

N&M House Detectives

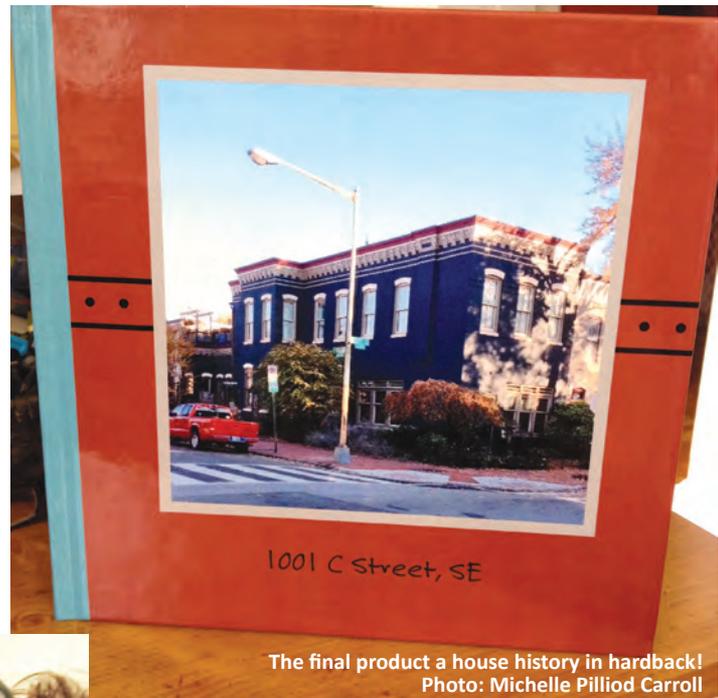
by Catherine Plume

Unlock the History of Your Capitol Hill Home

Many a Capitol Hill resident has wondered about the previous inhabitants of their home, and what their house looked like in years past. Earlier this year, Michelle Pilliod Carroll and Nina Tristani set out to do what they had long planned to do – research the history of their Capitol Hill homes. Over several weeks, they visited various institutions around DC including the Historical Society of Washington, DC, the Washingtonia Collection at the Martin Luther King Library, the Library of Con-

gress and that National Archives to gather bits of information about their homes.

Once they finished their research, they compiled the information into a hard copy book. Now, four months later, an adventure that started as a lark for these long time Capitol Hill residents has become a second career for both. “After finishing the books for our own homes we discovered how much we enjoyed the process and learning about the history of DC. We thought others would be interested in something similar for their own homes, and N&M House Detectives was created,” says Nina.



The final product a house history in hardback!
Photo: Michelle Pilliod Carroll



N&M House Detectives working a case. Photo: Carolyn Peterson

To date, N&M House Detectives (www.nmousedetectives.com) has completed some 10 house history projects. For a cost of \$400 plus a \$50 publication fee, they will produce a 20-page 8” x 11” color book documenting the history of a home. (Discounts are available for the purchase of multiple books on different homes.) The books include copies of building permits, census reports, directory listings, maps, neighborhood and archival pictures, a history of the surrounding area and more. While N&M House Detectives is Capitol Hill based, they can research any home in Washington, DC proper. While it typically takes four weeks to research a property, it can take a bit longer for an older (pre-1877) building or a commercial building.

Through their research, they’ve discovered some interesting quirks about DC. For example, building permits were not required until 1877. Then, from the 1890’s until 1964, the Department of War (now Defense) had to approve building extensions or alterations on DC houses. They’ve also learned about some interesting Capitol Hill personalities such as Wil-

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liam Prout, who sold parts of his extensive Capitol Hill land holdings for the construction of Christ Church on G Street SE and Eastern (Branch) Market. “With each project we are uncovering fascinating pieces of history for not only a home but its neighborhood. A new assignment opens us up to the rich history of Washington DC and new discoveries,” Michelle says.

Nina and Michelle have found that the skills, knowledge and accomplishments from their former careers are serving them well in their new endeavor. (Nina was a scholarly publisher while Michelle owned and operated a meeting planning company.) And, customers are thrilled with their work.

“When I was young, my parents purchased a building in DuPont Circle which housed my father’s dry-cleaner and three apartments. I’ve always loved the building, and when N&M House Detectives presented me with a book about my family’s building, I was blown away! They even found the building permit from 1879! I learned so much about the building’s story, including its owners and inhabitants dating back to the 1900s. They even found photos from as far back as 1951! The entire history is packaged in an inviting and attractive book. I can’t express enough how meaningful and fulfilling having this information is. N&M House Detectives do an unusual – and amazing – job!” says customer Stephen Paderofsky, Principal at Estate of the Art.



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Aside from revealing a property's history, N&M House Detectives gather crucial information for securing renovation permits in the Capitol Hill Historic District or marketing historic homes for sales. As Leigh Mailloux, President, LR Mailloux Construction, Inc., says, "I needed help with a historical provenance for a home on Capitol Hill. N&M House Detectives uncovered the information I needed to get approval from the Capitol Hill Restoration Society and an expedited permit. All this in addition to information on the builder, original owner of the home and more!" Realtor John Smith commissioned N&M House Detectives to publish a historical book as part of a home sale. "They did a great job! I highly recommended them!"

While clients have been pleased with their work, N&M House Detectives made ardent converts out of the librarians at the various research facilities they patronize. "They share our enthusiasm and have become an invaluable resource for each new project," says Nina.

So, if you're looking for a unique gift for a DC homeowner - be it yourself, a friend or neighbor - or even just to document the renovation of your home, consider putting N&M House Detectives on the case!

Catherine Plume is a lifelong environmentalist, a writer, and blogger for the DC Recycler: www.DCRecycler.blogspot.com; Twitter @DC_Recycler ♦



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