



Photo by Jan Vick, Sea Wing Creations

By Phil Pezzaglia

Historic Larsen Home

You only have to walk around downtown Rio Vista to notice the many beautiful older homes that line the historic streets of town. Each of these homes has its own history, built upon those individuals who either built or lived in the houses throughout the years.

One of the finest and most recognizable homes in Rio Vista is the 118 year old Larsen House, located on picturesque South Second Street. To get a real sense of the style and design of the house, you must learn first about the man who contracted to have it built to fit him and his family's needs.

Lars Peter Larsen was born on July 11, 1855 on the island of Laeso, in Denmark. At the age of fourteen he boarded a sailing ship as a helper. With determination and a love for the sea, Larsen gradually worked his way up from the lowest position in the kitchen to captain of *Sadie F. Caller*, making trips to the South Pacific and Alaska.

After visiting California, Larsen found the 31st state to his liking and decided to stay, accepting a captain's position on *Twilight*, which ran from San Francisco to Monterey.

Married in 1885, Captain Larsen and his wife Annie arrived in Rio Vista in 1887. Shortly after arriving he purchased half of the lumber company, changing the business' name to Sullivan & Larsen.

In the 1893 vote to incorporate Rio Vista, Larsen was elected town Treasurer by a landslide, with 82 votes, and held this elected position until his death in 1924. Larsen was also one of the founders of the Bank of Rio Vista, serving as bank president from 1904 to 1920. Lars Peter Larsen passed away in 1924 at the age of 69. Larsen's legacy is the fine Victorian home that he built on the corner of South Second Street and Bruning Avenue.

The home is Victorian in style and is considered one of the most beautiful homes ever built in Rio Vista. The property covers one quarter of the block, containing a beautiful yard with a barn and carriage house. The small outhouse still stands under the trees near the rear of the yard.

The home was constructed in the fashion of the day: brick foundation, wood framing, and lathe and plaster interior walls. Larsen hand-picked all of the lumber for perfection and, having amassed a certain wealth, purchased the best that money could buy.

The interior wood work is constructed of all redwood with beautiful hand painted graining, floors are hardwood with decorative feature strip trim, and the fireplace is Italian marble. First floor rooms have 13 ½ foot ceilings while second floor rooms are approximately 12 ½ foot.

The interior of the home has changed very little since its construction over a century ago. One very unique feature of the interior are several original pieces of furniture that Captain and Mrs. Larsen purchased. Each owner since has let those pieces remain with the home as it changed hands.

Noteworthy exterior items are the "widow's walk" atop the home, the Queen Anne corner tower and the carved decorations on the verge boards under the gabled eaves.

After Mrs. Larsen's passing in 1952, her son Arthur sold the family home to Floyd Hardwick, an engineer. The Hardwick's sold to Dr. Robert Bader, a local chiropractor, in 1964 and they in turn sold it to the current owners, the Shafer's, in 2005.

After 118 years, the home still remains one of the most beautiful and recognizable historic homes of Rio Vista and a legacy to its original owner.