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PACIFIC NW

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Family finds historic Ballard home to be just right — now

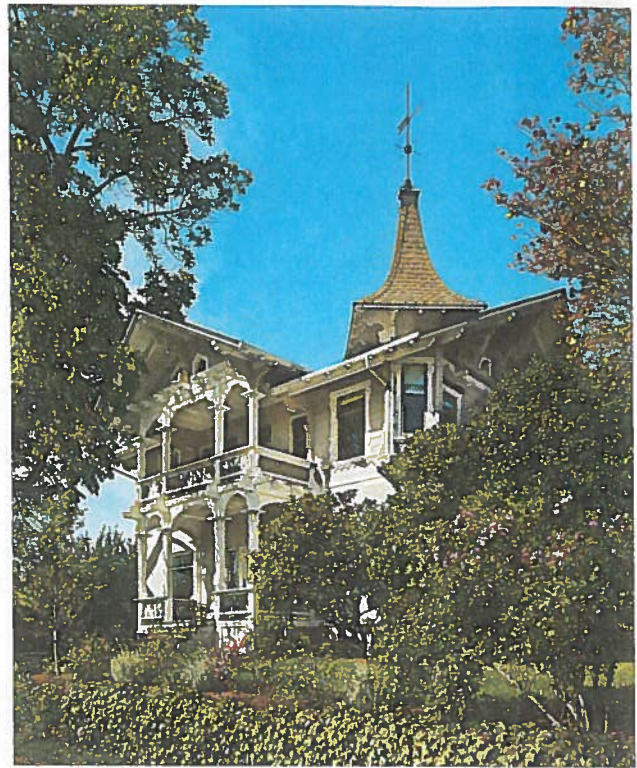
Building ON THE Past

SURE, IT'S PRETTY and it's fancy. Charming in an old-world, other-world sort of way. And historic, on lists and registers, in books. But make no mistake, the all-dolled-up Ballard two-story known as the Norvell House and built in 1908 is here to serve.

"It's the most serene, light-filled place to raise my girls in," says Kate Dunlop, who with her husband, Erik Abbott, are the latest owners of the place that, descriptors condensed, is its own gingerbread brand of Franco-Swiss chalet skewed Norwegian.

"At night we can see cars slow down and fingers pointing," Dunlop says. "Some people say it's Norwegian Dragon style. Or people say, 'You live in the Victorian house.' The kids call it the Halloween House."

Whatever you call it, the Norvell House comes with a past. It takes its name from James and Hazel Norvell, who lived here the longest — 1949-2005 — and were instrumental in getting it designated a Seattle historic landmark. But the house was built 41 years before ▶



Some call the 1908 Ballard home "Hazel's House," for Hazel Norvell, who lived here more than 50 years. The old place is handmade, romantic, eclectic with a Scandinavian joie de vivre. It is also well-documented (it has a Wikipedia listing) but its designer is unknown.

The entry, like the piano, is grand. The house got a fresh coat of paint (here Skylight by Farrow & Ball) by Shearer Painting. The fir floors have also been refinished.



J.A.S. Design Build carefully fit new into old, here crafting a white modern farmhouse kitchen with Carrara marble counters, subway tile and a salvaged-fir island top. Architect Kir Clements says, "The highest compliment for us is, 'Well, what was here and what wasn't here?'"

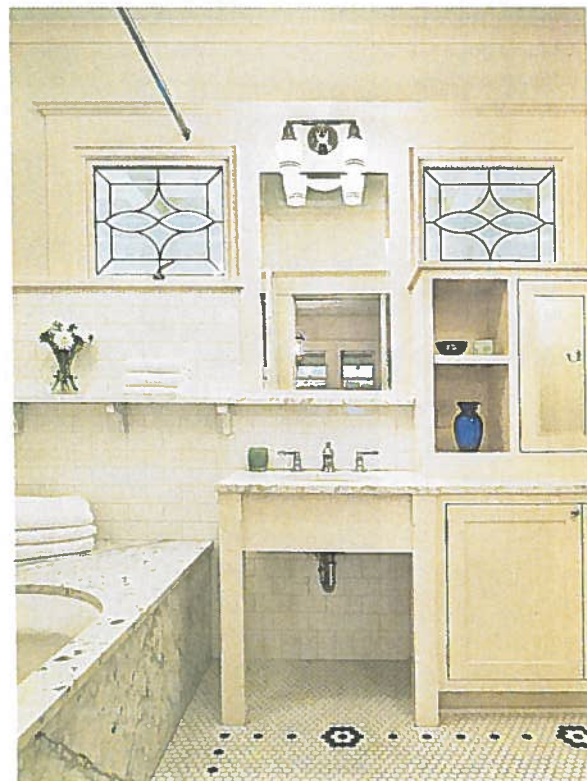


unlop and her husband, Erik Abbott, did the interiors themselves, some pieces inherited from Dunlop's grandmother. Stained glass windows are newly revealed.

