CLASSIC CARRIAGE

Recreated and reimagined in painstaking detail, this historic carriage house delights homeowners and neighbors alike.

written by ellen olson, photography by alyssa lee photography

"It takes a certain skill to work in a historic area and within a small footprint. This was a complex project that involved many layers of expertise to complete."

DOUG TANNER, DOVETAIL RENOVATION

project team:
doug tanner & nathan christenson, contractors, dovetail renovation
jake nau, site manager, dovetail renovation
jeff murphy, president/director of design, murphy & co
t. j. majdecki, associate aia, murphy & co

HOME

When longtime clients approached Doug Tanner of Dovetail Renovation to resuscitate a rather dilapidated carriage house in Lowry Hill, there was history that needed consideration. The original structure was built in 1896 as a barn set behind the main house, which was a simple, square Victorian home. In 1911, Charles S. Gold, Director and Treasurer of the Munsingwear Corporation, purchased the property. He extensively renovated and enlarged the main house, while also transforming the façade into an Arts and Crafts Tudor. Gold also converted the accessory barn structure into a large carriage house that included a garage and living quarters. Tanner's clients purchased the historic property in 2005, and spent nearly ten years lovingly restoring the main home. By the time that project was completed the carriage house had outlived its usefulness and was in a critical state of disrepair.

A number of avenues for a renovation of the carriage house were examined but due to the structural unsoundness and challenges with building code compliance, the decision was made that replacement was the proper option. Dovetail Renovation and Murphy & CO worked diligently to create a historically sensitive design with strong links to the main house. In addition to a 3-car garage and storage area on the main level, the upper level of the structure was built as spacious living quarters for friends and family. The footprint of the new structure is exactly as it was before; another nod to keeping with the historical integrity of the project.

"It takes a certain skill to work in a historic area and within a small footprint," remarked Doug Tanner of Dovetail Renovation. "This was a complex project that involved many layers of expertise to complete." The new carriage house was built to last, and the fireplace and chimney are supported by large steel i-beams that span the structure. The whimsical chimney design resembles those of historic Tudor homes in England and was envisioned by the team at Murphy & CO.

The architectural details of the project were painstakingly planned. Everything from the brick, stucco, exterior Tudor details, interior white oak floors and the white oak wainscot are exact replicas of the main house. Even the same stains and wall colors were used throughout. All of the hardware echoes details in the main house including push button light switches; all knobs, switch plates and drawer pulls are made of unpolished brass. "We were fortunate to work with a client that wanted to build something with this amount of detail and craftsmanship," stated Tanner.

Several of the fixtures in the living area are from the homeowner's childhood home. The chandelier in the living room is late 18th century English solid brass, as well as the sconces flanking the windows. Many of the furnishings are from his mother's estate and have been recovered in period fabrics. A unique feature of this project is the automatic hydronic (water and anti-freeze) snowmelt system beneath the concrete of the driveways and even the city sidewalk.

For Tanner, the greatest compliment is that most visitors believe that the project was a renovation of the 1911 carriage house, and not a new build. It is a timeless work of art that the owners, and their neighbors, will enjoy for years to come. ◊