

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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A Trio of Spanish Revival Jewels

By Sophie Braccini

It may not be obvious to today's readers, but the enormous popular success of the 1884 novel "Ramona," by Helen Hunt Jackson, is credited for the emergence of the Mission and Spanish colonial revival style in American architecture. Most of those homes were built in southern California, but some authentic Spanish revival style homes from the 1920's can be found in Lamorinda, as well some recent additions that share the same inspiration.

Tran Turner, who was an Art Museum Curator of 19th & 20th Century Architecture & Design and is now a real estate agent for Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage in Orinda, went on a hunt for such homes. "Made popular by the Spanish Colonial buildings built for the 1915 San Diego Exposition, many early California architects like George Washington Smith and James Osborn Craig subsequently brought national prominence to this architectural style in Santa Barbara," says Turner.

The Spanish revival homes have a lighter palette of colors that immediately differentiate them from the Mediterranean style. Other original features include inner courtyards, long, arcaded corridors, exterior walls coated with plaster, smaller windows, low-pitched clay tile roofs and wide, protecting eaves.

An Orinda Treasure

One of the oldest homes that Turner found during his search was built in Orinda in 1927.

"It took us two years to find this home," says present owner Julie Atkinson. The home is indeed unique. A single story structure with very thick stucco walls and a low-pitched roof

covered in tiles, it presents an asymmetrical façade. "You can see the original floor tile in the house with its unique design and the tile baseboards," says Atkinson. The blue baseboard tiles create a beautiful contrast with the brown-shen floor tile.

The bedroom wing of the building was once linked to the common



rooms by an open hallway; a previous owner, who had young children, closed the hallway with windows, but, "it retains that feel of transition to one part of the house to the next that's a characteristic of this type of architecture," notes Turner.

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After a long search, the Atkinsons found this unique Spanish style home nestled in the Orinda hills.

Photo Doug Koher