sherman Washburn. Born in Rochester, Vermont, he received his medical degree from the Chicago Medical College. While residing in Iowa, he served as Pension Commissioner under Presidents Chester Arthur and Grover Cleveland. He moved to California in 1887 and lived in Elsinore for six years before moving to Redlands. Here he practiced medicine, using the back room, now a kitchen area, as an operating room. An upstairs room was also used for the patients' recovery. This was then a common practice because hospital space was scarce. Before Dr. Washburn died, he was chosen as Redlands representative to the County Board of Health and Trustee of the Redlands School District.

At the time of his Redlands medical residency, it was the practice to provide a bucket of water and one drinking cup, in the rear of each school classroom, for use by all students of that class. Being mindful of communicable diseases and illnesses, he inspired the School Board to give up the communal bucket and to install drinking fountains. Gertrude Washburn, later to become Gertrude Montgomery, had her own personal cup at school and was forbidden to use the common cup. In retrospect, it was a step in the right direction despite the fact that she drank from the same bucket of water that was used by all of the other children. It is also reported that Dr. Washburn persuaded most of the local churches to change the practice of using a common cup for communion and instead to use individual cups, which is still the practice today.

Dr. Washburn instigated the establishment of a Health Clinic for the Redlands schools and is also credited with insisting that a doctor be present at all football games. Although Dr. Washburn

lived for less than six years in Redlands, he made his presence memorable, particularly in the area of good public health.

His wife, Harriet Washburn, was a graduate of the Juilliard School of Music. She contributed much to the culture of Redlands. After the death of her husband in 1898, she supported herself by teaching piano.

Their son, Bernard Washburn, who, too, lived in the house, had two listed professions, most likely in accordance with the ways of the “Old Country” as expressed by brother-in-law A. E. Springborg. He was registered as using his hands and mind in practice as a carpenter and an optician, respectively.

Between 1911 and 1947 the house was occupied by several families. One of the best known was Benjamin S. Stephenson and his second wife, Elleonore, who lived in the house from 1919 to approximately 1930. A native of England, Stephenson came to Redlands in 1885, opening the first jewelry store in 1886 on 5th Street between State and Citrus. In 1887 he married Selma White in the first marriage held in Redlands. Also that year, he became the first treasurer of the Trinity Episcopal Church. Other long-time residents from 1947 to 1974 were members of the Thomas Elliott and Harold Silky families.

In August 1975 Linden and Jeanne Tomlinson took possession of the property and began the arduous task of restoring the home, which had undergone many alterations since 1893. After eleven years, the structure was restored, as much as possible, to its original state. The home has been enhanced by the beautiful landscaping. In October 1986, the property was placed on the Redlands Historic Register of Historic and Scenic Properties. The Tomlinsons are to be commended for their excellent stewardship of this heritage property.

On the very afternoon that the house’s fate was scheduled to appear before the Scenic and Historic Preservation Commission, for review of its application for historic designation, the former owners located and talked to the missing granddaughter of the house’s original owner, Ms. Barbara Montgomery. Ms. Barbara Montgomery gave additional history on the house to the Scenic and Historic Preservation Commission.

Ms. Barbara Montgomery is retired after teaching for thirty-five years and was extremely grateful for the efforts that were expended in research of the Washburn family. Upon invitation to visit the Washburn home, it was learned that Barbara had never been in the home, as grandmother Harriet did not want to go back to the home for some unstated reason.

Over the past few decades, the property has changed hands and uses on many occasions. Today, though, the house functions as the Law Offices of James B. Church and Associates. A lot of work has been done by many people to preserve this historic old home. The Church Family would like to thank all of those who have gone before them in preserving the “Washburn House”.