



“This is a neighborhood about appreciating old things.”

—Tom Cain—



Tom Cain's Home in West Central

In each issue of Fort Wayne Living, we will feature an historic building, business or landmark in northeast Indiana. Have an idea for this feature? Send it to our editor, Amber Recker, at arecker@businesspeople.com.

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City landscaper Tom Cain has an eye for interior design and it shows. Nestled in Fort Wayne's historic West Central district at 1301 West Jefferson Boulevard, his home is a statement of his craft and artistic flair.

The 20th century residence has come a long way from its early existence as four

apartments. And if the walls could talk, the house would have a lot to say, perhaps about the passing of a century and a half, its multiple owners and a fire that destroyed part of the interior.

Cain bought the unit about 26 years ago as a fixer-upper project. The house was

sitting in disrepair and he “got into it for the long-haul,” eager to restore it to its original greatness. His vision: a home with modern amenities built on its historical richness.

As with many old homes, there was no shortage of work. Among the major projects: converting a bedroom to a kitchen

area, laying a faux stone tile floor in the basement and crafting oak woodworking in the stairway. Cain says each room required a different approach. Homeowners, he says, do not have to sacrifice new technologies for the sake of historical preservation. For example, the upstairs bathroom had 20th-century plumbing and thus needed to be modernized. A closet was converted into a shower.

As far as décor, Cain contends the home is a “mix of luxury and thrift.” Although it lacks a central motif, the rooms’ individual pieces work well together on a design level. Consider the juxtaposition of his collection of Oriental jars and a few delicate 18th century pottery pieces. These items, he

says, are favorite pieces because he enjoys “the serenity of Oriental items, yet the craft of pottery.”

With the Flemish tapestry on the wall and a few rare estate pieces, it's easy to see why Cain is known for his affinity for fine things.

His secret: “It helps to have an eye (for design) and to be inventive.”

The owner is also the proud keeper of a bit of Fort Wayne heritage. A painting by Fort Wayne artist Homer Davisson adorns his upstairs hallway. And in the master bedroom, a plush sitting chair from the Fort Wayne Women's Club is a shabby chic find. Another unlikely touch: a side table created from the remnants of a column from a Greek Revival

house on Pontiac Street.

Perhaps the best-kept secret lies behind the house. As to be expected from a landscaper, the horticulture is what truly makes the backyard. His English garden abounds with irises, peonies and tulips. And don't forget the fountain complete with water lilies. On a warm sunny day, a view from the garden bench is without a doubt a little piece of West Central heaven. Admiring his garden, Cain calls it his “own development project.”

Overall, Cain says he feels a sense of responsibility for maintaining the historical integrity of the home and neighborhood. “There's a certain stewardship mentality,” he says. “This is a neighborhood about appreciating old things.” FWL