

N&M House Detectives: Unlocking History

By Adrienne Williams

When Michelle Pilliod Carroll and Nina Tristani decided to research the history of their circa 1800s homes in Washington, DC, (both on C Street, SE), they never imagined that what began as a hobby fueled by curiosity would soon become a career.

"We had so much fun visiting libraries and combing through websites, but quickly learned that the research was a very lengthy process," said Michelle. "Learning to use microfilm and rewinding it properly was a trial for me," quips Nina. "And often times, it has been difficult to decipher the writing from over 200 years ago." One of the most challenging aspects of the project was locating archival photographs specific to this area. In order to respectfully highlight the history, imagery and the original local maps, they decided to print their discoveries in the format of a full-color coffee table book.

They were so pleased with both their findings and the finished results that they thought others in the community may enjoy a similar book about their own homes, highlighting their unique and varied histories. And so began the birth of their company, N&M House Detectives: Unlocking History.

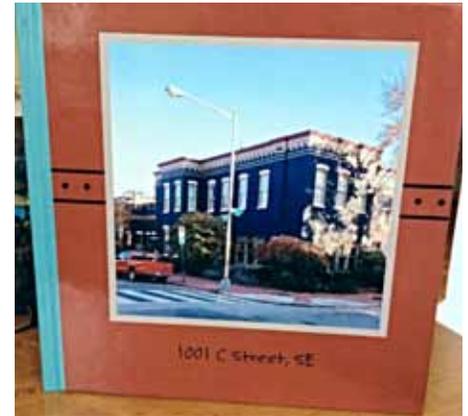
The DC area is extraordinarily rich in history. N&M House Detectives delves into the past of each house they research and provides the details about the original building permits, the names of those who have lived at that particular address, the occupations of the residents, the history of ownership, archival photographs of the property, and whatever other interesting and fun information they can uncover.

Some items of interest they have learned throughout this process. . .

Building permits were not required in DC before 1877. The War Department (later to become the Department of Defense in 1947) had to approve all building permits for alterations and extensions to existing properties beginning in the 1890s. This policy would continue until 1964. George Washington attended a local church and had his own pew. Walt Whitman served as a nurse at the local Civil War hospitals. Thomas Jefferson was one of the three original DC Commissioners and is represented by one of the three stars on our District's flag. And the discoveries go on.

Both Michelle and Nina were professionally involved in fields that lend themselves naturally to this new venture. Michelle owns and has operated Pilliod Meeting Planning (a full-service meeting and event company) for over twenty years. She is also a former Vice President of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society and, in that capacity has been heavily involved in the history and preservation of her neighborhood. Nina has worked in the publishing industry for over twenty-five years with organizations including the Smithsonian Institution and *Congressional Quarterly*. "Our new projects allow me to continue my work in publishing through the research, design, and the printing of these books," says Nina.

N&M House Detectives is currently working with realtors and their clients and look forward to collaborating with both veteran and new homeowners in the community. You can visit them at www.nmhousedetectives.com or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nmhousedetectives. ★



COURTESY PHOTO

Coffee table book developed by N&M House Detectives for 1001 C Street, SE.

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