

# **Charlotte Morecraft**

## **Historical Homes**

Oral History Interview by Penny Morecraft

**PM: What is your job?**

CM: My job? Really, I'm retired. But I'm also on the City Council. I am a council woman – the only woman. And I am president of Main Street Committee which has to do with the restoration of the downtown area of Marshall. And I 'm a grandma.

**PM: What is a historical home?**

CM: An historical home would be a home that is of significance for the period and time that it was built. It doesn't necessarily have to be a hundred years old. It could be not that old. But things that have been retained that are characteristic of that time period – time frame.

**PM: Does the house have to be a certain age before it can be on that?**

CM: Not really.

**PM: Okay. And do you know what home is the oldest in Marshall?**

CM: I think it is called the Robert Delaney home and it is owned by Eleanor and Damian Macey. And the person that owned this home also was the Mr. Archer that brought the land first. And this was the first sub-division and the first developed area.

**PM: Why did you become particularly interested in historical homes?**

CM: I've always liked older big houses. For a long time I thought I would like to own a great big house, and then, after I got a bit older, I decided that it would be nice to have a historical house but not necessarily a great big house. But I like them.

**PM: Are there a lot of historical homes in Marshall?**

CM: Yes, There are a lot of historical homes in Marshall. Of just the Italianate style, which is what Mr. Macey's house is, there are about twelve. And there are some other historical homes in addition to that that are different styles.

**PM: Is there any particular home in Marshall that you enjoy?**

CM: Other than my own? I do enjoy my own because it was built in 1908, and it's just a small little cottage. It's probably a home more like most of us would have had or been able to afford. It was built by a brick mason for his mother. And when it was first built it

had four rooms: the living room, bedroom, and what is now the dining room was a bedroom, and a kitchen. And then later, at some point, the bathroom was added. And then in 1947 a small breakfast area was added and a family room and another bedroom. So that add-on is still 50 years old.

And then another favorite house that I really like is the house of Eleanor and Damian Macey, and that is on 602 North 7<sup>th</sup> Street. It is the oldest house in Marshall. When it was first built it was the only house on the block, and there was kind of a raise in Marshall. It's not a big hill, but it is a raised area and the downtown – some of the buildings were downtown but most of them were not the buildings that are there now. They were more wooden and frame buildings. Most of the downtown... This house was built in 1862-1864 and the downtown buildings at that time were still made out of wood. The downtown buildings mostly were built starting in 1890's. And it was owned by a very wealthy man and that's why it could be such a large house.

**PM: What makes those homes enjoyable to you?**

CM: 'Cause they're neat. They have beautiful woodwork, stained glass, features in there that maybe sometimes aren't possible to put in homes today. That particular house has a beautiful ceramic tile that's still there and looks great. It's been there more than a hundred years. And the six fire places are made out of marble. Some of those were covered over when the Maceys bought the house and were restoring it. Those on the third floor were covered over with drywall and paneling, and so it was kind of an excitement to them to discover what was under there. And they've done a superb job of restoring what's there.

**PM: What's the most interesting thing that you've found in the home?**

CM: Okay, one thing that's kind of interesting in the Macey home, I think, and maybe unusual. They had a system upstairs in the attic that – where the rain water was drained. They had closed guttering and the rain water was drained into this tank and then that was filtered with charcoal and sand and this was for their water system.

And another house that I didn't mention but is definitely a very unique house and that's the one on the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Locust where it used to be the state representative, John Lewis, lived. And now one of his daughters [his granddaughter] has repurchased that home and lives there. And on the upper floor of that – that was a basketball court. And many of these old houses – and in this house on the third floor, that was the ballroom. This is where they had the dances. And that one was used for dances and basketball. And the one over here on 5<sup>th</sup> has a huge big stained window. It's hard to conceive that someone might have been playing basketball up there. But that's the way...

**PM: How has the structure of the home changed over the years?**

CM: Probably a lot is – well, the older homes and even including my house and Mr. Macey's – a lot of the brick was the double brick which maybe would be at least 16 inches thick. And the brick at that time was made right on the property years ago. And or

course a lot – we don't have quite the fancy woodwork, the time work... Some houses do, but not the craftsmanship that was possible years ago.

**PM: What's it like living in an historical home?**

CM: I think it's neat. There are sometimes when you go to do things maybe the walls aren't quite as straight as a new home, but I thoroughly enjoy it. I like it.

**PM: Do you know what the qualifications are to be admitted on the National Registry?**

CM: Very difficult and very hard. It takes a lot of description, a lot of paper work, the house has to be something unique to that style, it has to be – it can have some alterations but it has to be characteristic to that style of home. In fact, the Macey house had to have some part of it taken away at one time. One thing they absolutely do not like is any kind of vinyl, any kind of vinyl windows, vinyl siding, or – that is a no, no right there. It can have some interior changes and modernization, but most of the exterior needs to be original and as much as possible retained. But it's a lengthy process. It's first approved by the Illinois National Register. And then after that approval the home owner, who has already sent probably forty-five photos and one – first color photos and then black and white – also they have a hearing, and they have to present a slide program describing their house and all of it's feature and also telling it's history. And some things that are on the Register can be because of who lived there - if it was a historic person.

**PM: Are there any benefits to being admitted to the National Register?**

CM: The main one that I know if is just pride. There's really no money. Often times people think that there is money, but the home owners that I have talked to – they have not received any money. You get to put a nice plaque on your home. But you also have to pay for it - which I thought they might furnish.

**PM: Do you have any interesting stories about any of the homes?**

CM: I have probably already told them to you.