

CHARM OF YESTERYEAR - AND A HIDDEN STAIRCASE

The Burton and Rose Moore House

414 North Sheridan Avenue (formerly North "N" Street)

Marilynn Sabo

Our house is relatively small (2000 sf.) compared to most houses in the North Slope Historic District, but that's what we wanted. We also wanted "old world charm," something that hadn't been remuddled beyond recognition or McMansionized, and a smaller yard that would be easier to care for. Our agent showed us a few houses that were just too big or too much work, and then he drove us by this one.

It was late November, getting dark, raining, and dreary. About all we could see of the house was the "for sale" sign and some weird rock stuff glued to one side of the front porch. We didn't have time to go in, but he encouraged us to look at the MLS online. The website description stated: "Well maintained historical 1901 Dutch gable Victorian. 3 beds, 1 1/2 baths, all the charm of yesteryear & all the modern conveniences. In North Slope, the largest national historic district in the U.S. Ambrose Russell, architect. Period light fixtures, glass built-in cabinets, original open oak staircase, gleaming hardwood floors, and wood trim throughout...pictures don't do this home justice."

Mr. Sabo and I decided to take a look. The house was partially hidden by a large blue spruce, so it was barely noticeable from the street. But, we wanted to see that "charm of yesteryear," so we thought we'd take a closer look. The weird rock stuff was actually a granite turret (that matches the one on the Murray Mansion next door). We could see that the house had potential. We looked inside and saw oak floors that **were** beautiful (all level and true), the granite foundation (still solid after 100+ years), the round room in the foyer (great place for a Christmas tree or the Chinese settee), and that fantastic open staircase. Mr. Sabo and I went home and thought about it and came back the next weekend for another look. It was a rare sunny

December afternoon. (The house is situated so you get sun coming through the front bedroom in the early morning and the staircase in the afternoon). We looked at the sunlight shining through the old, wavy glass in the Palladian window at the top of the stairs, smooched, and declared our love for the house....We made an offer....and she was ours.



Then reality set in. The shake roof that the inspector said would last at least five more years started to leak...Mr. Sabo spent many an evening in the attic trying to patch the leaks with old tin can lids (like gallon- sized tomato sauce). After a particularly severe windstorm, we found rotten shakes strewn around the front yard. We gave in and decided to have the roof replaced, and, after much deliberation, chose a roofer. They finally started our roof after Halloween. They tore off the old shakes and covered the attic with plastic, except for the turret room. I was watching TV when I heard a drip, drip, drip. I ran to the front of the house....there was half an inch of water on the turret room floor. Needless to say, Mr. Sabo made them come back (at 9:30 PM) to cover it up. We had to run fans for a week to dry things out.

Our roof is guaranteed to last for 50 years. When it is time to replace it, I don't think we'll use the same company!

We have replaced the monster octopus furnace in the basement with a wonderful, really expensive one. It even heats the upstairs of the house! We have had the chimney rebuilt (that's another story), restored original windows, stripped endless layers of old wallpaper, and Mr. Sabo is finishing up a brick patio. We put in a round flower bed where the old spruce used to be (It was leaning on the porch and we were afraid it was going to fall on the house. Sadly, we had it taken out).

We even found a hidden staircase from the kitchen to the upstairs. I kept telling Mr. Sabo that, according to my calculations, there was extra space behind the bathroom. So, for my birthday, he let me drill a hole in the back of the built-in linen closet in the upstairs hall. Sure enough, the doorway was behind it. Future projects include opening up that staircase, new real linoleum floor in the kitchen (to replace the indoor- outdoor carpet), back porch re-do, new bathroom, having our 1929 Magic Chef stove refurbished, and *the fireplace* (a huge, strangely out-of-place, floor-to-ceiling Roman brick number circa 1940-something w/ Heatolator, painted glossy white)and the list goes on!

All kidding aside, Mr. Sabo and I are old house people. We've restored homes in Ohio and Seattle. We knew what we were getting into when we bought this old house, and we knew it would take work, money, patience, money, skill, elbow grease, and more money. The fact that this house was designed by a major architect, Ambrose Russell (Spaulding, Russell & Heath) and that it was in an older, established neighborhood (with trees and front porches) were selling points for us. We feel honored that our house shares the Russell pedigree with such venerable old homes as the Governor's Mansion, the Rust Mansion, the Rhodes Mansion, the Murray Mansion, and many other North Tacoma beauties.

The original owners of our house were Burton and Rose Moore. He was a stenographer at Fogg & Fogg Attorneys on Tacoma Avenue. In 1919, they sold it to Thomas and Hattie Brewitt, who lived here until



1940. Mr. Brewitt was a tailor from England and co-owner of Brewitt Bros. Clothing on Pacific Avenue. Hattie was a teacher at Stadium High School. There was a succession of owners until 1956, when it was sold to Ammon and La Rie Harris, owners of the Chef Café on Center Street. After Mr. Harris's death it was sold to Joan Benner in 1981. We are looking for more history on our house and would appreciate hearing from anyone who might have pictures (especially the original fireplace), stories, or information about it. Marilynn and Mike Sabo, 414 North Sheridan Avenue, 98403; (253) 627-4735.

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