

Lynnhurst Landmark

Renewed spaces welcome this gracious Minneapolis home into its second century

BY BONNIE BLODGETT | PHOTOS BY ANDREA RUGG

The stately home on the corner lot near Lake Harriet is a neighborhood landmark. Built in 1893 by two pillars of early Minneapolis civic life, Arthur and Maude Armatage, in what then was farm country, this house and eight others were part of a community called the Colony, later christened Lynnhurst.

The development was inspired by the visionary creator of the Minneapolis Park system, Charles M. Loring. His idea was to lure a portion of the city's burgeoning population to the outer ring suburbs and to create a city designed around its most precious resources, its lakes.

This house has changed hands just three times. The previous owners bought the house from the Armatage estate when Maude died at age 94. It

hadn't been on the market long when it caught the eye of a young executive in 2006. He'd been raised in Minnesota and was planning to move back home with his wife and three kids. The move was a year off. He bought the house anyway.

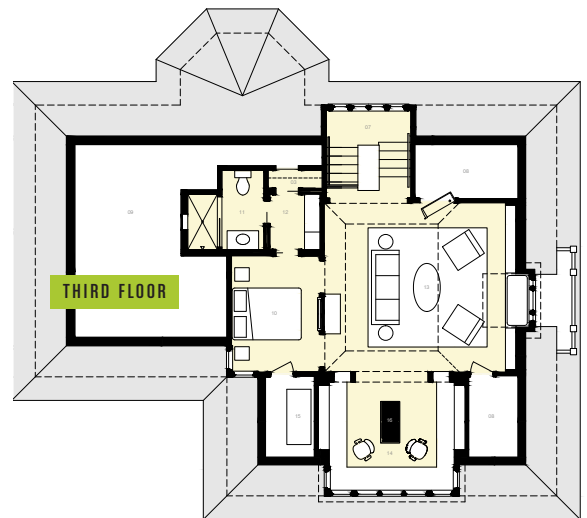
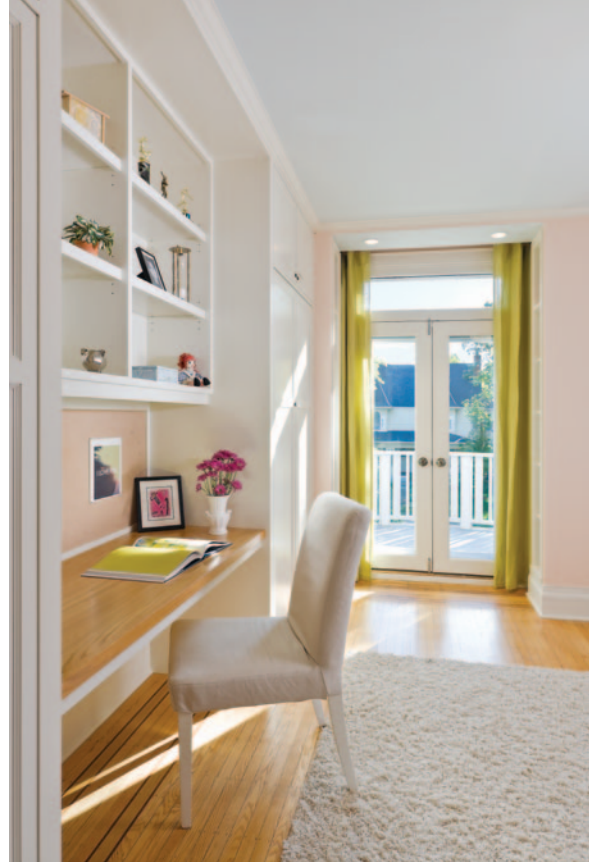
Previous owners had added to the house, including, in 1909, a living room wing on the south side and a screened porch/ballroom on the north. Scottish Arts-and-Crafts stained glass softens the light that flows through the spacious formal living room. An expanded garage was added in the 1960s and, just a few years ago, a large modern kitchen.

Having waited a year to claim their home, the new owners were quite content to live in it as is. No major renovations were on the drawing boards—until a pipe burst during their first winter in residence. When

resources

ARCHITECT: U + B ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: ERIC BUNKERS, BUNKERS AND ASSOCIATES
BUILDER: CHOICE WOOD COMPANY

LEFT A burst pipe kicked off a major renovation. A new second-floor bathroom features shimmering blue jewel-case tile work. **ABOVE RIGHT** The dark, stuffy attic is now an airy, sun-filled space furnished with sleek black leather Barcelona-style chairs and a wood frame leather sofa by Herman Miller.



