

Has True
Beach Hill

Features



Photos by Bill Lovejoy

Geraldine and Frank Shelley completely renovated historic Whittle home.

A few changes atop Beach Hill

Historic homes tour will show
how a family and home adjust

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THE TWIN MAGNOLIAS are almost as old as the home they belong to on Beach Hill, but if visitors could return from 101 years ago, they wouldn't recognize the trees. They are huge. So huge, say Frank and Geraldine Shelley, they have been topped and are wired to prevent the multiple, split trunks from breaking off.

The Shelleys will show of their 14-room home — and magnolias — at 1005 Third St. from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday in Santa Cruz YWCA's 17th annual Historic Homes Tour. In a sneak preview Tuesday, the Shelleys, who settled in the historic Whittle home in 1967, shared bits of history and tips on restoration.

A visit to their home turns time back in the imagination. Not that it's a perfect example of life in the 1880s — the home is, after all, the Shelley home now and is full of family touches. But the carefully restored high ceilings, tall windows and redwood trim speak of earlier days.

How does it feel to be part of a

Five historic styles

Santa Cruz YWCA's 17th annual Historic Homes Tour will be from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday. It is a self-guided tour, with hostesses stationed at each home to give descriptions on architecture and history.

Three of the homes were built in the last half of the 1800s and represent Stick-Eastlake, Gothic Revival and Rural Farmhouse examples. The fourth was built in the 1920s to reflect the Mediterranean-Spanish theme of California's colonial period.

Tickets are \$10 for the general public and are available at the YWCA, 303 Walnut Ave. For other details, call 426-3062.

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How does it feel to be part of a house's history? Do the Shelleys sometimes feel they're connected to other dwellers of these Stick East-lake walls? Are they a bit Victorian in their ways, in these 1980s?

Geraldine laughs receptively at the thought. "Well, we have lived here almost one-fourth of the home's life," she says. Frank was a test pilot for Coast Guard Aviation, which meant the Shelleys, both San Jose natives, and their six children traveled a lot and lived in many places before they settled on Beach Hill. "They took roots here immediately," recalls their mother.

The downstairs of what's described as a "basement cottage" gave the brood room to spread. There's some conjecture, says Geraldine, that the home was built as a physician's residence, because of the downstairs entry. Upstairs, the layout is traditional with entry hall, flanked by parlor and library, leading into a large dining room. Off the dining room is a bedroom and the kitchen. Off the kitchen is another bedroom, a room-size pantry and the back landing-laundry room.

The laundry room is noteworthy for two reasons. First, the Shelleys learned here that wallpaper can cover scars of the years. Second, on the wallpapered wall hangs a photograph taken close to 100 years ago. In it, someone sits in a rocking chair on the front lawn — and the magnolias are very small.

Geraldine has a copy of a note in the Daily Sentinel of June 11, 1887. It reads: "The framework is up on the home at Third and Beach streets." It was built as a summer home by a dry-goods merchant from San Jose, James Hart. It often is called the Whittle home after the family who inhabited it for many years. A Whittle family member was still renting the downstairs when the Shelleys arrived.

In 1978, a SCOPE award was made to the Shelleys for outstanding renovation and the home was open on the YWCA tour.

Visitors Saturday who took the tour 10 years ago will note a few

Ave. For other details, call 426-3062.

changes. Then, the focus was extensive work done on the ceilings, which, Geraldine says, literally were falling off, and the walls, which had been covered with a green, sand-texture wallpaper that had to be chipped off.

This year, the focus is the remodeled kitchen, a stark combination of old and new. "I had to have the conveniences," Geraldine admits. They left the fir underfloor exposed and had a delicate flower-motif stencil applied. The same motif is picked up in sand-etched glass cabinet fronts.

The library shows off the rich redwoods available at the turn of the century. The fireplace was built of brick rescued from a space heater chimney dismantled elsewhere in the house.

Two decorator touches from the Shelleys deserve mention: the lush oriental-style area rugs that add dashes of color, and the wall art, all mounted with ornate molding hangers. In the living room are two paintings by Myrtle Hoff, an early Santa Cruz resident who was a Venetian Carnival princess. On another wall, family portraits, tracing Frank's family from his Irish roots in San Francisco to their granddaughter, Rachel Barr of Watsonville.

One last comment: the exterior paint job. It incorporates six colors, with emphasis on blues.

Frank explains: "We started it in 1971. Our oldest son, Frank, painted his way through his last two years at San Jose State on the side wall." The house was a barn red when the Shelleys moved in and had not been painted for many years. It was sanded to the bare wood before fresh coats went on.

Frank continues, "Our second son, Bill, painted his way through UC-Berkeley with the front walls. Took him two summers.

"Our third son, Matthew, encountered the sun on the far side wall and decided the hell with school. He left home and took a job with Chesapeake Telephone Company in Washington, D.C." Matthew is back now, attending Cabrillo College, says his father, "but he still doesn't paint."



Antiques in Shelleys' dining room capture Victorian style.