

## LARKSPUR HONORS RENOVATION WORK ON TWO HISTORIC HOMES

By Jack Wilson

The owners of two houses built more than 100 years ago by early Larkspur officials have been honored for their work in restoring these historic homes. At a ceremony on Wednesday, December 5, the Larkspur City Council presented Heritage Preservation Awards to Scott and Wendy Morgan for their renovation of 9 Monte Vista Ave. and to Richard and Nikki Vanderdrift for work done at 130 Magnolia Ave.



Whiteacres Cottage" as it appeared a few years after it was built about 1908 at 9 Monte Vista Avenue in Larkspur.  
(Source: Larkspur Past and Present)

According to "Larkspur Past and Present," the recently updated history and walking guide published by the Larkspur Heritage Preservation Board, the residence at 9 Monte Vista was built by Charles and Ida White in 1908. Charles White, an insurance company executive, was Larkspur's town treasurer from 1908 to 1924. The home at 130 Magnolia was built around 1907 for William J. Kennedy, who served on the original Board of Town Trustees when Larkspur was incorporated in 1908.

The most extensive renovation was done by the Morgans, who moved to Larkspur with their two children in 2010 in part because of the city's reputation for protecting its historic character. "I grew up in an older home on the East Coast," says Wendy Morgan, "and I value the sense of history where I live."

The house at 9 Monte Vista, which the White family called "Whiteacres Cottage," was one of the first to be built in the "Baltimore Park" subdivision. It had been maintained in good condition by previous owners but had many limitations for a family of four. "It had a beautiful dark wood interior but only one bath for the three bedrooms upstairs," recalls Wendy Morgan. "You had to go out the kitchen door and down a flight of exterior stairs to get to the laundry room in the basement."

With the help of project architect Fran Halperin of Halperin & Christ in San Rafael, the Morgans were able to add 1,000 square feet of living space, expand the cramped kitchen, add a bathroom, and provide interior access to the basement – all while maintaining the historic public view of the house. "This is an excellent example of how a home can be modernized without harming its historic character," says Marilyn River, chair of the Heritage Preservation Board. "The renovation was also a good financial investment," says Wendy Morgan. "Historic homes have value in the real estate market."



The home at 9 Monte Vista Avenue after renovation by Scott and Wendy Morgan.  
(Photo by Richard Cunningham)

The 1907 house purchased by the Vanderdrifts in 1987 presented a different set of challenges.

Where most of the historic features of the Morgans' home had been maintained over the years, the residence at 130 Magnolia had suffered at the hands of insensitive remodelers. A porch that wrapped around two sides of the house had been completely enclosed, asbestos shingles had covered the old siding, and a crude rooftop tower had been added at the rear. "The house was in disrepair," recalls Richard Vanderdrift, "but the historic bones were still there."

The Vanderdrifts started by removing the tower – to the acclaim of neighbors who saw it as an eyesore – and embarked on a series of renovations to modernize the house while keeping its historic character. Most recently, aided by project architect Eric Rogers of Wagstaff Architects in Mill Valley and contractor Pete Pelionpanos of IRC Construction in San Francisco, the home was given a thorough facelift. The asbestos shingles were replaced with siding compatible with turn-of-the-last-century construction; scalloped shingles were installed on the front dormer; and much of the old porch was restored by removing walls and windows.



Wraparound porch of the home at 130 Magnolia Avenue, shown in 1910, was a typical feature of Larkspur's early architecture. (Source: "Larkspur Past and Present")



The porch was partially restored in renovation of 130 Magnolia Avenue by Richard and Nikki Vanderdrift. (Photo by Richard Cunningham)

The renovation required an appeal to the Planning Commission, Richard Vanderdrift notes, but he points out that the special building code for structures on the city's Historic Resources Inventory, which provides flexibility for meeting building standards, made it possible to keep the porch railing at a height compatible with the original plan even though it did not meet current codes. "The street-side façade now presents a reminder of the open front porches on many of Larkspur's early homes," says River of the heritage board.

Larkspur's Heritage Preservation Awards are given annually to recognize extraordinary accomplishments in preservation of historic structures listed on the city's historic inventory. Information about criteria for the awards and nomination requirements can be found on the City of Larkspur website at <http://www.ci.larkspur.ca.us/index.aspx?NID=172>.

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