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GONE WITH THE WIND? NOT THIS HOME!

Contributed Report by Paul Setliff

It's easy to list things that make owning a historic home enjoyable. Fine woodwork, solid doors, irreplaceable hardware, double-hung windows with wavy glass, heavy timber construction and many other tangible details.

Woven into the material stuff is — History. What has the home witnessed through the decades? What has the neighborhood seen? The answers enhance your overall experience owning one of these cool homes. Owners of historic homes often consider themselves caretakers and contributors for the next generation.

Homes of Raleigh's Cameron Park are loaded with interesting stories. Consider 117 Woodburn Road.

William and Myrtle Upshaw, along with their children Berrien, James and Sage, came first. In 1920 they moved into their fine new Craftsman home in the young neighborhood of Cameron Park — a streetcar neighborhood well out on the edge of town.

William was manager at Aetna Life Insurance in Raleigh. Years later Sage joined Aetna as assistant bookkeeper. Shortly after the family settled in, eldest son Berrien left to attend Georgia Tech where he played football. He met a young lady there named Margaret Mitchell.

In 1922, after a whirlwind and notorious romance, Berrien and Margaret were married in Atlanta, enjoyed a honeymoon at Asheville's Grove Park Inn and visited the family in Raleigh.

Neighbors report that the couple

lived at 117 Woodburn for a short while. They separated after a brief, torrid life together. Divorce came in 1924 and Margaret was back in Atlanta.

Shortly thereafter, Margaret Mitchell began writing "Gone With the Wind." She completed the novel in 1929. Many speculate that young Berrien "Red" Upshaw was, in fact, the inspiration for Rhett Butler.

Margaret and Berrien died in 1949 within months of one another. She of a pedestrian/automobile accident in Atlanta. He of mysterious circumstances in Galveston. Berrien is buried in Raleigh's Oakwood cemetery, Margaret in Atlanta's Oakland cemetery.

By 1932, the Upshaws had moved to Blount Street.

Sallie Rees, a milliner, then took over 117 Woodburn along with Mattie Rees. It's believed Mattie resided in the garage apartment.

During the WWII housing shortage, 117 Woodburn was converted to a duplex.

By 1942 the home was owned by Joseph and Daisy Waitt. Daisy was a genealogist with the NC Department of Archives and History. Joseph was head of real estate for Seaboard Railway. Joseph lived at 117 until his death in the late 1970s.

Over the next few years 117 Woodburn changed hands a couple of times and was reclaimed as a single-family home.

In the mid-1980s it was purchased by Gilbert "Gib" Smith, a professor at NC State who also taught Spanish on educational TV in Raleigh.

Gilbert lived there until his death in 1999.

In 2000 it was purchased by current owners George and Gretchen Chapman. George was City of Raleigh planning director from 1981 until his retirement in 2005. Gretchen taught French at Ligon Middle School until her retirement in 2008.

"Having lived in Cameron Park since 1986, we knew we this was the neighborhood we wanted to continue to live in. The home needed love and had an interesting history. So, we bought it and gave it the love it



needed. We hoped our efforts would also be good for the neighborhood," said George. It turned out they were, and the garage apartment has been an ideal complement to the main house.

In 2005 The Chapmans remodeled the home for a small bed and breakfast. Woodburn Cottage B&B was born. It operated successfully from 2006 until 2013 when George and Gretchen closed the business to focus on their grandchildren,

and continued enjoying their fine four-bedroom, three-bath single-family home.

"The renovations for the bed and breakfast were done in accordance with secretary of interior's standards for historic properties. We had a lot of fun being hosts at Woodburn Cottage and met lots of nice folks who loved Raleigh," Gretchen said.

117 Woodburn is listed as a contributing structure to Cameron Park National Register Historic District, and is featured in Ruth Little's book

"Cameron Park, A Remote Retreat on Hillsboro Street, 1910 to 2010" recently published by Preservation North Carolina. This home and others in Cameron Park may be eligible for North Carolina's Historic Rehabilitation credit program launched in January.

Interested in joining the chronicles of 117 Woodburn Road? It's listed with Paul Setliff of ERA Dream Living Realty.