This mudroom and powder room, at the back of the house, are new spaces achieved with a small addition. The silver, blue and white chinoiserie wallpaper, "Summer Palace," is from Osborne & Little. The cheerful yellow bench seat introduce a touch of modern fun. The floor is bluestone.



The family bathroom is grand yet set in time. J.A.S.'s goal for all the work was to maintain charm and improve function. The tub surround and counter are Carrara marble. The windows are new. The leaded and beveled motif matches the dining-room windows, originals.



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they moved in, for the manager of the Stimson Lumber Mill, using fir from the Ballard sawmill. It sits today on the original, large lot, which includes heritage trees and a carriage house.

The home is festooned with porches and balconies, bays and a turret, perched like a jaunty cap over a master bedroom window that frames Mount Rainier like a painting. Certainly the home is handmade. Romantic. And, above all, eclectic.

But it also has a joie de vivre that its current owners, a young family, found irresistible.

Dunlop and Abbott are two “certified Japanophiles” who worked in Tokyo for about a dozen years. They bought the Ballard house in 2010 with one daughter and a vague notion about returning state-side. The Tohoku earthquake and tsunami a year later turned notion into plan. “It was terrifying,” is all Dunlop will say.

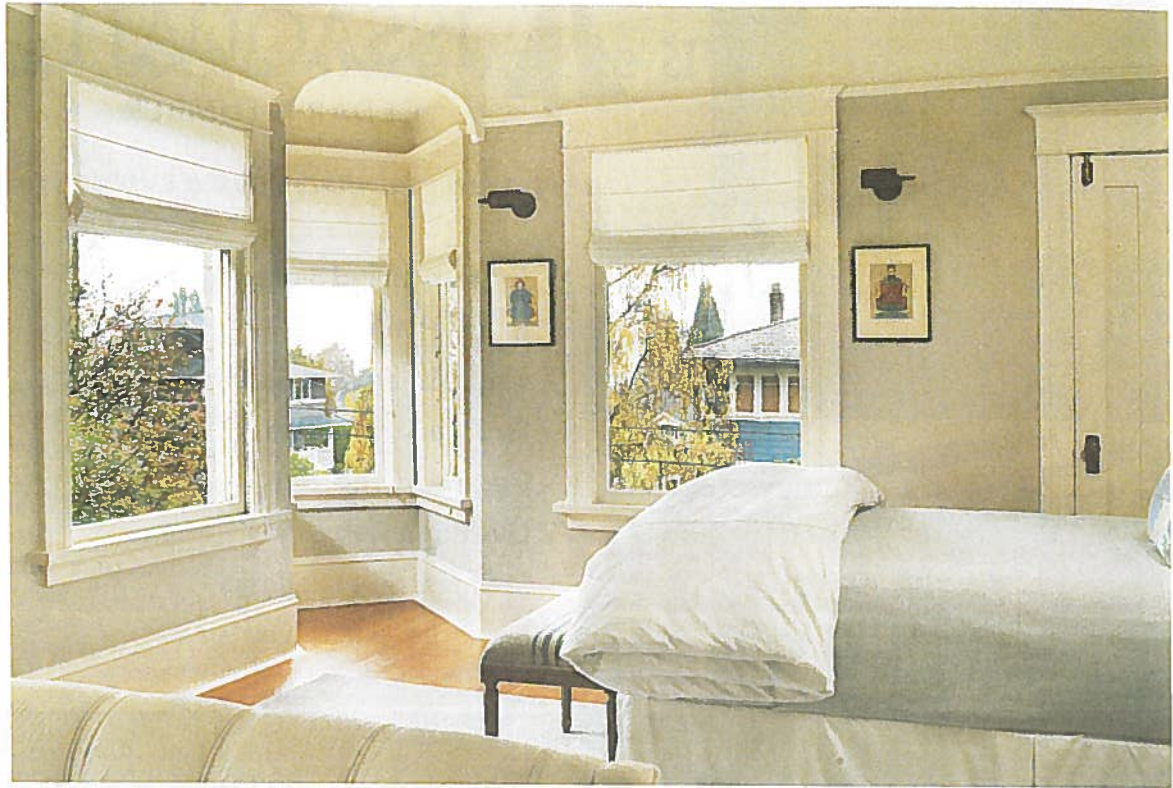
They found the Norvell House online. “I liked it, but I was hesitant,” she says. “It was such a project.” Dunlop’s husband, however, knew the moment he walked in that they could make it theirs.

And, in partnership with J.A.S. Design Build (and approval from Seattle’s Department of Neighborhoods), they have.

