

The Castle-The Barlow- Massicks House. Recollections by Jerry Munderloh

Interviewer: Jerry Munderloh has agreed to do an oral history for the Prescott Valley Historical Society recalling his time spent living in the Barlow- Massicks House also known as the "Castle" The Castle is a large 3 story home built in the 1890s by Thomas Gibson Barlow-Massicks and it is located adjacent to Fain Park. Barlow-Massicks came from England representing English mining interests, and he also had many mining claims. The house was nicknamed "the Castle" by the soldiers that camped on the Bull Whacker stage road. Barlow-Massicks was the stage master and the chimney of the stage stop still exists. Jerry, will you tell us how you came to live in the "Castle"?

Jerry: In 1960 I was hired by the Arizona Wildlife Department to poison coyotes. The poison was kept at what I called the ghost town about a mile down Lynx Creek from the Castle, as the Barlow- Massicks house was known. The ghost town was probably built by Fitzmaurice, a rancher and miner who acquired the property after Barlow-Massicks and before the Fains. Fitzmaurice probably built the building during his placer mining of the creek because it was wired for electricity. There was one large building with a way down into the side of the canyon for food storage, and there were three small buildings for the miners to stay. The road to these buildings and to the Castle came off the old Black Canyon Highway. Highway 69 was just finished.

Interviewer: So do you remember when these buildings disappeared or what happened to them?

Jerry: I have pictures of them. I think that the gravel operation located nearby destroyed them.

Interviewer: Back to your story-

Jerry: After seeing the coyote poison and what I was to do I decided the job was not for me. I then walked up the creek and there was the Castle! I couldn't believe what I saw.

I said to myself that I would like to live there. I went up to the house from the canyon and saw what bad shape it was in. Shingles were off the south and east sides. Inside, the ceiling had no plaster. The floors were broken in and garbage was all over. I then went to Norman Fain who owned the property, and asked him if I could live there in exchange for fixing it up. He said that he didn't think it was worth it, but if I did the work he would pay for the materials.

Interviewer: So that was the beginning of your work on the castle.

Jerry: Yes, it became a very busy time. I began by taking seven trailer loads of debris from the house. The shingles were unique and had to be split to match the existing ones. My brother-in-law painted the roof with many coats and that lasted until the Town of Prescott Valley took over. I put plaster boards on the ceiling and fixed the floors. I kept the wallpaper in the big living room. There was a huge table in that room. I understand

that it is no longer there. I plastered the fireplace because it was in such bad condition. There was propane to the house and a gas stove in the kitchen. There was also a big 4 burner wood stove. I put a gas lamp above the kitchen table. The rest of the house had kerosene lamps.

Interviewer: This sounds like pretty primitive living for the 1960s.

Jerry: Well, I wired the house for electricity and I bought a generator that started when a light was turned on. While wiring, way back in the attic I found a number of glass plates and regular photographs. Also there were bullion records from San Francisco. They showed 19 million. Bob Fitzmaurice was in school working on his master's degree, so I gave all that to him.

Interviewer: Does that mean that there was 19 million taken from the area by Fitzmaurice or would those have been Barlow- Massicks records?

Jerry: I'm not certain about that. It was a long time ago.

Interviewer: Please go on with your story.

Jerry: While I was living in the Castle we invited two old people to visit us. They were living in the Pioneer Home. One of them was Sharlot Hall's cousin, a Boblett. She lived in a home along the creek on a road that Barlow Massicks used to haul material to build the dam that at Lynx Creek. The Boblett house is still there and some of his dam is still visible. When my son Marty had the job to widen the spillway, the dam was still visible. The Boblett lady said that one of the stories was that Barlow-Massicks "built the dam with whiskey and that was why the dam didn't last." Our other visitor was a man who had trouble with Barlow-Massicks over horses. He said that Massicks would shoot a steer from his upstairs window when he needed meat.

