

Mure-Newberry-Lankford House (1893) – 1055 Prince Avenue

The Mure-Newberry House was built in 1893 by Elizabeth Hodgson Mure. Unfortunately, not as much is written about this house nor the Mure family. As stated before, Elizabeth was possibly the sister of Prince Hodgson, and the house was certainly located on the Hodgson estate. A history of the house, anonymously written, states that the house was purchased by the Durdens in the 1920s, in the 1940s converted into apartments, and later sold to the Fiji fraternity.

According to ACHF Trustee Bill Bracewell, the house was the original location of the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity which moved into the house in 1968. At the time, the Kappa Deltas occupied the Neil Reed House (currently Delta Tau Delta House) across the street and the Delta Chi fraternity was in a house located where Popeye's is now.

A 1975 article in the *Banner-Herald/Daily News* features Fred and Susanne Newberry who had recently purchased the house and were planning a major rehabilitation. The house served as their home as well as the location of Mrs. Newberry's decorating firm, Athens Interiors, and Mr. Newberry's paint dealership.

The Lankfords bought the house in 1991 and undertook major repairs and rehabilitation work.

The home was designed and built in an architectural style combining Queen Anne with Steamboat Gothic gingerbread details. The home contains 30 rooms if you count all the cubbyholes. The foyer is also Steamboat Gothic architecture. You can note the letter "M" on the shield and the staircase,

which stands for the Muir family. It has heart of pine wainscot and freestanding staircase along with a mahogany veneer fireplace mantle. Double heart of pine doors lead into the dining room, with its own mahogany mantle with original tile. Behind the dining room is the original butler's pantry and kitchen.

Upstairs there are five bedrooms with heart of pine floors and fireplace mantles. A kitchen and bath were added upstairs in the 1940s when it was turned into an apartment.

The back of the house was added as an apartment in the 1940s. The entryway to this portion and half of the kitchen were part of the original back porch that wrapped around the house. The bedrooms and dining room in this portion are thought to be part of the original servant's quarters located on the back of the property and then moved and attached to the house.

Young Couples Reap Rewards From Restoration



Newberrys Faced A Lot Of Work

Photo By BOB SIMONTON

A tower to rig a Halloween ghost in, doors of different heights and widths, fireplaces hidden behind wall-board and strange unaccountable dead spaces in the walls — old houses are full of whimsical details and downright surprises.

They are full of headaches and hard work too, especially when they've been vacant and vandalized, or rented out room-by-room to generations of college students with a leaning toward psychedelic decorating schemes.

But in spite of problems, young people are returning eagerly today to houses like the ones their grandparents lived in and their parents fled from to the suburbs.

Some old houses are ready to move into as is, but others have reached the age and stage when they need a full-scale facelift. Even these last, say the young couples who have been painting and plastering them, are well worth the effort.

Pat and Sharon Kelley, for example, bought a frame house at 458 Dearing before their marriage a little over a year ago, and have proceeded to do it over, a room at a time.

When they are finished, Kelley said, they'll have invested about \$10 a square foot in their home — while new construction now is approaching \$23 per square foot.

That is with the Kelleys doing most of their own work. But even with hired labor, Kelley claims, the cost of making an old house livable will not be greater than \$15 per square foot for initial cost plus restoration.

"People who tell you it costs more than it is worth to restore an old house," he stated, "just don't know what it costs. Sometimes they are more interested in selling you a new house," he added.

The young accountant figures it costs a maximum of \$200 to replaster and paint or paper a room, with an added \$100 to \$200 if the floors need refinishing. It takes the Kelleys about a month of evening and weekend work to do a room over.

Fred and Susanne Newberry have bitten off an even larger restoration project than the Kelleys, and they are trying to establish a new business at the same time.

They recently bought the large Victorian showplace at 1055 Prince Ave., and it is home, business and rental property and monster restoration job all in one.

The house, built in 1893 by Elizabeth W. Higson Mure in an architectural style combining Queen Anne gables with Steamboat Gothic gingerbread, will soon be an elegant setting for Mrs. Newberry's decorating firm, Athens Interiors, and Newberry's paint dealership.

They financed the 20-room mansion (30 rooms if you count all the little cubbyholes) last year, after a long and difficult struggle. Nobody had any money to loan last winter, Newberry said, especially not for old houses.

Since they couldn't afford two house payments, they sold their small house in Belvoir Heights and moved as soon as the deal was completed.

The Prince Avenue house was a fraternity house for a time (one room was painted orange and black) and then stood vacant for six months.

"There were at least one or two panes of glass broken in every room," Mrs. Newberry said, "and bricks were lying on the floor to show you how it was done." Carryout boxes from the Pizza Inn next door were scattered about, she added.

They raked out the worst of the mess and moved into the rooms with the most glass in the windows.

"I wanted to cry every night," Mrs. Newberry said.

