

History and Design

The cottage was designed by Justin Kelly, the owner's son. It was built by Tony Kikes, who lived just over the fence, between the fall of 2005 and the spring of 2007.

Because it is an “accessory dwelling unit,” on the same tax lot as the main house, the building permit took almost a year and a half to obtain from the county. Accessory dwelling units are encouraged by modern city planners to help concentrate growth within city boundaries and to help prevent urban sprawl. Also called “granny flats” they are an excellent way to maintain close contact with older family members who want their own privacy and independence. However county ordinances and the permit process for accessory dwelling units had only been written in recent years. The process included a neighborhood meeting with notarized minutes to allow questions and concerns to be aired, a specific size of sign at the site, and letters with specific content to be written to all neighbors within 500 feet. Permissions were required from gas, water, and fire services to assure that the accessory dwelling would not cause an undue burden on them.

Set back from the main house in a woodsy location, the cottage has a very small footprint, but everything a person could ask for in a small apartment. The architect, who also made the topography map for the site, gave much thought to the orientation of the structure and windows to maximize views out toward the garden, creek, and woods. Extra deep eaves that evoke European cottages give the cottage a sheltered look, literally and figuratively. The design places part of the bathroom and a storage area underneath the stairs. There is a hatch door on the first landing, and cabinets under the window seat to make use of those spaces for storage. The front loading washer and dryer are tucked under an ample peninsula that divides the kitchen and living room areas. The stairs to the loft make two 90 degree turns, and are an architectural feature in themselves. The open ceiling over the living area, and the multitude of windows give the cottage an airy feeling that belies its small size. The wall of glass in the window seat makes it a dramatic part of the interior and a delightful spot to read, especially with lighted sconces at each end. Though not yet common in Portland the cottage has hydronic heat, that is, water pipes embedded in an exposed aggregate floor. (Hydronic heat can usually be installed under existing conventional floors. The initial cost is more than a furnace, but a savings in energy costs is reputed to pay for it over time.) There is no forced air sound or dust blowing around, just quiet warmth coming from under your feet.

Steve Carruthers, also a neighbor and friend, laid the hand hewn cobblestone patio. The patio is dry laid, with crushed granite between the stones to allow drainage, from roughly five tons of recycled Pearl District streets. (Before Portland streets, the stones, Belgian black basalt, were ballast in the holds of ships from Europe, waiting in the Columbia River to load timber from the Pacific Northwest.) Steve added massive basalt steps to and from the patio and alongside the cottage, so that the view from the main house kitchen window across the stones to the cottage is the best in the whole house.

We couldn't be happier with the way the cottage has turned out, and wish to specially thank all of the following people, each one an artist:

Justin S. Kelly, AIA, Architect 415-516-3531

Tony Kikes, Five K Construction 503-245-9412

Steve Carruthers, Steven T. Carruthers Landscaping 503-245-9478