

THE EVERGREEN ADDITION...THE EARLY DAYS...

The end of the post-World War 1 slump and the authorization of Coolidge Dam ushered in a new era of prosperity for Casa Grande. The development of the Evergreen subdivision is closely associated with this new era of prosperity for the community.

The Evergreen subdivision is most closely associated with Frank T. Gilbert and his wife Gabrilla Gilbert. Frank Gilbert was born in Homerville, Ohio on June 4, 1874. In 1901 he moved to Celina, Ohio, where he met Gabrilla Hellwarth, daughter of David and Mary Hellwarth, and members of a prominent land-owning family in Ohio. Frank and Gabrilla married on July 27, 1905. The young couple then moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma to establish their first home. They moved to Arizona in 1908 and first settled in the Glendale area.

They moved from Glendale to Casa Grande in 1922. This may be due to a combination of factors, including the push factor of the post-World slump that hit Glendale also or the pull factor of the rapidly developing Casa Grande area in anticipation of the San Carlos project. Other families relocated from Glendale to Casa Grande during this same time period. Once relocated to Casa Grande, Frank Gilbert soon became involved in the great agricultural craze of the area: fig cultivation. He also grew “truck crops” which included turnips, other vegetables, watermelons and fruit trees. Gilbert attracted partners but after tough economic times and his partners deciding to return to Phoenix and California he decided to pursue real estate speculation on his property.

He brought in both Eastern investors (Frank Gilbert’s in-laws) and local investors. On October 1, 1928 Frank Gilbert announced that 40 acres in the eastern half of the project would be placed on the market.

The official plat of the Evergreen Addition contained restrictions designed to maintain the neighborhood as an attractive residential location. While the restrictions allowed the construction of apartments, flats, bungalow courts and

duplexes as well as individual residences, the plat required that multi-family buildings cost at least twice as single-family homes. Other restrictions included a ban on poultry and livestock. A tier of eight blocks facing Florence Boulevard was designed for business development.

Gilbert advertised the Evergreen Addition as the “ideal residential spot”. He advised potential purchasers to “buy a lot now and build a home among your friends.”

In January of 1929, the construction commenced for laying the water lines and the electrical connections to the subdivision. The Gilberts held an open house in March of 1929, and reported that many lots were sold during the event. Other amenities announced for the Evergreen neighborhood in 1929 included a hotel (construction expected to start within two years) and two parks. One park would be for scenic beauty alone, while the second would be a recreational park with a pool and tennis courts.

Source: Graham, R. G., AIA (Ed.). (2002). *A Historic Resource Survey of the Evergreen Addition* (pp. 1-60, Rep.). Phoenix, AZ: Metropolis Design Group, LLC.

The Gilbert Legacy. . . .

The Gilbert family planted roots in this community and they have left quite a legacy. After moving to Casa Grande in 1922, isn’t it astonishing that 95 years later the Gilbert family who donated the land for the First Presbyterian Church (the first Protestant church in Casa Grande) on Cottonwood Lane is the same family donating the land for the new Community Recreation Center at Peart and Kortsen roads.