

# NOTHING BUT THE BEST

If you've ever driven along Baltimore Street, you've surely noticed the English Tudor-style home in the 1000 block of East Normal Street. Its spacious yard, unique style of architecture, and size is bound to catch the eye of many people.

The house stands out from all the neighboring buildings because it towers over them; very few houses in Kirksville are built in the English Tudor style; and no other house in Kirksville was built so elaborately. Another reason the house stands out is the angle that it sits on the lot. The reason for the odd placement might be for viewing the house from the south and the east, but it is interesting to note that the sun shines through all the front windows around noon everyday.

In the house, it is obvious from the floors, woodwork, and ornate fireplaces that it was built with nothing but the best of materials. "This house was really built well," said Mr. Don Riley, the current owner of the home.

The open stairway in the cozy foyer is the first feature to catch a visitor's eye. It is a prime example of the fine oak of which the house was built. Just to the right of the stairway, through the double doors, is the large living room. Its multi-paned windows and marble fireplace give the room the feeling of a chalet in the mountains. In the kitchen, the breakfast nook is a perfect place to sip a cup of coffee on

a quiet morning as the sun shines through the east window. The house is a beautiful and well-planned combination of formal and comfortable living.

This house was designed and built by Irwin Dunbar and Archie W. Truitt. The plans were started in 1938 and the building began in 1940. Because Mr. Dunbar was so particular, it took the two years to not only plan the structure, but also to ship in the special materials ordered by Mr. Dunbar.

From the blueprints and building specifications of Mr. Dunbar, it is evident that the house was built to last longer than most houses built at that time. Each nail had to be placed precisely to his specification and the materials used were of top quality.

Mr. Glen Green, who originally painted the house, recalls that the oak used for the floor and downstairs woodwork was brought to Kirksville from the Appalachian Mountains. "It's the finest oak grown in America," said Mr. Green. The mahogany, which was used for the second-story woodwork, was imported from Honduras and is the finest available. Cyprus was used for the siding and outside posts because it grows in water and never rots. Mr. Green also remembered finishing the wormed chestnut paneling in the



den. Mr. Dunbar wanted each worm hole free of stain or varnish. Mr. Green had to use a toothpick to clean out the many holes. All the precise details were ordered by Mr. Dunbar to give Mr. Truitt the finest house available at that time.

One of the special features of this house is its unique windows. The screens seem to disappear as they roll up on tracks above each window. All of the window panes are held in place by lead, as opposed to putty, and the windows crank out—all state-of-the-art in 1940.

Another feature of the house is the sprinkler system. Two bottles of chemicals are concealed above each doorway. When the bottles come in contact with intense heat, they explode to activate the sprinkler system. Fortunately, its effectiveness hasn't been tested.

The slate roof is also an example of the quality of Mr. Dunbar's work. "It's supposed to be guaranteed for 100 years or a lifetime," said Mr. Riley and has worn well in its 45 years. There are copper pieces jutting from the slate which break up ice as it falls from the roof. The copper also protects the house's gutters. Under the slate there is a layer of copper sheeting which can be seen around the gutters and drains.

Air conditioning and a maid's room, over the garage, were incorporated in the original plans but because of the heating system, the air conditioning was never installed. The maid's room has yet to be finished.

The first residents of the house were Mr. and Mrs. Archie W. Truitt, the builders of the home. Mr. Truitt was originally told that it would cost \$14,000, but an additional

\$6,000 was requested by Mr. Dunbar to finish the house in the fashion Mr. Truitt wanted. Mr. and Mrs. Truitt lived in this house from 1941 to 1966 during which time the house stayed pretty much the same. In 1966 the Truitts traded the house to Kenneth Jackson for a house in Kellwood Hills.

Mr. Jackson built a funeral home next door to the house. For the foyer Mrs. Jackson bought oriental rugs which still remain today. After the death of Mrs. Jackson, Mr. Jackson sold the house and moved to another residence.

Beneath the rugs lies the control to an alarm system. It is unique in that it is the only alarm system in a house that rings at the police station. This system was installed by Eldon Alexander who owned the house from 1974 to 1979.

Mr. Alexander was the owner of Alexander Studios in Kirksville. Along with the alarm system, the Alexanders built a fence that surrounds the property to keep trespassers from walking through the backyard to Lincoln Square Shopping Center. They also built a large utility shed in the back yard.

In 1981 Mr. and Mrs. Don Riley bought the house from the Alexanders and live there now. They bought the house when Mr. Riley's business demanded that he be closer to town. When asked what drew them to this house, Mr. Riley will say that because they had lived on a farm they were used to privacy, "This house has lots of privacy. Besides, Gladys liked the house."

The house has basically remained the same through the years. It is just as beautiful today as it was in 1941 and is just as sturdy and impressive. Proving that it pays to use "nothing but the best."

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