

Tillman County Chronicles

Tillman County Historical Society Column

By Joe Wynn

In the early days of Tillman County, it was common for folks to hire a photographer to take a picture of their home. The photographs were then often sent to family members in other parts of the country to show their prosperity.

That's exactly what the Lawrence T. Martin family did in 1912. While most families settled for a single picture of their home, though, the Martins had every room in their home photographed. The photos were assembled into a small album and at Christmas 1912 they were mailed to Mr. Martin's cousin, Margaret Peck Wright, in Concordia, Kansas.

A few weeks ago, almost 97 years later, the album was returned to Frederick as gift to the Tillman County Historical Society by Mrs. Wright's granddaughter who lives in Florida.

Its amazing photos provide a look into the life of a prosperous Tillman County family in 1912.

Martin family included Lawrence (L.T.), his wife Ella, and their son Lawrence, Jr.

Their home, located at 405 North 11th Street in Frederick, still stands today and is owned by Mr. and Mrs. Fabian Reyes. In 1912,

the house featured a full porch with large brick columns and was covered with ivy.

A photo of North 11th Street in 1912 shows an unpaved roadway with wagon tracks, young trees, and electric poles lining both sides of the street.

Photos of the living room and dining room show the home's furniture, lace curtains, elaborate wallpaper, and the many personal decorative touches that made the house a home for the Martin family.

In the 1912 kitchen, there were no built-in cabinets, but a long sink, a work table, a pie-safe type hutch, a wooden ice box, and a massive cast-iron stove.

The home had four bedrooms and each is pictured in the album. Although the home was wired for electricity, in 1912 that meant only that it had electric lights. Electricity had been available to Frederick homes since 1906, but there were few if any electric appliances available at that time and no electrical outlets. In most of the Martins' bedrooms there was rough electric cord that draped from the center light fixture, wrapped around the head of the bed, and ended in a bare bulb suspended over the bed for a reading light.

Each room, including the upstairs hallway, featured wooden floors with decorative rugs.

The photos are not limited to upstairs rooms. They also include the basement laundry room where a woman is pictured using a scrubbing board in a big sink; the basement furnace room which

shows an large cast-iron furnace, coal bin, and kindling bin; and Lawrence, Jr.'s playroom where he is pictured in a railroad conductor's outfit playing with a toy train set.

The album also features a picture of busy Grand Avenue and one of Mr. Martin's office which was located on the second floor of a downtown building, probably in the 200 block of West Grand. A 1916 item in the Frederick Leader described L.T. Martin as "one of Frederick's leading real estate men" who "does an extensive farm loan business and is one of the progressive town boosters."

The Martin family apparently left Frederick sometime between 1916 and 1919. A 1919 Frederick directory showed 405 North 11th as the home of prominent attorney Prov Mounts.

Want to see the photos?

The album photos have been scanned and are available on-line at the Tillman County Historical Society's website, www.tillmanokhistory.org. At the site, they are filed under "Tillman County's History," "1912, Martin Home."

A reproduction album of the photos can also been seen at the Pioneer Townsite Museum or the Frederick Carnegie Library.