LEFT A light-filled guest bedroom and office ring the attic's central sitting room. The space has a tree-house feel with lovely views. **RIGHT** In the girl's bedroom, new French doors that open to a balcony were fitted with display cabinets on either side.

the attic was torn up to make repairs, the carpenters discovered charred wood dating from a 1937 fire in the maid's living quarters, as well as significant structural deficiencies that had probably contributed to the failure of a beam in the attic floor that threw the spaces above and below badly out of true.

A team from U+B Architecture and Design, including Mark Burgess, principal in charge, and Edie Sebesta, project manager, and assisted by structural engineer Eric Bunkers of Bunkers and Associates and general contractor Choice Wood Co., declared the outdated balloon-style structure of the house inadequate. A "sister" system comprised of two custom-bent steel beams was installed to support the roof.

The most obvious casualty of the burst pipe was a second-floor bedroom that belonged to a daughter, then 14.

Once a master suite, renovating this space was a no-brainer. It lacked adequate storage and was poorly designed. But as the attic repairs multiplied, the owners wisely decided to add an entirely reimagined third floor to the project, too.

Burgess proposed simple but ingenious fixes to the girl's bedroom: At one end, a small closet and doorway were sacrificed to make a storage wall with attractive cubbies for collectibles and a cozy built-in desk. New French doors that opened onto a balcony were fitted with display cabinets on either side and curtain pockets that had the effect of making, again, a clean wall for furniture and artwork. A bathroom that had felt shoehorned into a domino-shaped space was opened up visually to the room with the help of pocket doors that reveal shimmering splashes of blue jewel-case tile work, glamorous pendant lighting, a sleek



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The attic was designed with several space-saving features, including a comfortable window seat elegantly tucked into a dormer and a bookshelf (shown open on page 44) that doubles as a secret passage to a storage area.



countertop made of recycled glass with storage underneath, and tall mirrors flanking a window over the raised sink. A surprisingly roomy shower and toilet are at either end of the space, invisible from the bedroom.

The attic came next. It was utterly transformed. Dark stuffy rooms and severely angled walls gave way to an airy and sun-filled space.

A renovated stairwell sets the mood. Built in a shed dormer, it got bigger windows, a coat of white paint on new drywall, and custom millwork. Dingy carpeted stairs were torn out and replaced. The custom-forged, wrought-iron railings are removable, so furniture can be easily moved in and out.

The stairway opens directly into an open cube simply furnished with a pair of elegant black leather Barcelona-style chairs facing a wood frame leather sofa by Herman Miller. A

bookshelf doubles as a secret passage to a large storage area. A comfy window seat occupies a dormer. Furnishing all the new rooms was a collaborative effort, with the owners very much involved.

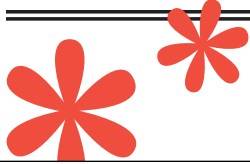
Beyond the sitting area is the home office. A long cherry counter wraps around the space, "his" domain separated from "hers" by an exposed-brick chimney that was in rough shape due to the fire and had to be tuckpointed, cleaned, and sealed. New large windows give the space a tree-house feel. They open into a leafy bower whose focal point is a regal white pine. On hot summer days, the space is cooled with a modern HVAC system hidden in a corner closet.

Since the owner often works in the office at night, he insisted on absolute noise control—no creaking floors permitted. The architect obliged

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with an acoustical isolation mat, LVL joists, and glued-and-screwed decking to eliminate squeaks. The office floor is covered in creamy brown cork flooring.

An elegant guest bedroom and full bath are also tucked into the third floor space behind a small mirrored bar. Again, seamless storage adds beauty and efficiency.

To eliminate any sense that this was once a musty old attic, the architect created a flat ceiling to define the sitting area. A rectangle of white-stained fir framed in white beams mimics the footprint of a widow's walk destroyed in the 1937 fire. Recessed lighting bathes the wide-planked birch floor in warm light.

At each corner of the ceiling a simple Mission-style pendant light serves as a reminder of the past and how many loving families this gracious home has sheltered. Thankfully, with the transformation wrought by thoughtful design, the present owners have brought this special house firmly into the future. **MH**

BONNIE BLODGETT IS A ST. PAUL WRITER AND AUTHOR.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON FEATURED PRODUCTS AND SUPPLIERS, SEE PAGE 52.