

Tucson Woman Lives On Land She Homesteaded



Mrs. Alvina Himmel Edmondson, pioneer resident of Tucson, pictured in front of her home, 2625 East First street, which she homesteaded as a young bride in 1897 and where she has lived ever since.

Pioneer Woman Is Proud Of Redwood

Homesteader Of 45 Years Ago Says It Withstands Southwest Elements

"Other structures are all right for those who don't mind patching them up as they fall victim to the severe elements of the southwest, but I'll take good old redwood for my home any time."

This is the unqualified opinion of Mrs. Alvina Himmel Edmondson, who, with her three daughters, Catherine, Grace, and Alvina, has lived in the same home of that construction on land that she homesteaded single-handed at 2625 East First street 45 years ago.

Re-shingled but once in all that time and never painted, Mrs. Edmondson's home is a living monument to the hardness of a wood that not only withstands wind, rain and excessive heat, but even turns away that persistent insect, the termite.

Came As Bride

Mrs. Edmondson, who is 73, came to Tucson a young bride and recalls how Tucson was then a small village. As she expresses it, "I could have had the whole county for the asking."

She was anxious to have a home of her own so decided to homestead 160 acres of land, on a part of which her house still stands. Her husband was unable to obtain work here so he went to Clifton. She remained alone and established her homestead.

She told how in those early days the storms in Tucson were much worse than they are today; of how "the wind and rain were so severe" that at times she thought surely the walls of her house would fall in, but "the sturdy redwood building withstood them all."

The shingles on her home have been renewed once since 1897; that was in 1917. The present shingles are still in good condition. Mrs. Edmondson is proud of her home and the quality of wood of which it is built. She pointed to the ceiling and walls, proudly pointing out the fine manner it has withstood the ravages of time.

Termites Fall

"The termites started on it on a few years ago," she said. "so I got a man to come out for the purpose of exterminating them, but after looking at the wood he told me that as it was redwood the termites would not stay long due to the type of acid in redwood which poisons them. He was right, for without any treatment the termites soon disappeared and there have never been any since."

When she first built the house, her nearest neighbor lived two miles away and Mrs. Edmondson spent many lonely years replete with nights and days of fearful forebodings. "It was so quiet you could hear the silence," she said.

Coyotes, rattlesnakes and Indians caused her great uneasiness. The coyotes used to howl and jump against the walls and doors at

night trying to get at the food inside. "They used to run in packs and lots of times when I walked four miles into town pushing the babies in a carriage and pulling a small wagon, in which I carried my purchases, I would have to chase them away with sticks."

"Great numbers of rattlesnakes were on the land and several times I had an Indian who worked on an adjoining homestead come over and kill them for me when they got too numerous."

Indians Sullen

"Indians were still sullen and certainly not what one would call law-abiding. They were frequently around in considerable numbers and would demand clothing and food from me. I used to keep them well supplied with coffee but once in a while this would not satisfy them and it was necessary to threaten them with a revolver to make them go away. I have always prayed a lot. This, together with the revolver I had, which used to belong to 'Buffalo Bill', always saved me and my children from harm," she related.

As Mrs. Edmondson is representative of the sturdy pioneers of early Tucson, so too her house stands a monument to the durability of redwood lumber used in its construction.

Redwood now as then is used extensively in the building of homes, offices and factories.