

AUTOS & CLASSIFIEDS INSIDE HOME & GARDEN

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THE TRIBUNE **F**

HISTORIC HOME IN ATASCADERO

New life in a familiar abode



TRIBUNE PHOTOS BY DAVID MIDDLECAMP

The living room of Tom and Peggy O'Malley's home is filled with antiques and vintage pieces such as the coffee table, which was a wedding gift. Below, the home's hilltop site next to an apricot orchard in Atascadero offers expansive views.

A pair of history buffs find the perfect home for their passions and collections – and it was right next door all along

By REBECCA JURETIC
Special to The Tribune

Former mayor and current city councilman Tom O'Malley grew up in a hilltop house in Atascadero. The only child in his small neighborhood, he spent many afternoons helping his next-door neighbors, the Petersons, tend the apricot orchard adjacent to their 1920s Mediterranean-style home.

Today, Tom still tends to that apricot orchard — except now it's his. Tom and his wife, Peggy, purchased the historic Peterson home in 1995.

Peggy, like Tom, is an Atascadero native. Both were born at the now-defunct Atascadero Hospital. They married in 1976 and raised their three children in a home in the southern part of Atascadero. Tom was administrator at County Mental Health and Peggy was an elementary school teacher.

As local history enthusiasts, the couple jumped at the chance to own the old Peterson



house when it went on the market.

"We knew it really needed a lot of work, but we took the project on," said Tom.

The house had seen a few sets of occupants since the original owners, Harry and Minnie Peterson, sold it more than 40 years ago.

Despite past efforts to modernize the 2,400-square-foot structure, most of its outstanding historical features were left intact. Minnie's cousin

Edward Trinkkeller, an iron worker who constructed some of the Spanish-style gates at Hearst Castle, crafted the dining room chandelier and possibly the curtain rods and light fixtures in the Peterson home. The balcony off the living room was salvaged from the Atascadero Inn, which burned down in the 1930s. Head

Please see O'MALLEY, F3

UC MASTER GARDENERS

Fertilization: How to tell when to feed the veggies



Mary Giambalvo is a UC Master Gardener.

Q: How do I know if I need to fertilize my vegetable garden?

— Rachel Hendricks, Los Osos

A: With fertilizing, as with watering, many of us subscribe to what I call the Goldilocks syndrome: We apply too much or too little, always hoping for just right.

While it is possible to detect nutrient deficiencies in individual plants, that should be a last resort for knowing when to feed them. Why wait until the older leaves on our vegetables are turning yellow to tell us they lack nitrogen?

Most California soil is naturally low in nitrogen (N) and some soils are low in phosphorus (P), two vital nutrients for plant growth. It is, therefore, a good idea to add balanced fertilizer that contains both nutrients while preparing the vegetable garden bed be-

GOT A GARDENING QUESTION?

Contact the University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners at 781-5939 on Monday and Thursday from 1 to 5 p.m.; at 473-7190 in Arroyo Grande from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; and at 434-4105 on Wednesday in Templeton from 9 a.m. to noon. Visit the UCCE Master Gardeners Web site at groups.ucanr.org/slomg or e-mail mgsanluisobispo@ucdavis.edu.

fore planting. It should be tilled into the soil, ready to feed the little roots seeking it when they appear.

While there are many sources of organic and inorganic fertilizers, the most important step is reading and following the label for how much to apply. Too much and one's money is washed away along with plant food; too little and the plants lack what they need at crucial growth times during the season.

In addition, individual plants may need more or less food during the growing sea-

son, depending on their growth characteristics and how long their time in the garden lasts. Another feeding midpoint will give plants an added boost. Once again, follow the label instructions. A side dressing worked into the soil without disturbing roots is ideal.

A general rule is that inorganic fertilizers work quickly and fade fast, while organic foods and compost work slowly and over a longer period. Keep this difference in mind in deciding when to supplement. Observe frequently



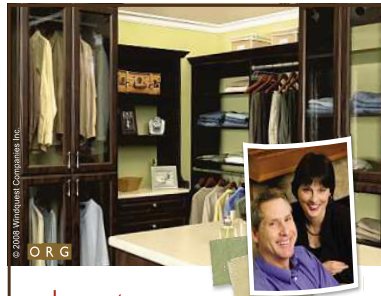
PHOTO COURTESY OF UC REGENTS

Inorganic fertilizers may produce results quickly, while the results of organics are more long-lasting. Guaranteed content must be printed on the packaging.

how the plants are doing, and give them a mid-season snack to keep them going.

