

Thursday, April 19, 1990

Townsite residences city's first homes

Much has been said, less written, about the Townsite home, a house of straight-forward features which have lasted through the years despite its initial billing as only temporary, 10-year dwellings.

The structures themselves featured full utility improvements including electricity and indoor water and sewer service.

All were constructed on a standard plan of shiplap on wood fram with composition roof, tongue and groove wood flooring and featured a covered carport and driveway.

Much has been made of the redwood used to construct the homes; such materials would lead any carpenter to believe the houses were meant for more than temporary use.

Southern Nevada Museum curator Mark Ryzdyski noted redwood is exceptionally dense and one of the few woods that naturally resists water, insects and dry rot.

For whatever reason, Ryzdyski thinks the use of redwood is the only departure for builders that were clearly thinking of a temporary housing project.

Other features of the house may have indicated the temporary nature that was anticipated, such as the heating and cooling systems.

Original six-sided evaporative coolers were fed a continuous stream of water that drained from the cooler to the ground while operating. A faucet was turned on along with the cooler and water flowed to the ground while the cooler worked.

Water was free during the war years, and only a nominal charge was exacted thereafter.

No insulation of any kind was included in homes of the era, yet Townsite interior walls were little more than painted plywood.

The lack of a concrete foundation may be the key piece of evidence to signal that builders really did intend for Townsite homes to be temporary.

The house was placed on concrete piles in the ground, Ryzdyski said, indicating builders planned to move the structures at a later date, a common practice in the yet undeveloped and wood-starved Nevada.

When the plant site was sold to Nevada and later to private industries, the issue of the homes proved to be a constant irritation to both the company owner and would-be owners.

Townsite houses finally were sold during the area's industrial revival during the early 1950s to families that had occupied them to that date or wish to purchase what was to become a permanent Henderson home for many.

Industrial Days 1990 - Henderson Home News, Boulder City News, Green Valley News 15A



MUSEUM PIECE—Noting the quick disappearance of unimproved Townsite homes, the Southern Nevada Museum has

worked diligently for about five years to secure their Townsite House exhibit, complete with 1940s furnishings.