I want to digress a bit and tell you a story that this man told me. He once owned the stage stop on Williamson Valley Road where the Ehrenberg and Hardyville Roads meet. It was a neat place-2 stories with a deck on the second floor. He told of the time when Indians came to cause trouble and there were only three guys at the station. They kept going in and out of the 2nd floor door and changing hats and shirts. The Indians thought that there were many men there, so they left. That building was torn down only a few years ago.

Interviewer: That's a great story! Did these visitors remember anything else about the Castle?

Jerry: I don't recall, but he sat in the rocking chair and sang some old songs.

I can get back to telling about what I did at the Castle. The backyard dropped into the canyon. I put a fence along it. I made a seesaw for the kids and a rattlesnake came to share it. There was an outhouse hanging over the canyon. I have a picture of that. On the 2nd floor is a bathroom with a flush toilet, sink and tub. The toilet was invented before

the castle was built. For a while I had to haul water. I planted some Ailanthus trees (tree os heaven) and they are still there. Then I put a tank up on the hillside. The pipes went there. The pipes led from the tank to the bottom of the canyon. They must have pumped water from the creek. I decided to dig a well. The creek was flowing. I had to dig at night as I was teaching school during the day. I got down about 10 feet and hit water. It was nice clean water. The next night I started to expand my hole and hit planks. The hole where I had hit water was through a rotten plank so I dug around and found good planks and a round well full of mud. I got a pump and ran water from the creek and sloshed around and pumped the well clean. I put a pipe into the pump, buried the well and fixed the plank. I started the pump and was very disappointed. It didn't pump beyond the Castle. My Dad happened to be visiting and he said I was trying to pump water without letting air in to replace the water. Like trying to suck pop out of a bottle without letting air in. I had to dig back down and put a pipe in to let in the air. That pipe is still there. The well worked fine. The Caldwell's never pumped water. They always hauled it. I would like to move that pump to the mining exhibit.

Interviewer: can see that you did a tremendous lot of work to make the Castle habitable.

Jerry: Back to the inside Castle work. On the 2nd floor I put 2 doors, one to shut off the cold from the rest of the rooms. That left our room, the kid's room and the bathroom. As my daughter got older I wanted her to have her own room so I had to put in another door. This left the Governor's room and the front stairs without heat. We called the largest of the four rooms the Governor's room because someone told us that a governor once stayed there.

Interviewer: It sounds like you made the old Castle quite livable. Did you do anything else to the interior?

Jerry: Yes, I did a lot on the front steps and the porch. Outside, the east yard had a number of old mining things. I moved them into a little wash and 50 years later I moved them down to Fain Park to start our mining exhibit there. I burned a lot of wood. I built a little building at the end of the driveway for storage and that building is still there.

I do have another story to tell about my experiences at the Castle. One day Norman Fain, his friend Joe Baldwin and I were trying to blast the dam free. There wasn't much room for water. Joe was interested in finding gold and he had some large equipment that needed a lot of water. We had coffee cans full of dynamite and threw them behind the dam. That didn't work so we decided to crawl up the 30 inch hole at the bottom of the dam. We had sticks of dynamite to place in the rocks that plugged the dam. We drew straws and I got the 2nd longest. The first one didn't work but loosened some rock and water. Quite scary! I was the next to try. It worked! Water and mud and rocks came out like a big tube of toothpaste. That made a larger lake.

Interviewer: What a story! I'm sure you have many more.

Jerry: Well, I do have a bobcat story. I had added onto the shed where I kept my generator and it was for chickens. One night a bobcat got in and got some of my chickens. I set a trap and he got caught but escaped with my trap. I found him up the canyon but couldn't get him because he was back between the rocks in a very steep part of the canyon. There were three more cats that I saw crossing the canyon. Days later I found my trap in my mail box. I found out the a man named Rush who had the ranch across Old Black Canyon Highway found the cat in his chicken coop with the trap still attached.

Interviewer: I'm sure you have more stories to tell about the time in the Castle, but we'll stop for now and hope that we can add to these recollections sometime later. Thank you so much for sharing these memories.

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