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VERMONT HOMES AND GARDENS

# A Cozy Carriage House Conversion

*An 1869 Barn Receives an Authentic Restoration*

THE STATELY ITALIANATE HOUSE THAT SITS on a secluded double lot in the historic south side of Burlington has a delightful companion in the form of a lovingly restored carriage house just steps away. The cheerful dwellers in the carriage barn, Jack and Peggy Mentes, collaborated with their daughter Amy and son-in-law Ron Wanamaker, who reside in the Italianate front house. All four own the two-building parcel that, even though it is located in town, feels private and quiet due in part to the wooded south side of the half-acre property.

“The effort to convert the carriage house to a residence was accomplished by all four of us,” Jack tells me. “There was essentially no GC [general contractor], although we did hire plumbing/heating and electrical contractors.” The familial team of four did the rest: design/layout, carpentry, slate roofing, and made specific renovation decisions. Ron, who is a contractor and co-owner with Amy, his partner in life and business, of Wanamak-

er Restoration, spearheaded much of the process. Peggy competently and skillfully embraced coming up with the design for each of the rooms. She has a special affinity for all things animal prints, which she judiciously incorporated in some of the spaces.



The carriage house conversion was a collaboration between Ron and Amy Wanamaker (seated) and Amy's parents, Jack and Peggy Mentes.



The restoration of the carriage house took three years to complete. Peggy (below) who came up with the designs for each of the rooms, stands by the slide-out spice rack, said to be Jack's pride and joy. Shiplap salvaged during the makeover became part of the kitchen island, "a nod to the original house" says Ron.



Jack and Peggy were adamant that their two-bedroom, two-bathroom home's renovation be done "in a fashion in line with what it was, and also to make it complementary to the main house because they both have a lot of the same features," Jack explains. But before any remodeling work could be done on the 1,300-foot structure, the building needed to be stabilized. The roof sagged and a foundation had to be poured for the proposed 14-by-14-foot screened-in porch, but even more important, they created a basement by digging out the dirt for additional height; the basement is more than six feet high now, Ron chimes in. Also paramount, steel I-beams were mandatory in securing the integrity of the residence, and "wherever they are exposed, we wrapped them in wood so you don't see any steel in the house," he adds.

One of the first things a visitor to this thoughtfully brought-back-to-life home notices is the simple but lush landscaping, the beautifully balanced flowers and ivy spilling out from window boxes, and a skirt of perennials that give the appearance of a green welcome mat. Amy's expertise came into play in that area, as she gets the credit for cultivating and maintaining the attractive flora. She also specializes in window restoration and rescued the solitary original, double-hung window situated in the basement. Once to the entrance, the custom front door begs a closer look; the dark stained wood and modern hardware add to the character, as does the patinaed frog doorknocker, crafted by a local artisan.

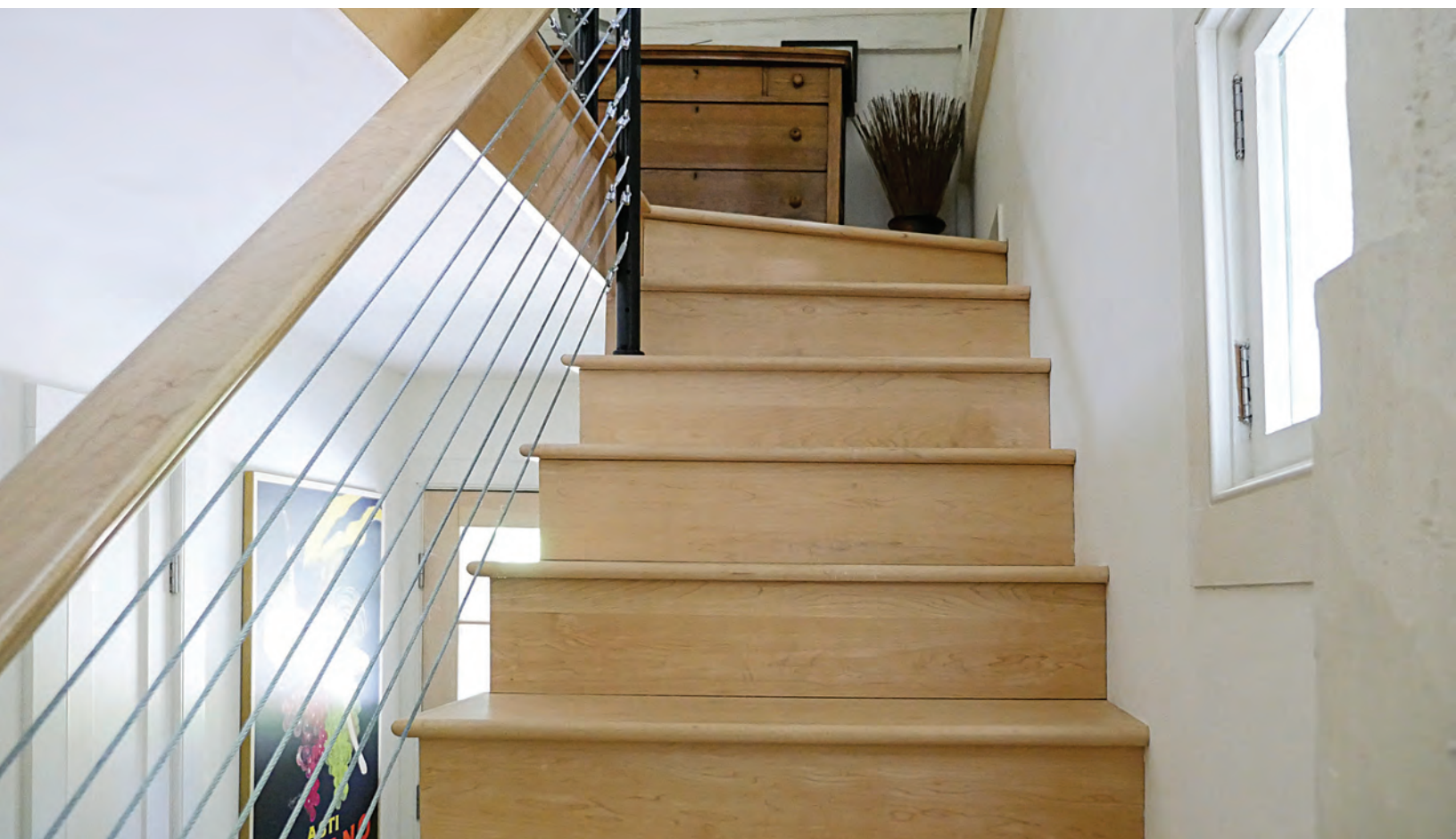
And speaking of local, it was very important to all four family members to use the local materials, hardware, and lighting unique—and readily available—to the state of Vermont. As much as was possible from floor to ceiling, the couple sourced everything they could, from the water-struck bricks on the screened-in porch floor and the structural steel reinforcements to the pendant lighting and the kitchen sink (literally).

