

1215 Delaware Street
(btw – the date of the signing of the Magna Carta)

We were only the second family to live in this house at 1215 Delaware Street, built in 1923. We have lived here for 32 years. Our children grew up in this house, running up and down the hallway and through many of the passages in the house, going to the good schools in our district, having many friends at the house and then going off to good colleges on the East coast and the Pacific Northwest. They played in the back yard, built forts and tree houses, played badminton and croquet and hide and go seek.

I remember clearly the first day we moved into the house. Our children were three and eight years old. We were so excited; the children running through the house deciding which rooms they wanted to be theirs. The house was so big! There were so many bedrooms, so many rooms, so many passageways to run through, a long hallway that could be a bowling alley. The ceilings were so high. The back yard was a dream, a place for future buildings, plantings, fences, hammocks, forts, a tree house, a swing. Everyone picked their rooms although over the years the configuration would change; our daughter choosing the room next to the garden when she was a teenager which gave her more privacy. I am an artist and used one of the bedrooms as a studio. There was always ample space for us to be together and have places to go for solitude.

And then there is the bathroom. There is only one. We right away thought of putting another one in but we seemed to get along fine with only one. There were four children in the only other family that lived in the house and they never saw the need to put in another bathroom. But we still kept thinking about it. When the children had gone off to college but still we said “there should be a second bathroom”. As it got closer to thinking of selling our house it seemed that it would be best for the new owners to decide where they would like to put the second bathroom. There are many options as well as many options for possible remodels in the house.

Over the years we spruced up the bathroom and remodeled the kitchen, retiled the fireplace, put in a new roof and a very new furnace with all new ducts and a brand new dishwasher. We refinished the hardwood floors and have painted and repainted all of the rooms of the house over the years. We replaced the pipes with copper ones, did electrical upgrades, put in a sewer lateral, put in new light fixtures and made many other improvements.

This house has a North South orientation. At the summer solstice you can watch the sun rise over the hills in the North East from the deck in the back and at the winter solstice it is the full moon that rises there. The sun rises from behind the leafy trees in the South East at the winter solstice and shines through the East facing windows in the living room casting beautiful leafy shadow patterns on the walls. At the equinox you can see both the sun and the full moon rise through the windows in the kitchen and the dining room. The sun sets towards the end of Delaware Street at the winter solstice and casts beautiful golden light all the way up the street. At the equinox the sun set can be seen through the bedroom windows also casting warm red and gold light on to the walls. At the summer solstice it sets to the North West and comes through the birch trees in the back yard. In the winter, when the sun is at its lowest, it comes gently through the large South facing window in the living room. From the deck the steady North Star can be seen all times of the year. I feel as though I always know where I am in the universe in this house.

The house is on a bit of a rise from the street and you can see over roof tops and off into the distance from the living room. It is a wonderful view, the light always changing, shining on the rooftops and sides of the houses and the trees in the foreground and the distance. We planted a Japanese Maple in the front yard which changes colors with the seasons and a Star Magnolia which has beautiful flowers and accompanying beautiful smell in February. There are Mulberry trees on the street that are the most beautiful golden color in the Spring when the trees just begin to leaf out.

The garden in the back is a real escape from the world. It is quiet and green. We planted 6 birch trees, for shade and privacy, an olive tree and three fruit trees over the years. There is a Granny Smith apple tree and a Meyer Lemon tree both of which give abundant fruit. The Bartlett pear tree is just about ready to produce in larger quantities. There is a volunteer Pittosporum with an incredibly beautiful smell as well as a volunteer plum tree which gives privacy and some good tasting plums. We have kept the old fig tree that was the only tree there when we moved in. It also provides privacy and some figs and used to house a tree house around it. We can see Redwood trees and Palm trees in the backyards nearby. The yard is very large: it goes far back and the lot is one and a half times the size of the other lots nearby.

There are several beautiful rose bushes, especially the climbing orange Polka Meitosier growing up the trellis on the deck. It flowers abundantly with gorgeous orange blooms that change color and shape from the first buds to falling of the

petals. The petals can be saved and made into wonderful smelling sachets or potpourri. There are irises, agapanthus, day lilies, Peruvian lilies, lavender and salvia attracting butterflies, hummingbirds and bees. Bird song fills the air, especially in the morning and afternoon. We have finches, cedar wax wings at certain times of the year, robins, and hummingbirds visiting and feasting on the catkins in the birch trees, the flowers and the fruit trees. It is lovely to sit out in the backyard in the evening watching the light fade, smelling the flowers and listening to the birds.

1215 Delaware is in a wonderful location. It is four blocks from the North Berkeley Bart Station, nine blocks from the wonderful shops and restaurants on Fourth Street and five blocks from the best bread bakery in the world, Acme Bakery. There is always a line to get in to the bakery but it is well worth the wait for their delicious fresh bread. We have great neighbors; young professionals, couples with children, grandparents with children and grandchildren visiting. The school district we are in is exceptional and there is a great network of parents working in the schools and well as a good network of people communicating through Nextdoor.

It will be hard to leave this house we have loved so much over the years. The only consolation is that it will be passed on to others who will love it and enjoy it as we have.