

A Note from the Sellers



My family and I have loved 1709 Milvia since the first morning we woke up in the house. We had moved in the night before, the eve of our son's seventh birthday. When we woke up, there were piles of unpacked boxes in every room, only our beds were ready. Luckily, we had asked two imaginative teenage sisters to help. Drawing inspiration from the house itself, they created a 'Pirates and Princesses' party for our son's first grade class, using only the glorious light pouring in, and the charm of the house, with its coved ceilings, its special stone fireplace, and its hand-carved lintels over the doorways. That day it became a castle and a pirate ship, a place for each child. They loved it and so did we. We all explored the still unfamiliar rooms, the kids climbed boxes, sat on the floor for cake, and we all came to appreciate the warm swaths of East, South and Western sunlight washing in, the airy feel of the high-ceilinged house, with its wonderful details. From that day on it was not just a house in North Berkeley, it was truly our home.

At times in our 29 years here, we have been able to offer space for three of our grown sons to live with us, as well as two granddaughters, and my elderly mother. Everyone has appreciated how enchanting this 1906 home is, how lovely our own outdoor spaces and the neighborhood walks are, with their Berkeley gardens, and the friendly, helpful neighbors we have grown to love.

During one of our projects to add a bookcase in the dining room, we found a sort of time capsule: a railroad tie and some hand-made nails carefully laid alongside the beautiful old growth redwood frame of the house's strong bones. Someone long ago had loved the house too, and wanted to leave a record of its early beginnings!

We have been so happy to give back to the house. We have poured our love and dreams into the house, building up a private back courtyard that has a quiet, European feel. There, we have hosted family gatherings and had friends visit; it's so close to the kitchen it was easy to serve an outdoor meal among flowers and Japanese maple leaves. We have shared so many Thanksgiving and winter holiday dinners in the dining room, where we put a long Shaker style table my father made under the chandelier, and laughed ourselves through the darker winter nights.

We have taken daily walks from the house. Since it is a Berkeley Bicycle Street, the traffic is slow and never too busy. Our teenage son used to ride his bike all the way up to the Grizzly peak ridge. We walked to the swimming pool at King Middle School: open to the public, or up to the campus for classes. We walked to plays at Berkeley Rep and studied at the Jazz School.

Of course, 1709 Milvia is in the "Gourmet District" neighborhood, which means many wonderful meals to eat out or bring home are available within a few blocks' walk. Music and pizza at the Cheeseboard collective are enjoyable. There are three schools within a two-block radius, and the family feel of the neighborhood is truly like a village.

We sought to follow the original integrity of the house when adding built-ins. To improve the house's environmental impact, we added and upgraded rooftop solar. We converted to a heat pump HVAC and a heat pump hot water heater, installed an electric car charger. The rooftop solar has helped our utility bills and the planet. We hired a plant whisperer, who laid a whole front garden full of plants that invite pollinators, which we've enjoyed daily, marveling as each new plant bloomed and more bees and hummingbirds came. The plum tree yields rich fruit every year.

What we want to tell you is that we have loved our house here at 1709 Milvia. It has truly been a light-filled home full of beauty, love, and family. We have been privileged to be able to put our energy into making it an even more wonderful home. We hope you will love it, too.

