

At Home: THE KILLARNEY HOUSE

Story by LEAH SHAPIRO | Photos by PAUL M. HOWEY

When Suzanne and Hunter Hale first visited what would become their new home in Hendersonville, they couldn't quite get a good view of it. "You couldn't see anything for the ivy," explains Hunter. "It was growing all over everything, especially the gardens and all the trees around here. It really looked like a ghost house."

Ivy maintenance was just a small part of the couple's plan to spruce up the home. Killarney House, as it's been known for well over a hundred years, was owned by several different families throughout its history before it became a bed and breakfast in the early 2000s. When the Hales looked to purchase the home, it had been a year or so since it had been occupied. "When we did restorations, we tried to do everything consistent with the way it would have been in 1910," says Suzanne.

Killarney House was built in 1858, but major changes came in 1908 when it was modernized and expanded by architect Richard Sharp Smith (whose projects include the Biltmore Estate and Asheville Masonic Temple). The Hales wanted to keep the style of the home consistent with his work. Throughout the home, they tried to use things that would have been from the early 1900s, says Suzanne.

In his design, Smith added a third story and wrap-around porch, as well as the two-story wooden addition to the back. With its pointed roofline, the home is a testament to the Gothic revival movement, and Smith took care in renovating the interior woodwork, flooring, fireplace mantels, and doors—all things you'll still find in the house today.

The Killarney House is the oldest structure in Hendersonville's historic Hyman Heights. "When we put things in, we wanted them to look like they belonged here," says Suzanne. This meant period paint colors, antique doors, schoolhouse lighting in the main kitchen, and antique radiators. Even modern day fixtures, such as the porch ceiling fan and kitchen faucet, have an antique aesthetic that allows them to fit right in.

The Hales moved to Western North Carolina from a

1930s home in Arlington, just outside of D.C. They had no extensive experience with renovation, and relied on the expert advice from Harris Architects, Hearth Stone Restorations, and Steiner Framers who helped restore the exterior, update the kitchen and bathrooms, and add carports that had a lattice matching that of the original back porch.



"We wanted an old house with an acre of land close to town that had an old garden," says Suzanne. The Killarney House fit the bill. Since the Hales purchased the home and grounds in 2010, garden beds have been raised and a children's jungle gym was installed for when the grandkids visit.

As for the interior furnishings, the Hales had an extensive collection of items from the time they spent in Japan. Suzanne (now retired) worked as a foreign service officer with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Hunter started a legal practice in Tokyo, which he still runs today, traveling back to Japan several times a year.

In all, the two spent 20 years in East Asia, and brought back with them beautiful art. In the middle of the stairwell, a large bamboo pole with wooden fish and hook is suspended. In a Japanese farmhouse, this would've been hung over a fire and a kettle of water would be lowered to the heat. "A lot of the carpets are from China or else from my grandmother's," says Suzanne. In one of the rooms, wooden figurines from Micronesia sit on the mantel.

Come see the Killarney House for yourself, as it will be one out of nine homes in the Hyman Heights Historic District on the Tour of Historic Homes in Hendersonville. The self-guided tour will take place on Sunday, May 4, from 1-5 P.M. and is sponsored by the Hendersonville Historic Preservation Commission.

Tickets are \$15 per person and available in advance at The Beehive (449 N. Main Street), Mia's Marketplace (241 N. Main Street), and City Hall (145 5th Avenue East). You can also purchase a ticket on the day of the event at the Killarney House, 322 Killarney Street. Cash or check only. For more information, visit hendersonvillehpc.org.

