

The Fireplaces at Bella Terra



With our recent chilly weather, we are getting good use out of the multiple fireplaces at our 1910 home. Fireplaces in the mid to later 19th century were a way to heat houses.



Tippy enjoying the residual warmth of the library fireplace
Many of the original fireplaces were restored and upgraded during the renovation. There is a total of 5 indoors~~ in the breakfast room, dining room, living room, library and upstairs sitting room. The two exterior fireplaces were added when we designed the outdoor terraces.

After doing some research, I believe the shallow ones are known as Rumford fireplaces.

The Rumford fireplace is a tall, shallow fireplace designed by Sir Benjamin Thompson, Count Rumford, an Anglo-

American physicist best known for his investigations of heat. He made them smaller and shallower with widely angled covings so they would radiate better, carrying away smoke with little loss of heated room air.

A good example of this style is the one in the upstairs sitting room. It is small and shallow. Here is a picture of it before restoration. The tiles around the opening were narrow, white ones that were chipped and damaged.



Upstairs sitting room fireplace Before

We replaced the tiles with green, crackled glazed ones from Waterworks. I have converted this room into my art room and it has been lovely to paint with a fire going.



Sitting room/Art Room fireplace after



The original fireplace in the library was okay, but I wanted the library to be dark and cozy. I replaced the original mantel with an antique one and changed out the tiles for a deep, burgundy crackled glazed tile from Waterworks. Years later, I was tired of the dark look and brightened it up with new paint and upholstery.



Original library fireplace. Photo taken before we purchased the house.

The library fireplace today.



Beautiful inlaid detailing

The current breakfast room fireplace location was part of the original kitchen. The chimney was there but nothing else. See the big vent in the photo below. We added on a new kitchen and used this chimney access for a new fireplace.



Chimney vent is the upper left on photo



Breakfast Room fireplace After

What I love about this particular fireplace is that it is on a wall switch starter. It is the first one we turn on to warm up the kitchen. I have fond memories of the children sitting on the hearth drinking cocoa before school.

My unofficial office is at the breakfast room table where I get to enjoy this as my working view. The Batchelder tiles used here came from the original library fireplace.



The dining room fireplace tiles were painted black and once stripped, revealed the same Batchelder tiles from the early 1900s.



In order to comply with City of Phoenix building codes, we had to add gas starters to all the fireplaces during restoration. In the shallow fireplaces, we have ceramic faux logs, which is easier to use than building a wood fire every time.



The living room fireplace tiles were also painted black. Must have been a thing back then? It has the largest opening and as a result, we left it as a wood burning one.



The outdoor fireplaces are new...well, now 20 years old. They share the same chimney. The first floor terrace fireplace is dry stacked stone and during many winter evenings, we have a roaring fire to enjoy.



The second floor terrace fireplace is not used enough, but when lit, it can be seen from the master bed.



There is something very primal about lighting a fire. I could spend hours watching the flames dance and flicker. When I need a moment of quiet contemplation, doing so in front of a fire fills my soul.



Count Rumsford designed these shallow fireplaces in 1796. This design is still used 224 years later! Isn't that amazing?

Have a wonderful Tuesday! Hope you are staying warm!

Mary