

A Storybook Tudor, 1417 Division, Tacoma, WA

[Editor note: This article was written by Marilyn Sabo as an expanded version of "FROM THE ARCHIVES.]

One of my favorite views is from the palladian window (original!) at the top of our staircase. I can look down my street and see neighbors' homes that are over a century old, still as solid and stately as the day they were built---Victorian Queen Annes, Edwardian four-squares, craftsman bungalows, Dutch gambrels. All around me are lovely examples of American architecture from the late 1800's to the 1950's.

We are fortunate to have so many homes that have been cared for (even in hard times) or that have been restored sensitively. Some were designed by well-known architects, built for opera singers, artists, governors, and local captains of industry. Some still have original blueprints and pictures available. Others were lived in by ordinary people, and records have been lost over time. Famous or not, each home has its own special tales to tell. What was Christmas dinner 1901 like in my house? Armistice Day 1918? V-J Day 1945? Any weddings, births, funerals? I'd love to have been a fly on the wall (or maybe a cat in the lap)!

The house in back of us is a very pretty Tudor- style cottage, which my neighbors worked diligently on all last spring and summer. They were especially meticulous about the paint job – the colors, quality of work, and cleanup. We chatted over the fence about paint, kids, dogs, turquoise refrigerators, flowers, and swapped old house stories. I remember my neighbor saying that her house was, "just an ordinary house," and that,



“no one famous lived there, and no famous architect designed it.” But, its charm, craftsmanship and style are what make our neighborhood so great.

Their home, at 1417 Division, was built in 1928 for Leonard and Kathryn Kolstad. Mr. Kolstad was a salesman for the Younglove Grocery Company. The Tacoma Historical Register lists it as a Tudor-style cottage, architect/builder/contractor unknown. This style is a subgroup of an architectural style called “Storybook”, which originated in California

after WWI. new knowledge and appreciation of European architecture, and the film industry began depicting castles, chateaus, and Cotswold cottages. To reflect this interest in things European, architects began designing unique, whimsical homes resembling something from a storybook. These homes were very popular in the 1920's and 30's, and came in all shapes and sizes. Charlie Chaplin and Humphrey Bogart had Storybook mansions, and Disney Court, a 1931 Storybook apartment complex, was probably the inspiration for the dwarfs' house in *Snow White*.

Storybooks often featured stucco, brick, or clapboard walls, sloping roof lines and unusual curves and angles. The English Tudor-style used arch-topped doors and windows, shingled roofs, wing walls, mullioned casement windows, wrought-iron embellishment and leaded or wavy glass. The Kolstad home is a wonderful cottage-scale example of this style, having a wing-walled facade with an arched entry and window, a tall, massive chimney, steeply gabled roof, and its original(functioning) mullioned casement windows. What a treat to be able to see this cheerful house every morning across my garden gate!

Next time you're out for a stroll, see if you can find more Storybook homes in the neighborhood!

References:

Storybook Style: America's Whimsical Homes of the Twenties, A. Gellner & D. Keister

<http://antiquehomestyle.com/styles/storybook.htm>