

The Brooklyn Cottage becomes The Manse.

by Louise Romero Trujillo

I have many fond memories living in Dixon in the manse for 13 years. My dad, Rev. Porfirio Romero, came to be the pastor of The Dixon Presbyterian Church when I was a second grader. Little did I know, our family including Victor, myself, and Eleanor, would cherish the many happy times we had living in such a big house.

Shortly after we moved into the manse, my mother, Elizabeth, told me I had been born in this house. She explained that our home used to be a hospital, The Brooklyn Cottage Hospital. No wonder our house was so big!

Our home, even though other pastors had lived there before, was very much as it had been when it was The Brooklyn Cottage Hospital. The right front entrance was my father's study and visitors' entrance. The first thing you saw as you entered this room, were the massive bookshelves with cabinets at the bottom of the shelves. These shelves, I heard, were used to keep the medical supplies when patients came to be examined. The room to the left was Eleanor's and my bedroom for a very short time as my folks thought it would be a nice living room. I will mention here that most of the rooms had one massive bookshelf up to the ceilings with either a closet or cabinets at the bottom. Where the small hallway and the two bedrooms off this hallway are now, this area was one big room! My father made this room into two smaller bedrooms so Eleanor and I could share a room and Victor the other. You could enter our one bathroom from Victor's room or from a door off the kitchen. These two doors were a blessing to Victor and myself as when we were disciplined by our father, we'd run in one door, lock it and run to the other door and lock it before Dad could get to that door. There we remained until Eleanor had to come in. When we unlocked the door, Dad was always there. You can guess what happened next!

My father, along with the men from the church, continued making changes in the manse. Where the kitchen is now, this was our living room. It was a small room, therefore, making it hard for Mom and Dad to entertain, have meetings and even perform small weddings and baptisms. I remember one wedding: One of my dad's sisters and her fiancé were in the middle of taking their vows when I made my grand entrance to the wedding. A door from our then kitchen (now the master bedroom), was missing the door knob therefore making a nice peephole. Victor and I were taking turns peeking through this hole watching our dad perform our aunt's wedding. Lo and behold, Victor pushed me, the door flew open and I landed in front of Dad and the bride and groom! Well, again you can guess what happened after this memorable wedding. Changing this small living room into a kitchen was the most difficult task the men worked on. Plumbing, connecting a gas line inspectors, etc. was certainly a very busy and messy job!

There was a basement under the house. There were two entrances, one outside and the other on the floor in Mom's and Dad's bedroom (now the dining room). Our folks would store their canned goods and fresh fruit there. Many boxes sent from the "big" churches in the east were mailed to our church before Christmas. These many

boxes were stored in the basement. These were full of toys, homemade quilts, children clothes, shoes, books, etc. These wonderful gifts were to be given to the mission school children at Christmas. Getting close to Christmas, Mom and Dad would load all these boxes and take them to the mission school where the teachers and other parishioners would prepare the nice bags to be given to the children after their "great" Christmas production.

I could go on and on about the manse - but I do want to mention the two wooden shed like buildings on the west side of the manse. Our parents said that one of these sheds was where the laundry was done when it was a hospital. The other was used for storage. My folks fixed one of the sheds so Eleanor and I could use it as a playhouse. The other was used to keep the cute little chicks Dad had ordered through the mail.

Several boys, Tomas and Ernest Atencio, Victor and others came to help my father prepare an area behind the garage into a very nice garden! I remember chili, calabazas, peas, corn and green beans were planted. We never lacked for a delicious stew!

Even though our parents worked hard in their ministry, keeping us clothed, fed, and sending us to Allison James and Menaul, we always knew there were many families in the area that did the same.

On September 25th, 1956, my brother, Victor, was killed in a car accident in California. This was a very difficult time for all of my family. I was in my first year in college, Eleanor was attending Allison James, therefore my parents decided to take their ministry to San Antonio, Texas. This move certainly helped Mom and Dad relieve them of the great pain they felt of losing their son.

Mom and Dad never forgot their wonderful friends from New Mexico. After two years in San Antonio, they accepted their call to Ranchos Presbyterian Church. They often visited the staff at Embudo Hospital, friends and relatives from Dixon.

I congratulate the many who took such an interest in renovating The Brooklyn Cottage Hospital!