



George Alexander/McMinn House Queen Anne 419 Tucker Street Built: 1895



This attractive Queen Anne home was built in 1895 by James W. Terry for George C. Alexander. Alexander was the son of pioneer settlers Cyrus and Rufena (Lucero) Alexander, for whom Alexander Valley is named. George married Nellie Sarginsson in 1900. The couple divided their time between this "town" house on Tucker Street and their Alexander Valley

ranch. George was a director of the Healdsburg National Bank, a school trustee, and a member of the popular Sotoyome Band. Nellie was active in local organizations and civic affairs, and was the mother of one child.

For reasons unknown, the Alexanders sold this house in 1903. They had a new Queen Anne home built at 423 Matheson, where they lived for the next seventeen years. The buyer, David Thornton, Jr. sold the Tucker Street property four years later to Joseph A. McMinn and Sarah (Crisp) McMinn, who planted twin palm trees in the front yard. One palm remains today. Principled and colorful, Joseph McMInn was a popular Healdsburg mayor, county supervisor and city trustee. His wife was an active matron in society. Sarah McMinn died in 1914. J.A. McMinn married Mrs. Norah (Terry) Black, a widow, 12 years later. Norah was the daughter of James Terry, the original building contractor. She was the first woman to drive over the Golden Gate Bridge in 1937. J.A. McMinn died in 1952. Norah McMinn lived in the house until her death in the late 1970s. Her spirit may yet remain. Realtor Clarence Arneson and his wife, the fourth owners, resided here from 1977 until1990. Since then, the house has been owned by Don Naples and Janet Thorp, who have devoted more than a decade to restoring and enhancing this vintage Queen Anne.

The house features front and side gables finished with cut shingles, a boxed cornice with scroll-sawn brackets and decorative frieze. It has a curved porch with turned columns and balusters. The porch has been recently rebuilt by the current owners. With enthusiasm and knowledge gained from a prior house restoration in Los Gatos, Don and Janet approached this renovation with the attitude of "if you're only going to do something once, do it right." They have not scrimped on materials or period details and furnishings, and have consulted and hired experts to do whatever work they could not do themselves.

Perhaps most notable is how Don and Janet have made the most of the space they found within the existing building footprint. They dug down two feet to legalize the basement apartment unit built in the 1970s. With the help of able carpenter Mike Edgerton, they have created a spacious third floor from unused attic space, accessible by a new staircase, crafted of Honduras mahogany and oak. The new master bedroom oak floor features Don's handiwork: wood inlay salvaged from a walnut tree that had to be removed from the property. On the first floor, the couple has completely redone the front three rooms, from floor to ceiling—a height of eleven feet. Janet and Don have milled and reproduced their own baseboards, crown moldings and other trimwork. They even manufactured their own Eastlake doors. They refinished the oak floors, and removed the "cottage cheese" ceilings, adding ceiling medallions. The flawless walls attest to the dry wall artistry of John Tsarnas. The subtle interplay of colors, fabrics and textures reflects the taste of the owners and the inspiration of Diane Winsley of Drapes and More. Outside, Janet and Don have made further improvements to the property. They scraped the exterior of the house back to bare wood and repainted it. They also pulled up a blacktop driveway in the back yard to plant grass. Since then there have been three weddings on the back yard lawn, graced by the century-old wisteria.