

Once Upon A Time in North Park

The KLICKA "Studio Bungalo"

by Donald Covington

*"To own a home and fireside is everyman's ambition and every family's heritage."
-George Klicka, (1935)*

In the early 1930's affordable housing was a serious concern of most young American families caught in the downward spiral of the Great Depression. Therefore, a major consideration on the part of home builders and designers was the quest for a marketable product. One local company which met the challenge of creating small, economical and efficient homes for mass consumption was the Klicka Lumber and Mortgage Company of North Park.

The Klicka brothers, Emit and George, moved to San Diego from Chicago in 1921 and established a number of businesses including the lumber company. Emil, an experienced banker, managed the financial affairs of the businesses and was the driving force behind the construction of the Fox Theatre on University Avenue in North Park. George became the manager of the lumber company and the developer of the Studio Bungalo which was patented in the early 1930's.

The Studio Bungalo was an attempt to make it possible for the average wage earner to own his own home. In an effort to meet that goal, George Klicka and his company of builders simplified the costly construction techniques and design styles of the 1920's. The result was a pre-fabricated package of wooden frame-and-panel construction offered in several price ranges beginning as low as \$2,222.22.

The ready-cut house package was introduced as a model home on the grounds of the 1935 International Exposition in Balboa Park. In 1936, the model was approved by the Federal Government for a twenty-five year FHA loan. By the close of 1941, over 1100 had been sold for construction at sites throughout San Diego. Although more than one hundred were erected in North Park and University Heights, most of those have been replaced or drastically altered by additions and "modernizations."

A few rare examples do still survive and from curbside appear to be in their original forms. These few, 4362 Arizona, 4575 Shirley Ann Place, and the five-unit bungalow court on Lincoln near Kansas, once heralds of future affordable home construction, now stand as antique relics of a by-gone era.

Construction restrictions of World War Two and the demise of the Klicka Brothers Lumber Company brought an end to the experiment with this unique housing type. These historic cottages have become "Depression Era Collectibles" and are rapidly vanishing from our older neighborhoods.