

TIME AGAIN

A monthly publication of The Fallbrook Historical Society

April 2021

THE STORY OF THE BELL HOUSE

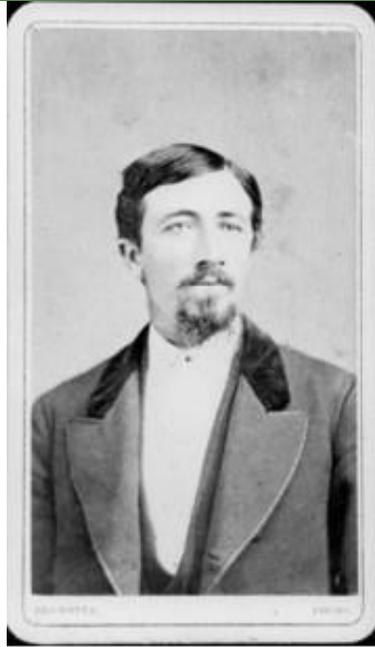


The Bell House today. In architecture; **Victorian Italianate** pertains to a mid-Victorian American style, remotely based on Romanesque vernacular residential and castle architecture of the Italian countryside, sometimes containing Renaissance and Baroque elements.

The Bell House is # 3 in the Fallbrook Historic Registry. The home was built in 1889 by M.J. Shaul. This home is the only remaining two story Victorian Italianate dwelling in the Fallbrook area. The historic house is located at 655 E. Alvarado St.

Continued on P. 2

This building was originally listed as the M.J. Shaul Residence. Today it is more commonly known as the Bell House. Many prominent Fallbrook citizens have lived in this home over the past 132 years. Until recently, we did not know much about the original owner, M.J. Shaul. That's partly because Shaul did not remain in Fallbrook for the long term. A few years after erecting this house, Shaul went north for adventure and fortune.



Marion Jefferson Shaul
about 1890



Marion Jefferson Shaul in later
years

Marion Jefferson Shaul, from Iowa, was an early Fallbrook homesteader and raisin farmer 1886¹ northeast of Live Oak Canyon, near today's Rainbow. He taught Sunday school for a time at the Fallbrook Methodist church on Fig St. Shaul purchased a lot on Alvarado Street to have a home closer to town. Becoming interested in real estate opportunities, M.J. Shaul and his wife Rachel moved to the Los Angeles area in 1894, selling his Fallbrook residence to A.H. & Laurette Murphy the same year. The Murphy's turned around and sold the place in 1896 to Thomas Smith, a Fallbrook rancher².

Meanwhile, Shaul joined the Alaska Gold Rush. He and the rest of his expedition froze and starved during the hard winter of 1899, deep in the Alaskan backcountry. Shaul survived and returned with his gold dust to buy large tracts of undeveloped sheep pasture that covered most of today's City of Long Beach³. He spent two years in the City of Oceanside investing in real estate and helping to found the Oceanside Electric and Gas Company before returning to his business interests in Long Beach. M.J. Shaul and his wife are buried in Long Beach.

But let's return our story to Fallbrook and the history of the house on 655 E. Alvarado.

In 1904, Kate Sidle Regan, the first president of the Fallbrook Women's Club, purchased the Alvarado St. home from Smith. Regan sold the house in 1910 to Horatio & Emelia Smelser. Horatio Smelser was the founder and president of Citizen's Commercial Bank in Fallbrook. When Horatio died in 1920, the property was conveyed to his widow Emelia, who resided here until 1942 when Herbert & Mignon Wright bought the property.

In 1944, Charles & Lenora Kraffts purchased the structure and retained ownership until 1946 when the dwelling was sold to Douglas Hamilton, a retired U.S. Marine Corps Master Sgt.⁴ After his death in 1955, Hamilton's widow Viola continued to own the house until 1985, although she resided at a different location in town.



Chuck Bell (1936-1993) This is his 1954 senior yearbook photo.



Residence of H. Smelser, Banker, Fallbrook.

1914 Fallbrook Enterprise photo. Alvarado Street is in the foreground

In 1967, the young couple Charles & Bonnie Bell, Fallbrook High School alumni, were occupying the home.⁵ The Bells resided here for the rest of their lives. The two-story bay windows were added to the building by the Bells. Bonnie continued to live here after her husband Chuck died in 1993. Bonnie Bell passed away in 2015. Her Fallbrook High School sweater, class of '53, hangs in the Historical Society museum on Rocky Crest Rd.

-Tom Frew

Fallbrook Historical Society Historian

References:

- 1) Homestead Records for township 9S3W on file at Fallbrook Historical Society.
- 2) Fallbrook Historic Resources Inventory, Susan H. Carrico & S. Kathleen Flanigan Sept. 1991.
- 3) Extended History of California and Extended History of its Coast Counties Vol. 1 Guinn pg. 713.
- 4) Fallbrook Historic Resources Inventory, Carrico & Flanigan.
- 5) Fallbrook telephone books from the 1960s.



Bonnie Lincoln (1935-2015) This is her 1953 senior yearbook photo. She married Chuck Bell in 1955.



For more stories like this, visit our webpage at www.fallbrookhistoricalsociety.org