

## 27 COLLEGE N.E.

Hosts: Jim Payne & Char Kruzich

The precise date of the construction of this house is hard to determine since cattle rancher and tannery operator, Wilna Cole, who was the original owner, also owned the property to the south and the histories of the two are intermingled. A jump in the property assessment value in 1882 suggests that this house was probably built in that year to be used as a home for Cole's mother-in-law. The house had a broad spectrum of renters over the years from Frank Vandeven, President of the Grand Rapids Paper Company to Marguerite Fields, a local actress whose late night cocktail parties were legendary, to the Konkle family, owners of Konkle's Bar on the west side of town.

The joined properties were divided in 1938 and the new owners of 27 College were listed as Lawrence and Dorothy Beukema. At some point, the house was converted to two, and later, three apartments. In the late 1960's, it was purchased by Dr. Lawrence Voss who speculated that Davenport College may want the property for a parking lot, but when that did not develop, he invested in the rehabilitation of what was by that time, a rather dilapidated dwelling.

When the current owners purchased the home in 1986, time and renters had taken their toll. There was no woodwork, no lighting fixtures, broken and missing windows, etc. Jim described it as a "blank canvas". It was a perfect project for two freelance artists, and Jim and Char set out to design every detail of the interior in collaboration with architect Mitch Witkowski, skilled carpenter Tim Karsen and a crew of craftsmen who became friends over the many years that it took to complete the work. The renovation was done in stages over 16 years with stage one being the daunting task of taking on the 17 housing code violations that came with the house. It required all new plumbing, wiring and drywall. From a gutted shell, this house is now one of the most unique and beautiful homes in Heritage Hill. Two art studios have been integrated into the living space, so the owners are able to create while living in a work of art.

This home was built in the American Craftsman Style, and though the interior has been completely altered, the exterior has been restored true to its original architectural design. The columned porch, a rounded bay window, dormers and multiple gables make for a complex facade and an interesting roofline. The style made use of natural materials and emphasized fine craftsmanship.

### MAIN FLOOR

The floor plan, the motifs of arches and geometric shapes, the curved and angled ceilings, the detailing in the woodwork and the earth-tone colors of the interior were inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright and the Arts and Crafts Movement. Walls were moved or removed to create a flow from room to room. A creative mix of woods including cherry, curly maple, oak, hickory and walnut can be found throughout the house. Furnishings range from modern to antique, and the artwork is similarly eclectic. The large and varied windows flood the interior with natural light. It is hard to imagine as one walks through this amazing home that, at one time, it was little more than 2x4's in an empty space.

In the foyer, the coffered ceiling was designed by Jim, the bookcase and closet were designed by Char. They added the cherry wainscoting. The newel post at the base of the open stairway is one of the very few elements left from the original house. The alcove at the landing is one of many built-in display nooks in the house.

The tile on the simple but elegant fireplace in the living room echoes the arched shape of the outside turret. The curved shape is repeated in the sliding doors, whose solid panels were replaced by glass to give a more open feel. A drop ceiling was added over the window seat to reflect the shape of the turret outside.

There is an antique pendulum clock in the kitchen sitting area. Curly maple was used for the wainscoting and cupboards in the kitchen and dining area. The motif of curved elements is repeated in the arch over the sink. The walnut cabinet was designed and built by the carpenter and the image on the cupboard over the dry bar was hand-painted on rice paper. The room's unique layout with an open balcony to the bar area upstairs is perfect for two-story entertaining.

There is a guest bedroom and bath on the first floor as well.

## SECOND / THIRD FLOORS

This house is both a home and a workplace and the two functions blend seamlessly in this design. To create the art studio, a wall was taken down to combine two rooms and the ceiling was removed to create the loft. The unique stair to the third floor artist's loft, the light deck with creative cut-outs that outlines the room, the pedant light, the architectural details and even the drawer pulls all pick up on the geometric theme. The open plan facilitates air flow through all three floors of the house.

A wall and ceiling were removed to open the bar area to the kitchen below. The wood on the bar is birds-eye maple trimmed with cherry. The curved form was made by using steam from the nearby radiator to make the wood more flexible. There is a rounded door to a sunporch next to the bar.

A hand thrown sink made by Mary Kuilema in a lovely custom-made curved cabinet graces the upstairs bath. A small party could be held in the beautifully tiled shower with its winding entrance and glass-block insert for added light.

All of the furniture in the primary bedroom was custom-made to fit the room, and as with almost everything in this home, it was designed and built by the owners and their carpenter.