

Gundlachs bring 1920s home into the 21st century

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Janie and Rick Gundlach know how to bring an old house back to life.

The Gundlachs have restored several older homes. They recently worked on a 1920s "arts and crafts" brick bungalow on Farmington Road, two houses north of the Masonic Temple. The house is now for sale.

Their daughter, Katie Stewart and her husband Kevin live next door, in a house built in 1910.

"We bought it because we are committed to the neighborhood, to preserving these houses as homes, as residences," said Janie Gundlach of the couple's current home. "It has a lot of character, a lot of features that needed to be brought back."

"They updated it to improve its looks and comfort."

"Our goal was to restore the beautiful old part and, what wasn't very pretty, we ripped out," Janie said. "It's updated and very livable for somebody today."

"We've been in the neighborhood a long time, 30 years," Janie said. "We purchased our first home on Shiawassee. It was a 1910 square house. We lived in it for seven years."

They then moved to the 1860s Victorian house on Warner, where they continue to reside. "We put a big addition on that and raised our three children there," she said.

They also moved an 1860s Victorian house, which sat on Grand River near the Jo-Ann Fabrics parking lot and was going to be torn down to a lot on Shiawassee.

"We were given the house," Janie said. "That was the least expensive part."

The Gundlachs can't estimate the hours they worked on the Farmington Road house. Support came from friends and neighbors.

"It's gratifying to hear people generously tell us how much they like what we do," said Rick, a former Farmington Historic Commission member.

"It was costly because we didn't skimp," said Janie, a homemaker. "It was costly to hire professionals. It was more than cosmetics and aesthetics. The structure of the house is really good. We do have some 'before' pictures but we really don't care to remember it that way."

Among the features removed was a cistern.

"Most people don't remember what a cistern was," said Rick, a metallurgical engineer. "It was

a walled-in vat that collected rain water to wash your clothes. It was a carryover from the previous century. They didn't even have sewers in Farmington when this house was built. They had storm sewers only."

A home 75 years or older is considered historic by Farmington historical standards, Rick said. The area from Warner to where Shiawassee meets Grand River is considered Farmington's historic district. More than 20 homes are registered.

Highlights of the Farmington Road house also include an antique oak fireplace with marble hearth, beveled glass mirrors, leaded glass windows, including Frank Lloyd Wright-style custom accent windows, an oak woodwork column, red oak hardwood floors throughout the house, and a maple hardwood floor in the kitchen. There are 9-foot tall ceilings, a "three-season" front porch with natural red pine floor and a back porch with a

flower box.

There's an open, 1,000-square-foot floor plan. The house has two bedrooms with a large attic which has potential for a master

bedroom suite as well as a classic two-car garage.

"In this block, people are putting major additions on," Janie said. "There's a renais-

sance here. It's a family-oriented neighborhood."



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BACKLER

History in the making: Janie and Rich Gundlach are restoring this 1920s era home.

Let the sun shine: Highlights of the Gundlachs Farmington Road house include leaded glass windows, hardwood floors and nine-foot-tall ceilings. The couple says they have invested quite a bit into the project, because they haven't 'skimped' on materials or workmanship in their effort to restore the historic home.

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