

Hometown Ramblings

By **Bobbie Smith Bryant**
Contributing Columnist



The Playhouse



Photo provided

The playhouse located at Smith Farms in Kirksey.

Like so many in their generation, my grandparents, Porter and Ruby (Maynard) Chilcutt, moved north to Chicago in 1941 to find work. Mamaw wasn't too keen on the big city, so they returned in time for my mother, Shirley, and her older brother Charles, to start to school in Murray.

When they returned, they found a rental home on 10th Street. The house was owned by Marvin and Opal Fulton, located behind their personal residence which was 1001 Main Street.

Mom adored Mrs. Fulton and had many fond memories of playing in her yard. One reason she loved living near the Fulton's was because they had a daughter named JoAnn who was some years older. Mr. Fulton owned the Murray Lumber Company for many years, and when JoAnn was a child, he'd built her a miniature one-room house, complete with electricity. It had louvered windows that opened and a front door with a see-through glass window, a doorknob and a front porch complete with two stair-steps down to the ground.

In her memoirs, Mom recalled, "I thought this house was the grandest thing I had ever seen! I was absolutely thrilled

when Mrs. Fulton graciously told my mother that I could play in it any time I wanted to. As it was just outside our window, my grandmother, Virgie Maynard, could watch over me and I got to play in it many times while we lived there."

Within a few years, the Chilcutt family moved to a new home on Sycamore Street. There was a coal shed in their backyard in which Shirley could play house. While it wasn't the same as the "real" playhouse at the Fulton's, she was just as enthusiastic about it.

As she described it, "The coal house was like a duplex; one side was for coal storage and the other side was my playhouse. It had a wooden window that opened and closed from the outside and a wooden knob on the door. My mother fixed it up for me soon after we moved over there and even made a pretty gingham curtain to hang over the window. I had my paper dolls, baby dolls, a doll-sized cookstove, cradle, ironing board, rocker, and a table with two chairs to play with."

Mom's memories of the Fulton's playhouse were so embedded in her memory that some twenty years later when their son, Henry, approached her and

my dad, Billy, they bought the house from him.

Mom said, "By then, Henry owned and managed his father's lumber business just across the street from where Billy worked at Hutson Chemical Company on the railroad tracks. Henry knew that Billy had a little girl and suggested perhaps he'd like to have the house for her to play in. My dream playhouse became that of our own daughter."

As the recipient of the playhouse during my childhood, I can say that I also had many carefree days of play in that adorable miniature house Mr. Fulton built long ago. I'm grateful to the Fulton family for their thoughtfulness to tenant neighbors some 80 years ago. They left a legacy of kindness worth remembering.

Bobbie Smith Bryant is a native of Calloway County. She currently serves as a Community and Economic Development Advisor for the Kentucky League of Cities. She is passionate about western Kentucky and is currently working on a commemorative history to celebrate the 2022 Calloway County Bicentennial. For more information about the author, visit bobbiesmithbryant.com. ■



Photo provided

Neighbors and friends left to right: Jill Falwell, Margaret McCallon, Bobbie Smith, Kim Smith, Karen Edwards and Martha McCallon at play in 1968.