

Phillips County's oldest home endures the test of time

Written by Kyle Arnoldy

With Holyoke celebrating its 125th anniversary earlier this year, more eyes than ever have been on the history of the city.

While the town has progressed and adapted with the times over the years, a few structures from the late 1800s can still be spotted throughout the county.

According to the Phillips County Assessor's Office, just 10 residential structures remain standing from before 1900. Of those, just one of the homes predates 1890.

Lenny and Pat Warren have the distinction of owning the oldest house in Phillips County. Constructed in 1888, the house located at 130 S. Lewis Ave. has stood strong since the incorporation of Holyoke.

According to "Building Holyoke: 125 Years of History as Seen Through its Architecture," a survey project of all buildings constructed in Phillips County before 1970 by the University of Colorado Denver Center of Preservation Research, frontier architecture was generally quick, small and utilitarian.



Pictured in 1966, the Warren house west of town has gone through many changes in its 125-year existence.

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Builders of the area were limited by the lack of availability of materials. Some resorted to sod houses constructed from prairie grass roots.

Within a decade or two, most frontier buildings were abandoned, replaced with more permanent buildings or were expanded and renovated.

Although changes in the form of remodeling and general updates have taken place at the Warren residence, the foundation of the home remains the same.

Having purchased the house in 1965, the Warrens have continued to put forth the time and energy in keeping the home in tip-top shape.

The original four-room layout that made up the 1888 living area is still present, just expanded.

Some renovations were made prior to the Warrens moving in, including remodeling in 1934.

The kitchen had been removed from the living room area by previous owners, but that would not be the last renovations made to the kitchen.



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Today the Warren home boasts new siding, windows, doors and patio area among many other upgrades.

—Enterprise photo

Through their nearly five decades at the home, the Warrens have extended the walls on both the east and west ends of the house to give them more living room. The original building was 24 feet by 24 feet. Added was a 7 feet by 17.5 feet area on the east end and an 18 feet by 22.5 feet area on the west end, making the kitchen and dining area much more comfortable.

The roof was originally leveled out at the top, typical of hipped box homes in the area. Due to leaking problems, Leonard gave the roof a peak to avoid water from collecting.

When adding on to the already-existent partial basement in the early 1970s, Leonard said he was surprised to find out that there was no way to get under the home as it had no real foundation. He said it looked like someone dug a hole in the dirt and began pouring in the concrete.

In the interior of the home, all of the walls have been repaneled and a false ceiling was created, bringing the height down from 11 to eight feet. A closet has also been added.

While the solidarity the home once offered has been greatly reduced since L&L Ready Mix Concrete Co. set up shop across the street in the 1970s, a stark contrast from the pastures that once surrounded the premises, the Warrens have no complaints and no intention of living anywhere else.

The Warrens just recently found out of the home's status as oldest in the county. When asked if he had ever considered relocating to a newer home in the past 48 years, Leonard was quick to shake his head.

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“I guess we never had enough sense to leave,” Leonard said with a smile.

Holyoke Enterprise August 1, 2013