

THE 1921 SAULS HOUSE: ITS STORY AND RESTORATION

*1330 East Washington Street
Monticello, Florida*



This historic old home and its grounds have just been tastefully restored to provide years of comfortable living for a new family wanting to call Jefferson County their home.

HISTORY. The Sauls House, believed to have been built in 1921, was home to a politically influential old Jefferson County family until it was sold in 1989. Clyde Sauls was the county Clerk of Court for over three decades until the 1950's. His wife, Genevieve, headed the powerful Democratic Executive Committee for the county during a period of one-party politics. President Jimmy Carter's mother, Lillian, stayed at the house during a campaign stop in the 1970's. The Sauls' son, N. Sanders Sauls became the Chief Judge of the Circuit Court. He was a conservative judge best known for his decision that torpedoed Al Gore's best chance to take Florida in 2000, possibly costing Gore the presidency.

RESCUE AND RESTORATION. The home has been through two owners since the Sauls family. Due to a family tragedy, the last owner moved out, abandoning the house and leaving it vacant for several years. Faced with financial difficulties and foreclosure threats, the owner worked with long-time local businessman and Realtor Hines Boyd to rescue the home. Boyd, who has experience in the renovation of old homes, teamed up with a skilled local craftsman for the restoration project. Ronnie Barrett began working in the construction business with his father in the 1960's and has worked on dozens of old homes in the community. He is an old-style contractor who is on the job everyday supervising a small crew of experienced workers. He is meticulous about the quality of his work.

There was lots of work to do. The house was filled with belongings and "treasures" which needed to be removed. Boyd worked with the owner to ac-

complish that task. The grounds were overgrown with brush and tangled grass that required clearing. Most of the home was built with termite-resistant heart pine lumber, but a more recently added room on the east side of the house didn't have that advantage. The outside wall had heavy old termite damage and had to be demolished and rebuilt. This rebuilding project provided the opportunity to convert the east end of the house to another downstairs bedroom and bath. The original windows throughout the home were in very poor condition and had to be replaced with modern insulated glass windows. The old vinyl siding that covered the original wood lapped siding was beginning to fall off. It was replaced with new siding.

Here are other items that were repaired or upgraded during the restoration project between October 2021 and June 2022:

ELECTRICAL: The electrical system in the house was a mixture of old and new. It was not practical to completely replace it or the plumbing without a gutting of interior walls that were in good condition. So, the electrical received extensive inspection, repairs, and upgrades to ensure its safety—about \$6,000 worth of work. That work was done by Mike Gramling who has been practicing his craft in the community since 1972. He's highly skilled and in demand by local folks who trust his work. He's now semi-retired, works alone, and is hard to get. His work included the replacement of wiring, breakers, outlets, and fixtures where need. He also installed numerous new fixtures throughout the house and property, including a 220V RV/ EV hookup at the carport. There are still a few low-demand circuits served by pre-1950 BX steel-incased armored cable inside the home, mostly upstairs. They were inspected for good condition and proper grounding and wired to appropriate breakers and new three-prong outlets.

PLUMBING AND WATER HEATER: The original plumbing, of course, was galvanized pipe. Most of the plumbing lines on the interior of the structure have now been replaced with PVC lines. An on-demand gas water heater is mounted on the carport wall outside the kitchen. It recently received a major cleaning and upgrade by Seminole Plumbing of Tallahassee. The upgrades included filters to reduce calcium buildup and special bypass plumbing to make future flushing and maintenance easy.

ROOF: The roof consists of a top-of-the-line heavy duty asphalt architectural shingle. When new, it had a 25-35 year life cycle rating. The



thick shingle is believed to have been installed in 2007 and is still in good condition. Ronnie Barrett, an experienced licensed roofer who performed routine maintenance on the roof, estimated its remaining useful life at 10-12 years.

KITCHEN: The kitchen received a major remodel and upgrade under the last owner. Her son, who specialized in intricate trim, did much of the work. (He also installed much of the detailed trim in the living room/dining room area.) Other than a cleaning, fresh paint, and new flooring the kitchen has had few changes during the recent restoration.

BATHS: The two original baths have received few changes other than fresh paint and some new fixtures such as faucets and lights. The third bath in the new downstairs bedroom is all new—tub/shower unit, commode, vanity, fixtures, lights, etc.

HVAC: The upstairs A/C unit, though still working well, was 20 years old and has been replaced with a new compressor and air handler. All duct work was inspected and resealed where needed. Two new programmable thermostats were installed. The old attic fan was cleaned, inspected, and is in good working condition. It's very useful during mild weather (early spring and late fall) to draw fresh air into the home through open windows and screened doors.

FINISHES AND FLOORS: All walls and trim have been cleaned, primed, and painted with fresh paint. Doors and hardware were removed during this process. The old door hardware was meticulously cleaned of old paint, lubricated and reinstalled. The pine floors were sanded to bare wood, stained, and refinished with three coats of polyurethane. The dark stained floors add a touch of elegance to the stately old home.

OUTBUILDINGS: An old garage has been converted to a spacious air-conditioned workshop/project room. Electrical was added to the old smoke-



house for lights and outlets. A more recently installed storage shed also has electrical for lights and is set up for a wall A/C. All three buildings received needed repairs and fresh paint.

GROUNDS, LANDSCAPING, PARKING: The entire lot has been cleared except for a few select trees and shrubs, mostly at its perimeter. The spacious yard has been tilled, leveled, and sprigged with Empire Zoysiagrass, a premium turfgrass that will make a dense, durable, and attractive lawn as it grows in. Landscape shrubs, many of them flowering shrubs (azaleas, drift roses, gardenias, crepe myrtle), have been selected and planted to provide multi-season color in the foundation planting and landscape. The one-car carport is supplemented by at least three parking spaces on the street immediately in front of the house. The large lawn area can also accommodate temporary parking. A gate at the back of the lot leads to a city-owned alley, creating a back entrance from a nearby side street.

DECKED-OVER POOL: A former owner had installed a 15'x34' in ground pool with concrete deck in the backyard. The pool liner had been removed. Rather than fill it in, the pool was covered



with a heavy wood deck. The deck is sturdy enough to move to one side if a new owner wants to restore the pool. The old pool equipment is still in place, though its condition is unknown.

TERMITE BOND: The house has been inspected for termites, received a routine preventive treatment, and has been placed under a termite bond. Through two inspections and restoration construction work, no live termites were ever found. All substantive old termite damage has been repaired. Poor air circulation in the crawl space probably caused by overgrown foundation plantings resulted in minor fungal growth under the house. That fungus has been treated and the foundation exterior re-landscaped with less dense plants.