Often we gardeners are much like Goldilocks and her trial-and-error porridge tasting, but there are sources of

help to put odds in our favor. Check out <http://ca.mastergardeners.ucdavis.edu/files/63771.pdf> or contact UCCE Master Gardeners for help with all kinds of home gardening questions.



The kitchen, above left, was renovated after the San Simeon earthquake. The stove hood was handcrafted to match the living room fireplace. Above right, the dining room chandelier was crafted by Hearst Castle metal worker Edward Trinkkeller. Below, this carved beam was added to the kitchen in the 1960s or 1970s.



O'Malley

From Page F1

carpenter Russell Pysher, the brother-in-law of Minnie Peterson, was also the head carpenter at Pasadena's historic Huntington Hotel.

As the O'Malleys moved in with their three teenage children, renovations were already underway including earthquake retrofitting, new plumbing and a new electrical system.

The O'Malleys took their time finding furniture appropriate for the home. They picked up early 20th century furnishings at local shops and poked through antique stores whenever they traveled.

Some pieces came to them by chance, as when they learned that the original chairs from the Carlton Hotel coffee shop were going to the dump. They intercepted them and took all 30, which now inhabit various rooms throughout the home and carriage house.

The O'Malleys are also avid collectors of historical artifacts. They purchased 1920s telephones and had them restored for everyday use. A collection of artifacts from Atascadero's Colony Holding Company blacksmith shop are showcased in their carriage house. They also acquired original artwork by Minnie Peterson, through generous gifts from friends and family.

By 2003, the O'Malleys were empty-nesters comfortably ensconced in their restored home.

Then came the San Simeon earthquake. "We're on top of a hill, so half the house went



Tom and Peggy O'Malley

one way, and the other half went the other way," O'Malley lamented.

Structurally, the house was fine, thanks to the recent retrofit. But the living room and kitchen interiors were destroyed. The couple found themselves unexpectedly propelled into the next phase of their remodel, which included rebuilding their crumbled chimney and refinishing their oak floors.

The O'Malleys took this opportunity to restore the kitchen that had been partially remodeled in the 1960s. They commissioned new cabinets to match what was left of the original ones. Scott Greenway of Greenway Construction recreated a decorative plaster treatment on their stove hood to match the one above the living room fireplace.

They also began the process of reversing renovations that weren't consistent with the era of the home. They removed skylights from the master bedroom and kitchen that were installed in the 1960s. Walls that had been painted were re-finished by Greenway with a historically accurate

plastering technique. "Nowadays people use paint to replicate the texture of older walls, but it used to be done with multiple layers of different colored plaster," Tom explained.

Around that time, the community-minded couple found themselves hosting frequent events at the house, including the wedding receptions of all three of their children.

The couple refurbished their carriage house with a stage, dance floor and old-fashioned ice cream parlor. They added lawn and patio seating areas to their five acres which Tom, who had since retired, lovingly landscaped himself. In 2007, their new business, Portola Event Planning, was born.

The O'Malleys still own Tom's boyhood home next door, which they use as a rental. And the apricot orchard is smaller now but still well-tended.

"It gives me a sense of continuity to help preserve local history and to live here, right next to the house my dad built," said Tom. "It's something few people get to enjoy in this day and age."

TIPS FROM THE O'MALLEYS
BUY BROKEN

Mint-condition antiques are pricey and rare. For a little extra effort, a broken or incomplete piece can be a real bargain. Missing furniture parts can often be replicated by a skilled woodworker. Or you can find replacement pieces like chair legs and hardware on Web sites such as www.vandykes.com.

PUT AWAY THE POWER SAW

Put away the power saw. When restoring a piece of antique or vintage furniture, try to use old manual tools that render a more authentic, hand-hewn look than modern electric tools. Check out garage sales and antiques stores for old carving tools, wood planes and saws.

PERFECT YOUR PLASTER

The old-fashioned plastering technique that rendered the multi-hued, textural wall finish in the O'Malley house was accomplished after much trial and error. They recommend that only experienced plasterers take on the project. Even then, you should start on practice boards, taking detailed notes on what combinations work best.

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Their daughter's bedroom, left, is furnished with antique pieces including an old-fashioned washstand. Above, the master bath.

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