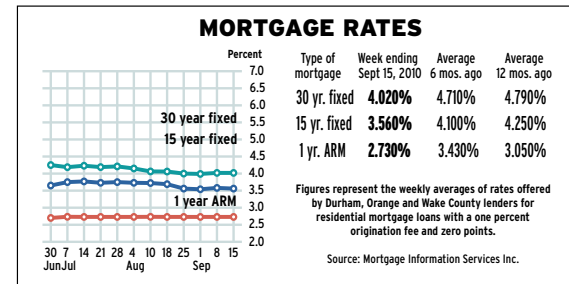


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Find grace, charm in historic homes

BY IRIS JUNE VINEGAR
CORRESPONDENT

Can you imagine living in a town without a Walmart, or even a movie theater? Honestly, you'd be amazed at how well the population of under a thousand is coping in Historic Warrenton, only 55 miles from Raleigh and Research Triangle Park. The town, established in 1779, was the center of a prosperous plantation region before the Civil War, and many of its antebellum homes have survived.

"Some people live in Warrenton and work in RTP," notes Richard Hunter, 62, a Warrenton native, Clerk of Warrenton Superior Court and the town's unofficial historian. "They like the peace and quiet our town is known for." Actually, a Walmart store and movie theater are only 13 miles away, in Henderson. Warrenton does have a golf course, and most town folks do their swimming, fishing and boating in nearby Lake Gaston and Kerr Lake. "What makes Warrenton so special," Hunter emphasizes, "is that it's a walkable town — every home is just a few blocks away from downtown."

In fact, three of those historic homes are listed for sale with Re/Max City Centre Realtor Paul Setliff of Raleigh and are described below. They are on the National Register of Historic Places and can be viewed at www.preservationnc.org.

Whitsome (Coleman-White-Jones House) 205 Halifax St., \$350,000

Alice White McVey was a teenager the day her father, Warrenton attorney Charlie White, came home and announced he had bought a house just two blocks from where they were living. "He said he'd fallen in love with the house," recalled McVey. He hadn't actually bought that home, but after showing it to his wife Sallie, it was a fait accompli. "They did not care that they were beginning their empty-nest years," McVey told me.

That house is Whitsome, a stunning four-column 3,744-square-foot antebellum federal-style home built for Dr. Littleton Coleman in the early 1820s on the highest point in Warrenton. Whitsome is architecturally related to the lost plantation house Montmorenci and features the only surviv-



PHOTO COURTESY OF PRESERVATION NC AND DAVID STREVEL

ing Montmorency-style windows. Three striking Flemish bond chimneys support the home's five fireplaces. Whitsome's distinct interior includes pedestal-type wainscoting, ornate federal-style ceiling medallions and decorative plaster in the hall and main parlor.

In spite of its uniqueness, Whitsome is a very livable home. The amazingly well-preserved house features four bedrooms, two full baths, three half-baths and a finished basement with game room. The separate two-car garage and shed were built in the mid-1900s.

"There were parties at the house and always people in and out," recalls McVey, a 49-year-old division manager at Charles River Laboratories. She and her brother, Chuck White inherited Whitsome when their parents died. During the 30 years the family lived there, numerous historians and architectural students visited the house and, McVey notes, it was always open to historic-home tours as fundraisers. "Dad would show the house off to anyone who would knock on the door," she said, remembering that during neighborhood weddings, "Mom would offer the house to complete strangers

to come and stay during the festivities."

If you ask McVey what she liked best about Whitsome, she'll tell you about the two porches. On the second-floor rear veranda that spans the width of the house, there were many fun parties. She'd return in the first morning light to drink her coffee while watching the foxes, deer and other wildlife frolic over the 3-acre estate. But the place that invokes the most nostalgia for Alice is the first-floor rear screened porch: "I always had a quiet time with my dad there early in the morning."

Tucker House 214 N. Bragg St., \$210,000

Like McVey, Catherine Guarducci grew up in Warrenton. In fact, her family lived in a large house just down the street from Tucker House, the two-story 1924 colonial revival cottage she and husband David purchased through Setliff six years ago and restored. Their home reflects the keen interest of its builder and first owner, Charles Tucker, in architecture and gardening.

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Tucker House is a colonial revival cottage restored six years ago by its current owners.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

WARRENTON

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The 2,630 square-foot home with basement has two bedrooms, three baths, a large eat-in kitchen, dining room, and first-floor family room that could easily become a third bedroom.

The couple also renovated three out-buildings, including "the tavern" - a tool shed with stained-glass windows and a bar - and a 446 square-foot guest cottage with a bedroom, fireplace, full bath, screened deck and air conditioning.

But what is very special about Tucker House is its classic terraced garden designed by renowned landscape architect Charles Gillette. It features stone walls, boxwoods, twin

fountain pools, a rose garden with brick edging and a shady brick patio.

Catherine Guarducci, whose late grandfather Charles Peete was a local physician, believes Warrenton residents are the town's greatest asset. In fact, when she asked a friend if she ever felt sorry she had not moved, the Warrenton native told her, "No, there is nothing I would ever want to do that I can't get to (from here)."

Bobbitt-Pendleton-Arrington House **109 W. Ridgeway St., \$395,500**

It is rumored that the Bobbitt-Pendleton-Arrington House could be 50 years older than circa 1840, when carriage maker William Bobbitt purchased the original federal-style house. But Toni Haavisto, who owns

the house with her husband Marc Steer, said that without detailed documentation prior to 1840 it's not possible to be certain about the original house.

Haavisto and Steer purchased the 4,816-square-foot house in disrepair seven years ago and restored it to its original grandeur. "My husband and I renovated it and preserved the bones of the original house," Haavisto said.

Actually, that classic home has been transformed several times since it was built. Victoria Pendleton, who purchased the house in 1868, enlarged and remodeled it in Greek revival style. In the 1920s, her daughter Katherine Arrington, a leading force in organizing the North Carolina Museum of Art, enclosed the outdoor kitchen, expanded the home and reoriented its position. She also added upstairs rooms.

With four stately two-story columns at the front and a graceful entrance stairway with curved banister, the spacious house boast-

ing five bedrooms and five full baths exudes charm. The first floor has 10-foot ceilings, two parlors, a kitchen and library. A banquet-size dining room adjacent to the sunroom overlooks an exquisite garden designed by Charles Gillette. There's distinctive woodwork throughout, including wide crown and dentil moldings, exquisite paneling and wainscoting.

Despite these elegant features, Haavisto and Steer have made the Bobbitt-Pendleton-Arrington house very comfortable with numerous improvements that include a new PVC roof, rebuilt chimneys, dual zone cooling, custom fixtures and an embossed tin ceiling in the library. It was all a labor of love.

"To say that we have done extensive restoration and preservation would be an understatement," Haavisto said. "This project has been the adventure of a lifetime for two people who developed an emotional attachment to a wonderful historic home."



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