

434 MORRIS S.E.

Hosts: Mary & Sean Dougherty

In 1920, Harry F. Stiles was vice-president of Togan-Stiles Inc., a lumber company that he owned with his brother E.W. Stiles, that made pre-fabricated buildings and millwork. Later on, they also purchased WOOD radio station.

Before Henry built this home, he travelled to Europe to research in depth the English Tudor Style of architecture. He hired a local architect, Don J. Lakie to design a home incorporating many of the style's traditional elements, including the use of warped, charred and discolored bricks on the first story to imitate hand-made bricks and stained, rough-hewn clapboards on the second story like those used for Tudor houses in Great Britain. Half timbers outline the stucco and herringbone brick details around the upper floor's bay window. The ornate chimney is distinctively English. The extended porch with an arched portico, spindle detailing and the rounded doorway create a unique entrance. Decorative stonework surrounds the door and the central front window. The bands of square and diamond shaped mullioned leaded-glass windows add a touch of elegance throughout the home and are found even in the carriage house. The double-paned windows swing out to open, making it cool in summer, warm in winter.

The Stiles family lived in the home until the early 1950's. After two consecutive short-term owners, Clarence and Harriet Hill purchased the home in 1965 and lived there for over 20 years, finally selling it to Ronald Surgeson in the late 1980's. Surgeson loved this house that he said was "built for air and light". He spent 30 years restoring it and caring for it. He replaced over 20 sconces that had been taken down, removed carpeting to reveal beautiful hardwood floors (oak down and maple up), restored the marble fireplace and updated the kitchen. In 2018, the Dougherty's bought the house and, staying true to its Tudor origins, they have continued the journey of preserving this lovely home over the past four years.

MAIN FLOOR

A small vestibule opens to a sunlit living room with a recessed wood-burning fireplace. Mr. Stiles burned only apple wood and it is said that Matthias Alten, the well-known landscape artist, used the soot to make his inks. A bump-out bay window seat is beneath a curved ceiling, echoing the arch over the fireplace.

The dining room has large glass French doors that open to a side patio. The doors to the pine-paneled library, are double sided with gold reflective panes on one side and wood panelling facing the library. The house was built during Prohibition and the library has a hidden panel for stowing certain "illegal substances".

The kitchen retains its basic original floor plan. The cupboards were custom-built in the footprint of the original cabinets, the counters have been updated and the gas stove is beneath an original range hood. From the cozy breakfast nook with built in benches and drawers, the carriage house is visible through the leaded-glass windows that surround it. A convenient pantry provides extra storage space.

At the base of the main stairs, there is a phone closet and on the first landing there is a powder room that still retains the original fixtures but has updated flooring. The clock on the stairs was made by Mary's godfather.

SECOND FLOOR

There are three bedrooms at the front of the house. There is a master suite with a small walk-out balcony that was probably used to air the linens. It has a large, attached walk-through dressing room. The two baths on this floor still have all the original and unique fixtures. The back bedroom is a converted sleeping porch. There is also a maids' room at the back of the house. The expansive leaded windows are a major element on this floor and in every room of this home, bringing a sense of light and an airiness to the whole house.

BASEMENT

The basement has a canning room, a laundry, a workroom and an outstanding billiard room with wood-paneled walls and ceiling, a working fireplace and a secret pass-through that was used during the days of Prohibition.