

Buying Here: Century-old beauty in Butler is priced at \$589,900

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By Rosa Colucci / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Sometimes Mary Jo Silvia has to remind herself that she lives at **300 Old Plank Road** in the Oak Hills section of Butler Township.

“Every time I drive down the driveway, I think, ‘What a beautiful house,’” said Mrs. Silvia, who became the house’s fourth owner when she and her husband Mark bought it in October 1997.

She attributes much of the three-bedroom, 3½-bath house’s beauty to its third owner, the late Alva L. Hill, an architect and principal at the firm of Burt Hill Kosar Rittelmann.

“He was a real visionary. He kept the integrity of the house.”

Mrs. Silvia loved it from the beginning.

“We had an opportunity to move back home from San Jose. I made an offer that day and my husband didn’t even see the house.”

Now empty nesters, they have put the nearly century-old house on the market for \$589,900 (MLS No. 1404407) with Betsy Wotherspoon & Team at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices (www.thepreferredrealty.com or 412-540-5420). The home is open by appointment.

Built in 1922 by the Koomer family, the original house stood on 6 acres and had a stable. It passed on to Mr. Koomer’s daughter and then sold to Homer Tack.

“A lot of people say you are in the Tack house. They call this Tack’s Corner,” Mrs. Silvia said. “Mr. Tack was an excavating contractor and owned the home for 25 years. He raised hackney ponies here.”

One afternoon, Mrs. Silvia spotted an elderly man and woman on the side of the road looking at the house. “They were the Tack children who grew up in the house. I invited them in to see it.”

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They regaled her with stories about growing up there and told her that the fireplace tools were the original set from when the house was built.

The home now sits on a 2¼-acre level lot. There are two patios and lots of windows offering views on all sides. A long driveway takes you to a three-car garage and a brick paver path leads to the front door.

Inside, the 17- by- 5-foot entry features original oak floors laid in running patterns; several rooms feature inlaid designs. Hill traced the crown molding, banisters and other woodwork back to Louis Manufacturing Co. A first-floor powder room features a corner sink with a furniture-style vanity.

Original French doors lead to the 17- by- 13-foot dining room. All of the doors in the home have original glass doorknobs. An arch above the windows frames the front views while a bank of cabinets against a long wall holds dishes and serving pieces for parties. The dining room easily seats 10.

Across the hall, the 30-by-15-foot living room has an arched, wood-burning fireplace and space for many different seating configurations.

The 14-by-12-foot kitchen is in the rear and has a semi-oval island, cherry cabinets and a handmade counter and floor tile. Appliances include double gas wall ovens, one convection, a dishwasher and disposal. A breakfast room nearby features a long farmhouse table and sage green walls.

A 12-by-9-foot sun room has French doors that lead outside to a side patio surrounded by mature plantings and gardens. The Silvias put their touch on the back patio by adding an outdoor kitchen with granite counter tops, a natural gas grill, warming drawers and a stove.

“We added it 13 years ago,” Mrs. Silvia said. “We finished it in stacked stone and it has lighting built in.”

Beyond the patio is a manicured lawn and lots of mature trees. It's a great place to entertain; the Silvias have hosted parties for 80 to 100 people.

The second-floor master bedroom measures 15 by 15 feet and features an additional suite of rooms including double walk-in closets, a dressing area and a full bathroom. Two more bedrooms measure 16 by 15 feet and 16 by 12 feet. All bedrooms have large windows overlooking the front or rear of the property. There is an additional full bath on the second floor.

The couple finished the lower level and added a 30-by-14-foot home theater. It has dedicated space for lounging, viewing and entertaining. There is a large storage room and full bathroom with tiled shower.

The home has radiator heat, central air-conditioning, a security system and is located in the Butler Area School District. Annual estimated taxes are \$4,648.

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