

These OLD homes

In Oxnard neighborhood, houses are doors to past



Star staff

Take a walk down memory lane

What: The Autumn Home Tour
When: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday.
Tickets: \$15 in advance and
\$20 at the door.

For more information: Call the
Heritage Square Visitors Center at
483-7960, ext. 3, or Karen Martia at
483-7749.

On the Net:

<http://www.oxnard-journal.com>
<http://www.ci.oxnard.ca.us/historic/homeimages/background.html>
<http://www.ci.oxnard.ca.us/historic/autumntour.html>

By Sylvia Moore

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When thinking of historic districts in Southern California, Oxnard may not immediately come to mind. Tell that to residents of the Wilson neighborhood and they will say you've missed some hidden gems.

Wilson is probably best known these days for its residents' 12-year fight to get the abandoned and graffiti-ridden St. John's hospital building on North F Street cleaned up. But Wilson is one of Oxnard's oldest neighborhoods and home to the Henry T. Oxnard Historic District, an area of classically built homes that has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1999.

"It was really Oxnard's first neighborhood with a prestigious address and it still is today," said resident Gary Blum, who manages Oxnard's Heritage Square

complex.

Named for the nation's 28th president, Woodrow Wilson, the neighborhood is bounded by Doris Street to the north, Fifth Street to the south, Oxnard Boulevard to the east and H Street to the west. When Henry Oxnard and his brothers opened the American Sugar Beet Co. factory in the late 1800s, wealthy merchants, bankers, professionals and blue-collar workers built their homes next to Oxnard's commercial district, creating a diverse community. Wilson is also the site of Oxnard's City Hall, main library, police department, Woodrow Wilson Park, and Plaza Park with its Chinese-style bandstand, known locally as the Pagoda.

"I think the appeal of the neighborhood, why people stay, is the size of the house lots

See **HISTORIC** on B2

Home sales rare in Wilson area

HISTORIC

From B1

being offered. Plus, it's the actual central city location," said Bill Winter, chairman of the Wilson Neighborhood Council. "It has that charm and feeling of permanence."

Karen Martia said she moved into her bungalow on F Street three years ago because she likes the eclectic atmosphere. Martia belongs to the preservation group the Friends of Old Oxnard. The group is organizing the Historic District's eighth annual Autumn Home Tour, which is Sunday. The public will be able to see the insides of six homes in the district.

"We all love our homes," Martia said. "We're all doing a lot to upgrade our neighborhood and bring a lot of the homes back to their historic state."

Homes in the Wilson neighborhood are a mix of craftsman, mission, prairie and revival styles, such as colonial, Mediterranean, Spanish and tudor. Many were built before 1940. Depending upon the style of home, there are different historical color palettes: for example, earth tones or brighter colors, such as pink. Sycamore and camphor trees line the streets, making the area seem more like the Midwest rather than Southern California.

Preserving the past

In the 1970s and '80s the neighborhood fell on hard times, and some of the old homes were subdivided into apartment units. Alarmed by this trend, a group of residents formed the Friends of Old Oxnard in 1997 to take steps to preserve the community's character.

For two years, the group photographed and documented the provenance of a section of homes on F and G streets, just enough for the project to be manageable. In 1999, members' efforts paid off and the area was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Historic District residents can renovate their homes only in a way that reflects the character of the neighborhood.

"It's desirable now to move downtown. It's not something to be afraid of," said Rosanne Moss, who lives in a craftsman-style home once owned by the daughter of early-20th century Oxnard banker Achille Levy.

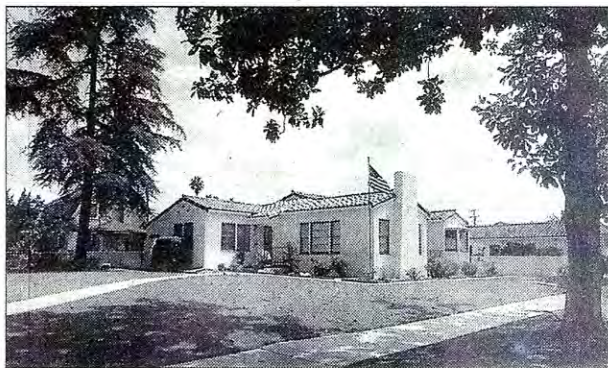


Photos by Jason Redmond / Star staff

HOME IN 300 BLOCK OF SOUTH G STREET.



HOME IN 400 BLOCK OF F STREET.



HOME IN 200 BLOCK OF NORTH F STREET.

