

THE LANGFORDS IN FULTON: THEN & NOW



The highlight for the Langford family on their ancestral visit to Fulton was a guided tour of their Uncle Charles Langford's home by Al Leemhuis, the current owner at 817 11th Avenue.



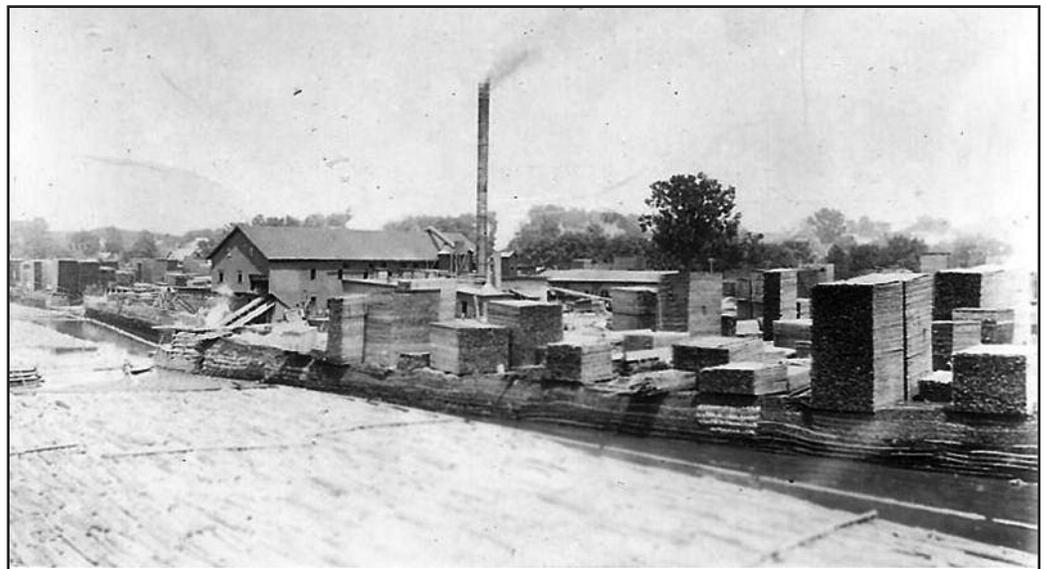
Date of Photo - 5-13-2013. Seated on the left is JoAnn Langford St. Romain, of Rogers, Arkansas; Seated on the right is Rebecca Langford Yeadon of Slidell, Louisiana; Back L-R - Patricia Langford Lukens of O'Fallon, Missouri; Al Leemhuis, current owner; Dan Foley and Nancy Langford Foley of Davenport.

By Barbara Mask

Nancy Langford Foley and her husband, Dan, of Davenport, Iowa contacted the Fulton Historical Society six months ago when he had found an article, "The History of the Sawmill Industry in Fulton, IL," on the internet. They appeared at my house on the same day that my Christmas tree was delivered. It was immediately apparent that we each had a lot of information that would be mutually beneficial to share as they knew more about the Langford family and we had extensive history on the Langford & Hall Sawmill Co. And, of course, the Charles Langford home was here.

CHARLES E. LANGFORD, FULTON'S LUMBER BARON

"Fulton has been long and extensively known as one of the best lumber markets anywhere on the Upper Mississippi River. Her mills are not as numerous as at some other points, but we venture to say that the quality manufactured is not equaled by any other up or down the stream," is a quote taken from the Fulton Journal on June 25, 1875. There were several mills, including an early steam one located on the north end of 4th Street, which was owned by Charles Dement. He used it to manufacture the wood products, such as doors, sashes, flooring and window frames for his mammoth hotel (current site of the post office). But if the designation, 'lumber baron,' was granted to any one owner in Fulton, it would indisputably be, Charles E. Langford.



Added land surface was created from an accumulation of sawdust and lumber pieces not suitable for sale (polder land-Fulton style). Early photos of the L & H Co. reveal how far the property extended into the river. Note the stacks of lumber which were stored from 6th to 14th Avenue. The lumber was cured for a year and during the peak years of the 1880s, over 7,000,000 feet were on the riverfront.

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This is an original invoice from the L & H Lumber Company for the purchase of supplies by the Fulton Development Company on June 20, 1894.

He purchased the Dement Mill in 1878 and dismantled the equipment and moved it to the large mill he had started at the east end of 8th Avenue in 1863. He hired Warren P. Hall in 1865, an experienced sawyer and mill manager and made him a full partner a year later. The Langford & Hall Sawmill Company was a successful business for over thirty years.

Langford settled in Lyons when he first arrived in the area from New York. He leased a mill in 1861 and the next year leased the Dement Mill in Fulton. In 1863, he purchased land on the river bank between Eighth and Ninth Avenues (currently a municipal parking lot and Brinkman Company supply building). Within a year, the sawmill building, a 24 by 60 feet with a single rotary saw, was in operation. The partners erected a new two-story saw mill building, 80 by 100 feet, and a boiler house built of stone and fire-proofed in 1875-76. By 1888, the annual cut was 12,000,000 feet; the average each year at the peak of this sawmill in Fulton. Langford owned other property and served as an alderman.

THE LANGFORD / LEEMHUIS HOME

The house at 817 11th Avenue was constructed in 1875 when the lumber industry was nearing its peak in Fulton. It may have been built by a C.A. Winslow, the previous owner, because Langford paid \$4000 for the property.

The main roof is mansard, a style which is developed under strict architectural rules of proportion. Originally, there was a double door on the south side for the main entrance. Today, there is a single window pane and entry is on the west side of the porch. The hall inside had two curving stairways with one remaining. The winding staircase ascends to a beautiful leaded-glass window. For a seventy year period, there was an Irish inhabitant in the big white house.

The Langfords lived here from 1875-1888. He, and his first wife, Hannah, had seven children. His daughter, Anna, married Oliver Finch, who was a well-known businessman and brick maker here in Fulton. Charles moved into the house, with the 'steamboat gothic' architecture shortly after he married his second wife, Maria Sherman on June 18, 1874. They were the parents of one daughter. When Charles Langford sold his sawmill to Joyce Lumber Company in 1888, he also sold his home to David Joyce. The Langfords traveled to California before they relocated there. An item in the Fulton Journal, dated March 20, 1886, stated, "The Langfords are expected to reach Fulton today from California where they passed the winter months." Also, in the same issue, "C. E. Langford while in California purchased an orange grove and just before starting to return to Fulton he was offered \$7000 more for his investment than he gave. His judgment seems to be as sound on orange groves as it is on purchasing logs for the L. & H. Lumber Company." Langford died in Pasadena, CA on June 10, 1893.

Dan Foley, the Langford family genealogist, notified Nancy's sisters about finding the ancestral site of Uncle Charles in Fulton. And so it was that the 'Langford girls' visited Fulton on May 13, 2013. They are the descendants of Oscar Langford, the younger brother of Charles. Oscar, only three years old, remained in New York when the Langford family moved west. Harvey Geerts, chief researcher for the Fulton Historical Society, also located the burial site in Fulton of the Langford great grandfather. Having lived in Davenport for the last thirty two years, it was a pleasant surprise for the Foleys to learn the whereabouts of Charles Langford here in Fulton.

Assisting individuals and families as they search for their roots continues to be a meaningful function of the Fulton Historical Society. And when a family chooses to visit us in Fulton, it makes it even more rewarding. Both Al Leemhuis and I agree, this experience was enhanced because of the charm and graciousness of the 'Langford girls.'

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