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417 Newman Avenue: The Anderson-Hurt House

Carol Ashburn Roach

Cecil and Fay Hurt wanted a house with “personality and potential” when they found the perfect house in 417 Newman Avenue. The Hurts purchased the wood clapboard-sided bungalow in 1988. Their home was featured in the September 1998 issue of *Southern Living*, and it was chosen as the first house in the newly enlarged Twickenham



Front Entry—The new front entry incorporates an arched gable, simple wood railing and posts, and applied detail around the door. The effect combines bungalow and colonial elements similar to other homes on the street. Photo by Carol Roach.

Historic Preservation District to be included on the Huntsville Pilgrimage Association’s 2001 Tour of Homes.

Newman Avenue was added to the city of Huntsville in 1924 as part of the Newman-Moorman District. 417 Newman was the first house built on the block. Dr. Milton Anderson, a local dentist, built it in 1927 (Hurt). At the time it was built, it had approximately 1300 square feet. The house contained a small living room with a fireplace, a dining room with bay windows, two bedrooms, a kitchen with a chimney, a bath, unfinished attic space, and a back porch that extended the width of the house. A covered entranceway was located on the east side of the

house. Cecil believes that side entrances were often chosen at the time as the streets were not paved (Hurt). Cecil has learned that the lot was purchased in 1926 for \$800, and the cost of the house was approximately \$3200 (Hurt).

The Hurts were surprised to find that the floors were not level, and the walls were not “plumb.” The remodeling took approximately two years. Vernon Schrimsher, a local builder, worked with Fay’s designs to accent the personality of the house. The previous owner had started a gabled porch on the front of the house. The Hurts completed this work adding circular columns, a wooden railing, and planted greenbrier smilax (commonly known as Jackson Vine) to enhance the front entrance. The Hurts repeated the porch’s arch above the front door with a fanlight effect.



Site of original entry—The original side porch and entry after renovation. The overhang, interior beadboard and siding, and dimensions of the porch remain but are enclosed to create a sunroom and additional bath and closet space. Photo by Carol Roach.

The original covered side entrance was enclosed with casement windows creating a sunroom. The Hurts preserved the original exterior clapboard as it became the interior wall of the sunroom. The original entrance door was replaced with French doors opening into the living room, creating an extension of the living space (14'x 30'). In the living room, the Hurts closed an entrance to a bedroom. Cecil believes the bedroom “was originally either a walk-through room or maybe a sitting room because it had no closet” (Interview).

The Hurts preserved many features of the 1927 house: the fireplace in the living room, the arch between the living and dining rooms, the original woodwork, the yellow pine floors, all of the original windows, and the original clawfoot bathtub.



The living room mantel—Other trim and molding in the room and throughout the home were added to match the Adamesque details from the existing fireplace woodwork. Photo courtesy the Hurts.

The back porch was enclosed. In this space, the Hurts created a small TV/den area and a walk-in closet. The swing area of the side porch was enclosed as a master bedroom closet. They also added a bath and dressing room for the master bedroom. The kitchen was completely gutted (except for the old windows) and updated with new cabinets and appliances. The old chimney for the stove was dismantled and enclosed in the kitchen wall. The house now has approximately 1600 square feet. The house is open and inviting with a living room (includes the sunroom), a dining room, two bedrooms, kitchen, TV/den, two full baths, and a dressing room.

Cecil talked with many of the original homeowners on Newman when he needed a variance to build the garage he designed for the northeast corner of the lot. It is connected to the house by a landscaped garden that extends to the west side of the house.

The Hurts have enjoyed living through the transition of the neighborhood. When they moved to Newman in 1988, the original owners were senior citizens, many of them “using walkers.” Now, Cecil and Fay enjoy a neighborhood where children’s strollers have replaced the walkers. They feel the neighborhood has returned to its roots with children all around: when working in their garden, Fay has discovered marbles as well as the heads of porcelain dolls, evidence of the vitality of the 1930s neighborhood. The Hurts find Newman Avenue “a delightful place to live.”

Works Cited

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Cecil Hurt retired from the Madison County Board of Education with 45 years of service in education (37 years in Madison County), and Fay is a visual display associate at Parisian. She moved to Huntsville with her parents in 1959, where her father owned and operated Madison Limestone Company. Cecil moved to Huntsville in 1966 to work with the Madison County Schools. The Hurts married in 1984.

Carol Ashburn Roach is a member of the HHF Publications committee. She would like to thank Cecil and Fay Hurt for their time and care in presenting a portrait of their home.