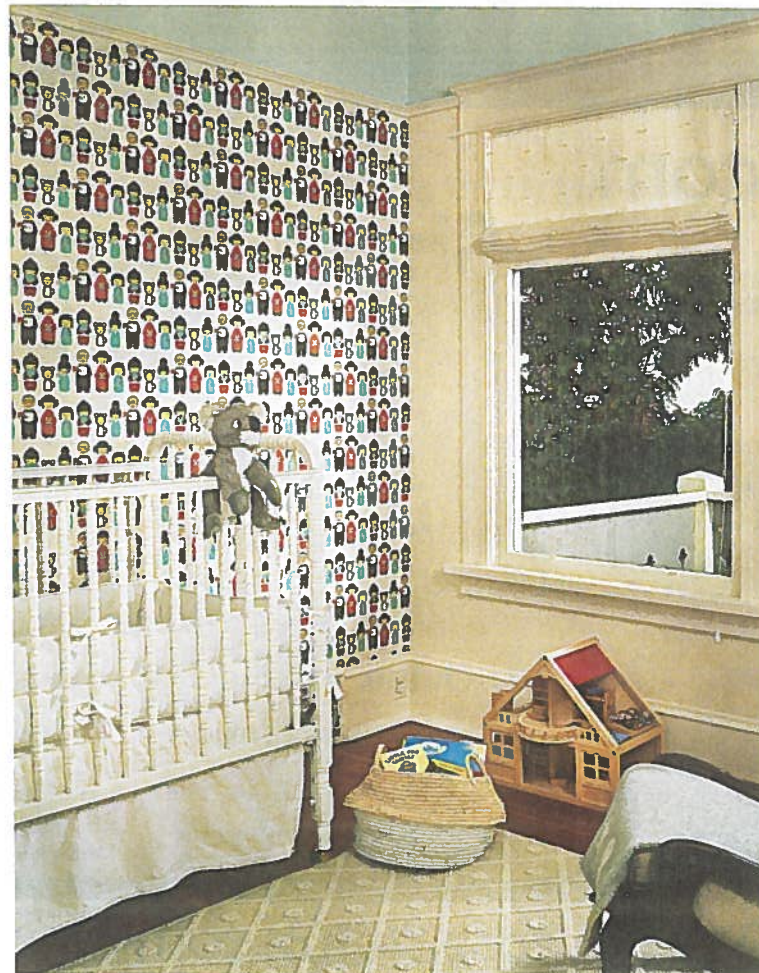
“The single best decision we made was to go with J.A.S. and to trust them,” says Dunlop. “J.A.S. knew the house better than we did, to be honest.”

Abbott and Dunlop met with lead designer Erin Sonntag and architect Kim Clements from across the Pacific Ocean, via email, Skype and conference calls (one the morning Dunlop was to give birth to their second daughter, Julia).

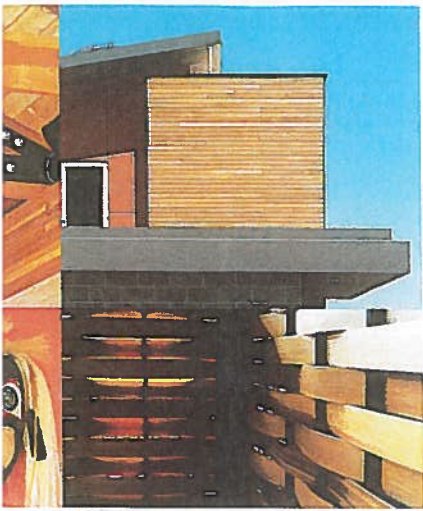
The goal was simple: maintain charm, improve function. A powder room was moved to enlarge the kitchen, now truly a modern farmhouse deal with a 10-foot-tall ceiling (and a library ladder to reach upper cabinets), farm sink, marble counters and salvaged-fir island ▶



The turret in the master bedroom perfectly frames Mount Rainier. Due to budget concerns, the master was just refreshed with new paint, all that was needed.



The bedrooms got face-lifts. This is daughter Julia’s room. “We had fun with the wallpaper,” Dunlop says. “Julia kisses her people good night.” It is from Osborne & Little.



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counter top. And, most important, a fireplace with a new bluestone hearth and surround. The fireplace is original to the home: No one could bear to remove it.

There is also a new mudroom and charming powder room (Dunlop had this room and Julia's bedroom wallpapered with Asian-themed prints.)

The bathroom upstairs, now in Carrara marble, is shared. "There isn't a bathroom for each bedroom," says Dunlop. "We don't have that kind of house, and we didn't want that kind of house. So we're glad the bath is extra beautiful."

The basement now holds the girls' play space, family room, laundry and storage. Other spaces were brightened with new paint.

"I feel like we've inherited a piece of a lot of people's history," Dunlop says. "I miss Tokyo a lot, but I don't miss it when I'm in my house." 📷

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