

[← Back](#)

'Our Forever House'

By Kay O'Donnell February 3, 2007 Publication: San Antonio Express-News (TX) Page: 10E Word Count: 769

When Amy Murphy and Ken Major left their Northwest San Antonio home to relocate to Monte Vista, it was an inspired move, with inspiration coming from several directions. They had a desire to feel more connected to a community, and wanted extra space for when family and friends visited.

But, overwhelmingly, they were inspired by love.

"We would look at real estate in the neighborhood a lot," says Amy, an English professor. "This was one of those houses that the first picture you see of it -- wow! -- it was love at first sight."

It was a "whirlwind romance," says Ken, a mental-health professional. The house "fit the vision of someplace special," he adds.

The three-bedroom, four-bath home incorporates elements of the architectural styles each admires. For Amy, it's the old Southern home, while Ken favors the Victorian model.

Built in 1916, the three-story house first offers guests a touch of Southern hospitality with its inviting front porch, which features a beadboard ceiling and hardwood floor. Hardwood accents continue inside, with parquet flooring helping to define the foyer and wood floors throughout the 3,500-square-foot home.

The second story has the original wood floors, Amy says, but the downstairs floor has been redone, noting that whoever did the work used reclaimed wood so the surface retains a vintage look.

"It's not even and perfect, but more funky," she says.

Amy points out other distinct features of the home, each appearing to feed her curiosity about the structure's past.

For example, a previous owner converted the attic space into a loft, an area large enough to serve as the master bedroom with a small office at one end. A large built-in window seat with storage and a handcrafted chessboard attached to one wall make the space even more unique.

Furthermore, the first and second floors are separate and functional living spaces, connected only by a staircase in the foyer. At one point, the home was turned into a duplex, which explains the full kitchens and dining areas on each floor.

"We laugh at the fact that the bathrooms are in bad places," Amy says. "Two are right by each of the dining areas."

Despite this, having the first floor available as a separate living area for guests has been a blessing for the couple and their two daughters, both preschoolers.

"This house is a great way to have friends and family stay for extended periods," Ken says, adding that it also might be a place for their parents to live when they get older.

Another option, he says, is for the girls to live there while going to college so they can at least be "semi-independent."

For now, the family primarily occupies the second and third floors, although they did transform a first-floor living room into a library featuring leaning bookshelves on opposite walls and access to a separate, enclosed office.

"We never had a house that had so many places to read," Ken says. He adds that the extra space has allowed both him and Amy to indulge some of their other interests: archaeology for him, showcasing family heirlooms for her.

Amy says, "When I put the furniture in this house, it really belongs here, while it didn't go in the other, newer house." For example, the table and buffet that belonged to her grandparents are now on display in the first-floor formal dining room.

Though the couple's connection to family runs deep, their desire to connect to a community is equally powerful.

"We both grew up all over the country," Amy says. "We really wanted to give our girls a real neighborhood, a hometown, a place where if you put a mark on the wall (to chart a child's growth), it will always be there."

Ken adds, "I had been so bothered by the lack of community in my life and wanted to get connected to the people around us." In their current neighborhood, he says, they have restaurants and shops to which they can walk, there are activities for the girls to participate in, and the neighbors are welcoming.

Amy agreed, saying, "We'll stay here as long as we can walk up and down the stairs. This is our forever house."

San Antonio Express-News (TX)**Date:** February 3, 2007**Page:** 10E

Copyright (c), 2007, San Antonio Express-News. All Rights Reserved.