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## Marie Schorer Cottage

• 1509 • 20TH STREET •

Galveston's hurricane of 1900 not only erased much of the island's structural identity but also obliterated many of the records of that time and the years that immediately followed. The property at 1509 20<sup>th</sup> Street is just one example of modern historians' inability to track exactly what happened in the immediate aftermath of the terrible storm that still holds the nation's record for greatest loss of human life in a natural disaster.

According to Galveston's 1891 and 1899 Sanborn maps, there was a one-story frame dwelling on the property at 1509 20<sup>th</sup> Street. Built in a horseshoe-shape, it had a central projecting bay at the front. At the rear, there was a 2 1/2-story frame stable and, at the back of the property, a one-story frame building, possibly an outhouse or hen house.

In a case of historic "now you see it, now you don't," there are no other entries for the property until 1904, when insurance records state that a house was built at 1509 20<sup>th</sup> Street in December of 1903. Owned by "F. Schorer," it is described as a 1 1/2-story frame building with a metal roof. The house sat on 10-foot posts, and the basement was partly enclosed. Lighting for the home was originally oil, but the house was later wired for electricity. Gasoline was used for the cook stove, and there were four rooms, two halls, one bath, two pantries, and two porches.

Frank Schorer, the owner of the home, was listed in the 1903 city directory as a dealer in firearms, ammunition, fishing tackle and sporting goods. He also was a gunsmith, locksmith and agent for Dupont Powder Mills at 2206 Mechanic. In the business section of the directory, he is listed under "Ammunition" as one of three dealers at a shop located at 2206 Mechanic. Apparently firearms was a booming business in Galveston in the early 1900s, as Schorer also is one of six listings under gun and locksmiths, and one of three listings under guns and pistols.

An additional advertisement says: "Scorer[sic], Frank. Importer and dealer in firearms, ammunition, fishing tackle and general sporting goods, 2206 Mechanic Street, iron safes and locks opened and repaired. Also keys of all kinds made to order. Re-stocking and repairing fine guns a specialty."

Whether Mr. Schorer's profession had anything to do with his demise is not known, but in 1905, the city directory shows Mrs. Marie Schorer as the widow of Frank and living



alone at 1509 20<sup>th</sup> Street. By 1909, however, Victor Schorer, perhaps a brother or a son and also listed as a gunsmith, had joined the Schorer household. In 1920, Mrs. Schorer sold the property to William S. Pask, who in the 1923 directory is listed as a stenographer and living at the home with his wife, Essye K. Pask. The property subsequently changed hands more than a half dozen times over the next 70 years.

When the current owners found the house in April 1998, it had been abandoned for at least eight years. The city had boarded the windows to

discourage vagrants, who had earlier been camping in the attic, and both the interior and exterior were in serious disrepair. The new owners, who had already redone one house in Galveston a few years earlier, started by leveling the structure, then replumbed, rewired, replaced the roof and repainted the exterior before moving on to the interior. Throughout the process, however, they always sought to retain the character of the original home, while making it suitable for their modern lifestyle. "This was built as a working man's house," they say. "We weren't trying to create a showplace, but rather make it a livable home without destroying its historic charm."

The asymmetrical Queen Anne cottage of today features a gabled roof and interesting forward-facing gable bay with shingle detailing. The front door is a typical Queen Anne style, with a combination of wood panels and glass; there is also a transom. The porch windows feature a two-over-two pane design, and the bay window is in one-over-one styling. Scrolled brackets detail the bay window and porch, and other porch design elements include turned posts and intricate woodwork above the scrolls. A small, hipped roof dormer has casement windows, and board and batten siding encloses the raised basement.

