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SHAKER HOMES

The Evolution of a Wine Room



Growing from a casual hobby to serious home improvement, the McCormicks' wine rooms have enhanced their property values, provided continuity as their circumstances have changed, and, of course, offered them a great deal of pleasure.



It's the people with imaginations who really thrive as Shaker home owners.

Sue and Tim McCormick envisioned a wine room in the basement of their first Shaker house, in Fernway, which they bought in 1995 after a job-related move from Connecticut. When they finished the home's basement in 1999, they turned the coal chute area into a wine room.

"It was an experiment," explains Sue. "We had noticed that the temperature and humidity never varied in that space."

So, with the help of Dan Dureiko of Dureiko Construction, the couple's first wine room came into being. It was relatively small: six by ten feet, with cedar paneling.

BY SUE STARRETT

PHOTOS BY KEVIN REEVES

Over the years, their family expanded with the birth of Caroline, seven, and Timmy, four. Sue and Tim started thinking about a larger home. When friends were transferred to Phoenix in late 2003, Sue and Tim bought their Mercer area house as much for its wonderful garage-turned-office and finished basement as for its spacious layout and yard. But there was no place for their growing wine collection.

Their new home provided the opportunity to apply some wine room innovations. Sue re-engaged Dan Dureiko and together they planned the project: the reclamation of an ugly basement pipe room.

cement floor were transformed into a very special and elegant wine room. Its combination of colors, textures, and materials evokes the satisfying complexity of wine, so much so that the room won one of four top prizes in the National Kitchen and Bath Association's 2005 Design Competition, in a field of 417 entries. (No doubt this is the wine equivalent of the icing on the cake.)

Hiding the unsightly (but necessary) basement pipes and meters made for interesting work. Dan started the renovation at the ceiling in order to enclose, rather than relocate, the water, steam, and waste pipes. This made the ceiling low, so he created an octagonal tray ceiling.

Over six weeks during March and April 2004, the cinderblock walls and

ing to restore some height.

“All the other symmetry of the room followed the ceiling design,” he says.

Next, he built closets at each corner for the gas meter and water meter. He sealed the room with three layers of insulation and framed it in drywall covered with a plaster-sand mixture. The resulting Stucco-like surface was painted a dark green and then wiped with a rag for added dimension.

The wine is stored in custom-made mahogany racks, and Dan fashioned the room’s doors and trim from matching wood. The slate floor is all earth tones, and the counters are granite. Crackle tile covers three walls, one of which features two raised-tile wine labels. The focal point is the largest tiled wall, bordered by an arch. Above a jade-green marble chair rail is mosaic stone. Below it is a gorgeous tile grape arbor, and then more crackle tile. Accent lighting provides subtle illumination.

With a constant temperature of 58 degrees, controlled humidity, and low voltage recessed lighting (such as that found in museums), the 12- by 8-foot room has a hushed feeling. Yet it is inhabited by nearly 300 bottles (half of its capacity) of wine. The collecting wines and special occasion wines are stored along the “grape vine” wall. “Our favorite vineyard is Silver Oaks,” says Sue, and two of their vintages dominate the McCormicks’ Napa Valley Cabernet collection.

Other evidence of their avocation includes wine magazines and books, a





box of labels Sue has removed from most loved bottles, a crate from Dominus Vineyard, and a tall glass vase of corks.

“The kids mostly like to play with the corks and the light switch controls when they are in the room — though they really don’t pay that much attention to it,” says Sue.

The details that make the room extraordinary include a sophisticated music system, rope lighting that illuminates the bottles stored nearly upright, hanging glasses, and the thoughtful organization of their collection.

A pub table and two chairs in the center of the room provide a perfect setting for Sue and Tim to begin the evening with a glass of wine. The delight they take from the room is obvious, and they enjoy sharing it with friends. Their first formal wine tasting will be the fulfillment of a silent auction item they donated last summer to a Canterbury Country Club breast cancer benefit.

“It’s a fun room,” says Sue. Dan Dureiko says he enjoyed building it, though it was “one of the most, if not *the* most, challenging spaces we have had to work around.”

Tim McCormick worked from his home “garage” office until late last year, when Dreyfus Investments transferred him to Manhattan. And so Sue and Tim may be faced with another move — and the creation of another room for their wine.

“But it will give us a chance to tweak again,” is Sue’s optimistic take on their future.

