

Sheldon Castle 1946

The tale of Fairhope's Story Book Castles begins with Craig Sheldon and his wife Annie "Butch" Sheldon. Craig was a world class sculptor, a master carpenter, writer, environmentalist, and WWII Marine. Annie "Butch" Sheldon was a teacher and founding member of Theatre 98 and Thomas Hospital Auxiliary.

The structure is a testament to what the imagination can create within a strict budget.

In 1946 the young couple began building a garage, workshop, and laundry room. They had planned to build a Mexican-style house on the west end of the lot, but grew tired of the small apartment they were renting at Whittier Hall on Magnolia Avenue in Fairhope, so the family moved into the shell, which had no partition walls. The garage became a bedroom and hence has the only wood exterior wall in the house. Its rippled, stained-glass panels were removed in the summer to allow the cool breezes in. There were cool breezes in those days because the lot was more heavily-shaded and the gully was less overgrown. The "shop" became the living and dining room, and the "laundry" became the kitchen.

The house was built of Clay City tile. Mr. Sheldon covered the tile with Mobile Bay stone, first using the stone Mrs. Sheldon had hand-carried up the bluff to line her flowerbeds. He embellished the stone with old tools, Civil War shrapnel, cookware, bottles and more.

The rolled roof design resulted from his World War II experiences in the South Pacific. Being in the construction business, he would bring home shingles left over from various jobs. The random assortment of colors produced the patchwork-quilt design.

The tower was built in the 1950s with the help of his young son, Craig, Jr. (then called Mac). Mr. Sheldon had always dreamed of building a round room, and in this tower he constructed three of them. The first two allowed Mac and his sister, Suzan Megrez, to have their own rooms. The top room, on the third floor, was Mr. Sheldon's office where he wrote plays and a satirical newspaper column for the Fairhope Courier, "Knee Deep in Fly Creek." The conical roof was added later, after many nights of sleeping under the stars. Eventually it became Mac's room. Years later both daughters threw their wedding bouquets from the window of this room.

Tourists, locals, families and friends are welcome to walk down the front drive and the front yards. Signs are posted with guidelines for guests to follow. The Storybook Castles are a wonderful setting for photo shoots for special occasions, and tours for large groups are also available.