The restoration process took three years to complete. The care and intention to replicate historic details is evident in every room and in almost every feature. For example, the transoms over the bedroom doors are "a nod to the original house" says Ron. That's also the case with the cupola, which has six windows and lets in bright natural light. The windows were also deliberately chosen to reflect the



New maple floors grace the living room area that adjoins the dining area, where recycled and refinished timber from the original floor were used to construct the tabletop, a true fusion of old and new.

The stairway, also new maple, has bannisters and railings made of steel pipe and cables, which give the area and stairs a clean, unconfined, open look.





Upstairs, dormers that mimic the design of those on the main house were added to let in light. The salvaged steam radiators and antique dresser add a retro look.



age and character of the Italianate main house, and dormers were added to the roof to mimic the dormers in the front house.

The shiplap that bedecks the kitchen island was salvaged from the walls of the carriage house and now blends seamlessly with the more contemporary elements in the kitchen. Jack made an excellent and period-specific find when he visited Mason Brothers in Essex Junction to see what they had in the way of radiators. “It’s a small space,” Jack relates, referring to the layout and configuration of the rooms in the carriage house. He found not only a couple but a total of nine 3½-inch-wide radiators that “worked fine *and* fit perfectly.” The radiators were pulled out of a building on the UVM campus and the college didn’t want them. Jack found the nine working units at the beginning of the process and saved them for three years while the carriage barn underwent its transformation until it was time to install and hook up the matching radiators.

While the two-generation team successfully adhered to remaining “sympathetic to its original use” as Ron puts it, they also gracefully merged old with new. A solid wood antique bureau and historic photographs share space with new maple floors and a stairway that sports galvanized cables and black steel pipes. Ron claims that they made it up as they went along. It works. Peggy wanted this style of railing for the staircase and quips “it doesn’t have to be ship-worthy”—the result is “not heavy looking,” as she describes it. Ron adds that it lends itself to a “contemporary look with a utilitarian purpose.”

The two couples—simultaneously—reveal that the custom spice rack that slides out vertically from a cabinet near the cooktop, complete with hooks from which to hang frying pans, is “Jack’s pride and joy.” And apparently he doesn’t do all that much cooking, but he resolutely states that he likes design and function, and that the placement of conveniently located pots and pans just makes good sense. (Side note: there is also a fire extinguisher handy—just in case.) He is, however, famous for his homemade marinara sauce. A survey of four is unanimous.

The kitchen and adjoining dining area are also open to an intimate and comfortable living room. All three spaces echo



Jack and Peggy sourced as much of the renovation materials as possible—including the bricks on the screened-in porch floor—and even the kitchen sink.





Peggy's design aesthetic and flow easily from one spot to another. The cook, working at the stylish yet practical island, which is made of bird's-eye maple with a white-sand-infused concrete counter, won't miss out on any of the conversations whether guests are gathered around the dining table or lounging in the living room. A word about the dining room table: It is made from some of the reclaimed, two-inch timbers that were pulled from the original floors and recycled to construct the handsome tabletop. The supports are black steel pipes and the chairs metal—again a fusion of old and new that is a successful aggregate.

Living in the best of both worlds—downtown Burlington and wooded privacy—Peggy and Jack are fortunate indeed and they are appreciative. The carriage house they restored together with their daughter and son-in-law exudes the love and care poured into it. 🍷

Marisa Crumb enjoys hiking, kayaking, and chocolate in southern Vermont. Carolyn Bates is a professional photographer who lives and works in Burlington, VT. To see more of her work, visit [carolynbates.com](http://carolynbates.com).

The extensive flora and wooded surroundings give little clue to the carriage house's downtown location. Family and guests can enjoy a quiet retreat outside as well as inside.

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