They finally got nearly \$1,000 in new glass installed, a new roof and an outside paint job — in muted tan, with accents of teal blue and wine red.

Inside, they slapped on paint everywhere, tore out, built and repaired, until they had temporary living space for themselves and some rentable apartments and studios. Their apartment is a small house that at some point was joined to the main house.



But End Result Was Elegance

Photo By RICHARD FOWLKES

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A master plan was designed for the house proper, with the showroom for fabrics and a darkroom completed first.

Work in the foyer, parlor and dining room is scheduled to be completed by Christmas.

The foyer, with fireplace, unusual wood paneling and gingerbread traceries, will have greyed turquoise walls and off-white ceiling. The dining room is dominated by a large overmantel of burl wood, beveled mirrors and gothic detailing. It will be papered in a Victorian plant pattern of shades of green with ceiling covered in a geometric-patterned fabric.

"I'm going to have chrome and glass as well as old pieces," Mrs. Newberry said. She tends to concentrate heavily on color in creating room schemes. In their bedroom, deep eggplant walls form a backdrop for shining brass bed, floral-slipcovered chair and antique armoire.

The restoration is going to cost a lot before it's over, they admitted, but will still give the Newberrys more space than they could afford any other way and an architecture that complements their business.

At the same time, the Newberrys are proud to be saving a house they love, which they believe otherwise might be torn down.

The Newberry house has been changed little architecturally since it was built, but the Kelleys' has been full of surprises.

Their house first belonged to Sylvanus Morris, dean of the University of Georgia School of Law and author of "Strolls About Athens During the Early Seventies." Morris bought the lot in 1890 and moved a cottage (circa 1860) onto it.

A two-story front portion was added in 1912, and through the years basic modernization took place, often in the simplest manner. The plumbing was run down the walls of the front hall, small narrow corridors lead to the upstairs bathroom, and the stairway landing was left open to provide light for the original hallway (now the back hall).

Floor boards run in two directions in the same room — and hearths were found hidden under modern floor covering material. Two hidden fireplaces came to light in this manner, bringing the total of working fireplaces in the house to nine.

The Kelleys enjoy living with memories of "The Stroller" and bought his law books from grandson Julius Miller when they purchased the house. Recently they found a large painting of Morris under the house, and plan to hang it in Kelley's study.

Morris once defended Dearing Street with a shotgun, Kelley said. The city planned to widen the street, and was going to move the Morris house back a few feet to do so, but the law school dean stood on his front porch and dared city employees to come a step closer.

Kelley also worked to restore his parents' Victorian residence at 198 Dearing. He offered a few rules for buying and restoring old houses:

The first problem is finding an old house at the right price, and making sure it is structurally sound.

He crawled under his house with an icepick to check the wood, Kelley said. "There are obvious things to look for — sags in the roof line, things like that. Actually most of these old houses are sound. This one has 4-by-16 heart pine beams set on a brick foundation. It will be here after we're gone."

The great bargain days in old house buying are pretty well over, he added. The growing popularity of restoration is pulling their prices up.

Next it is important to find out what to hire done and who to hire to do it. Kelley found out the hard way that sanding floors is a job for a professional.

"The living room floor is wavy, and I really messed up on the back hall," he said.

Aside from floors, the Kelleys have tackled most everything themselves.

"There is very little about restoration that requires any particular skill," he continued. "You just have to stay with it till it looks right." □

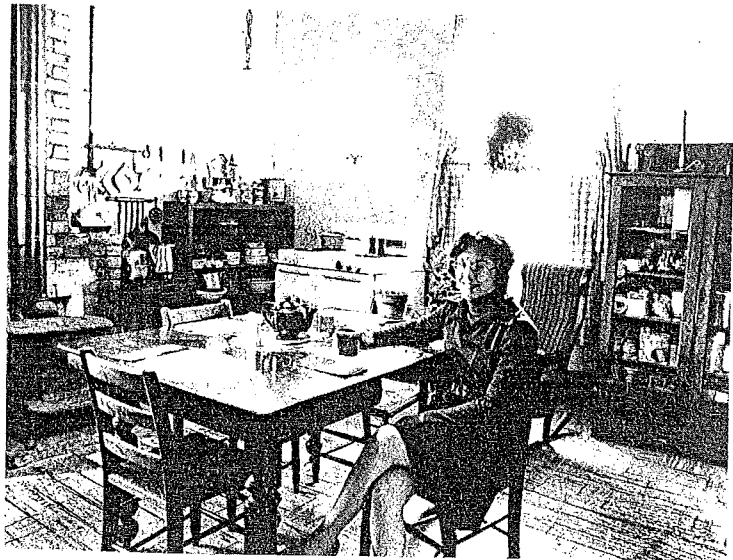


Photo By BOB SIMONTON

Work Still To Come On Kelley Kitchen



Photo By BOB SIMONTON

Newlyweds Show Off Completed Dining Room

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