

Wilson Island Stories of the early 1900s  
**The Sigmund and Loraine Levy Home at 1549 N. Echo Avenue**

This month's short story was written by a descendant of the Levy family, Debi Austen, who has shared some of her family photos of this home from 1934, the year it was built. Thanks to Debi's efforts we get a glimpse of the surrounding vegetation and landscaping as well as the home itself! Photos like these are extremely difficult to come by now 85 years later.

The home was built by Taylor-Wheeler Builders in 1934 for Sig and Loraine in what is known as the Wilson Island historic district. The name "Wilson Island" is a local term that refers to the initial plan for the neighborhood where Wilson and Echo Avenue were designed to dead-end at Carmen Avenue, which formed a backward "P" shape or "island". The district qualifies for Fresno's Local Register of Historic Resources ([www.historicfresno.org](http://www.historicfresno.org)). The home is a Spanish revival home with a Monterey influence, which is interesting since Loraine was raised in Monterey, California.

Sig and Loraine were, obviously, quite taken with their new home and took these photos on July 4, 1934 to remember what it looked like as they moved their young family in.



*Front of house at 1549 N. Echo Avenue, Fresno, California July 1934*

If you look closely (and with help from the zoom tool), you can see the sign that shows it was built by Taylor Wheeler Builders. I wonder if they'd moved in yet or were just getting ready.



*And another angle with more of a view from the side of the house. July 1934*

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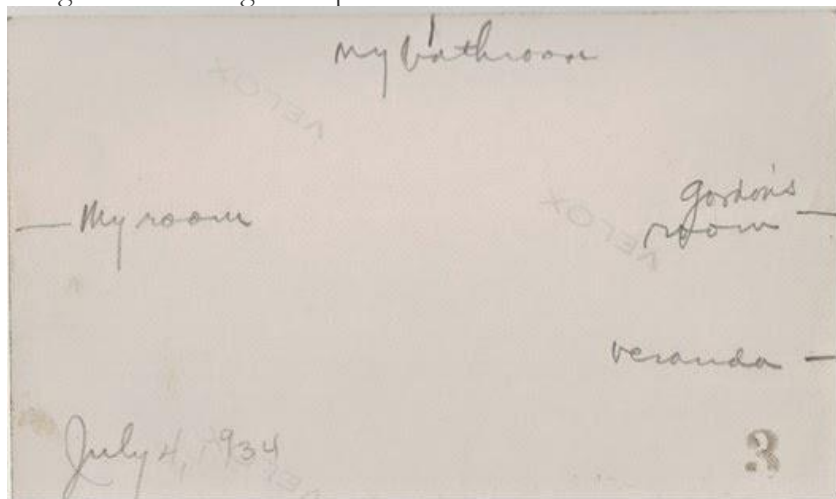
The room upstairs with the balcony was my Uncle's bedroom with windows both on the balcony and on the side of the house. My dad's bedroom was upstairs on the corner in the back. What's interesting is that the three corner windows on the first floor on the side corner were about where the den would have been. And I always remember that den being very dark without any windows on that side – did they remodel at some point and cover those windows up? I do remember that was the wall where the cuckoo clock hung (that bird was NOISY!) and there were no windows there. Maybe my cousin who knows the people who own the house today can confirm that for me.



*And a view from the back. Notice the trees along Carmen Ave to the left rear. July 1934*

The upstairs windows on the left were my dad's bedroom – and the windows on the right were my grandmother's room. The little window to the left of my grandmother's room was the bathroom but I don't remember what the other little window was – maybe there were two windows in the master bath.

My grandmother was good at labeling these photos –



*here's what she wrote on the back of that photo.*

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I find it interesting that even in 1934 when she had been married for only 15 years, she called out that it was “her” room. I remember that it was her room and Grandpa had his own room but I’m surprised that they weren’t sharing a bedroom back then.

And there are even photos of the kitchen! These photos were taken by Laval Commercial Photography on August 1, 1934. I wonder why they had a professional photographer take photos of their kitchen?



Looks like they had new fangled contraptions in the kitchen – a phone and a mixer. I’ll bet those were hot items in 1934! This is pretty much how I remember the kitchen and there never seemed to be much out of place as Grandma didn’t do much cooking. I do remember arriving for the weekend and she’d bring out the ice cream and make us a milk shake.



This is another angle of the kitchen. Check out the washer and dryer in the hallway! To the right of the washer and dryer was the side entrance door and to the left was a bedroom that was used by the maid in the early days



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I don't know why but when we went to help clean out the house in 1982 after Grandma died, I took pictures. I guess even then I was interested in my family history and wanted to remember forever the home my dad grew up in. Things had changed just a bit in almost 50 years!



1982



And the back of the house – you can't even see the windows in Dad's bedroom anymore. 1982

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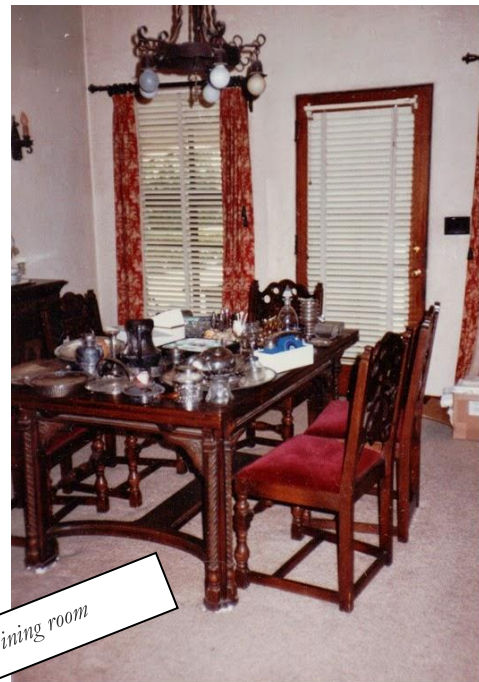
The house was in disarray that day, but I'm glad I snapped a few photos



*Living room.  
Dad learned to play on that piano*



*Hallway with Grandma's  
bedroom in the background  
Loved the banisters!*



*Dining room*



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And a very special photo of my two daughters in the backyard in front of the citrus ‘orchard’ – I’ll never forget those cheesy flamingos!



The Sigmund (‘Sig’) and Loraine Levy Home in 2019.

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If you would like to know more about Debi’s family history go to her blog at:  
[www.who-knew-it.blogspot.com](http://www.who-knew-it.blogspot.com)