

Historic renovation project reveals links to the past

By: Kent Hohlfeld in Construction August 11, 2017 1:39 pm



From left, Clark Zeller, of Joseph Hughes Construction and Tracy Orvis of DiLoreto Architecture conduct a project walk-through with Celeste Lucas of Sloy, Dahl & Holst Inc., at a Northwest Portland building being renovated for the financial services firm. (Sam Tenney/DJC)

A multistory Northwest Portland structure that will soon serve as the home of financial services firm **Sloy, Dahl & Holst Inc.** was first a home for a prominent doctor in the late 19th century. **DiLoreto Architecture** and **Joseph Hughes Construction (JHC)** are taking on the modernization project, with sensitivity for the past.

“We’re trying to be historically accurate while being mindful of current needs,” architect Tracy Orvis said.

Workers have already discovered in the building’s old walls some unique items, including 1920s-era newspapers with ads for items such as zeppelins and war bonds. Wooden balls were found wedged in between pipes to help them keep their slope. Pipes used to power gas lanterns and coal chutes used to feed the original furnace turned up as well.

“There is a pocket door that led to the parlor, and the hardware is date-stamped 1891,” Clark Zeller, project manager for JHC, said. “We are still going to use that piece of hardware. That is kind of cool.”

The house, at 829 N.W. 19th Ave., was designed by Whidden & Lewis, an architecture firm that operated in Portland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. But over the course of many decades, the house was “remodeled beyond recognition,” Richard Marlitt wrote in his book “Matters of Proportion,” which detailed the residential work of Whidden & Lewis.

The project team found the building still had stained glass windows above the landing at the top of an ornate staircase. However, many other elements were simply covered. “The building was treated very poorly,” said Celeste Lucas, a Sloy, Dahl & Holst Inc. account executive who has been extensively involved in the renovation project.



A 7,500-square-foot building in Northwest Portland built in 1892 as a home for a Portland physician is being renovated for Sloy, Dahl & Holst Inc. (Sam Tenney/DJC)

The 7,500-square-foot building was completed in 1892 as a personal residence for Dr. George Good. It became a school in the 1930s and then was used for offices in the 1950s. Through the building's 125 years, each renovation removed some of the original architectural elements.

"They covered hardwood floor with flat laminate," Orvis said. "They covered up the doors and filled in the panels."

An extension was added to the front of the house in the 1950s, and four of the home's five ornate fireplaces were stripped of their finishes and walled off. The decisions to cover the flooring and fireplaces raised questions.

"You ask, at what point did they think this wasn't beautiful?" Lucas said.

The renovation team has already managed to bring the building's hardwood floors back to life. Existing fireplaces are now being restored. The plan is to finish renovating the first two floors by October. Basement, third floor and exterior renovations are planned for a later time.

"Luckily, a lot of the things we found were original," Orvis said. "The original doors were still in there. They are in great shape. The coverings, as hideous as they were, were a great protector."



The renovation of a 125-year-old Northwest Portland structure will include the restoration of several ornate fireplaces. (Sam Tenney/DJC)

