



The Preservationist



Spring 2021

Page 1

REHABILITATING INTERIORS IN HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Identifying and Preserving Character-defining Elements

H. Ward Jandl

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Preservation Assistance Division, Technical Preservation Services

A floor plan, the arrangement of spaces, and features and applied finishes may be individually or collectively important in defining the historic character of the building and the purpose for which it was constructed. Thus, their identification, retention, protection, and repair should be given prime consideration in every preservation project. Caution should be exercised in developing plans that would radically change character-defining spaces or that would obscure, damage, or destroy interior features or finishes.

While the exterior of a building may be its most prominent visible aspect, or its "public face," its interior can be even more important in conveying the building's history and development over time. Rehabilitation within the context of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation calls for the preservation of exterior and interior portions or features of the building that are significant to its historic, architectural, and cultural values.

Interior components worthy of preservation may include the building's **plan** (sequence of spaces and circulation patterns), the building's **spaces** (rooms and volumes), individual architectural **features**, and the various **finishes** and **materials** that make up the walls, floors, and ceilings. A theater auditorium or sequences of rooms such as double parlors or a lobby leading to a stairway that ascends to a mezzanine may comprise a building's most important spaces. Individual rooms may contain notable features such as plaster cornices, millwork, parquet wood floors, and hardware. Paints, wall coverings, and finishing techniques such as graining, may provide color, texture, and patterns which add to a building's unique character.

Virtually all rehabilitations of historic buildings involve some degree of interior alteration, even if the buildings are to be used for their original purpose. Interior rehabilitation proposals may range from preservation of existing features and spaces to total reconfigurations. In some cases, depending on the building, restoration may be warranted to preserve historic character adequately; in other cases, extensive alterations may be perfectly acceptable.

This Preservation Brief has been developed to assist building owners and architects in identifying and evaluating those elements of a building's interior that contribute to its historic character and in planning for the preservation of those elements in the process of *rehabilitation*. The guidance applies to all building types and styles, from 18th century churches to 20th century office buildings. The Brief does not attempt to provide specific advice on preservation techniques and treatments, given the vast range of buildings, but rather suggests general preservation approaches to guide construction work.

Identifying and Evaluating the Importance of Interior Elements Prior to Rehabilitation

Before determining what uses might be appropriate and before drawing up plans, a thorough professional assessment should be undertaken to identify those tangible architectural components that, prior to rehabilitation, convey the building's sense of time and place—that is, its "historic character." Such an assessment, accomplished by walking through and taking account of each element that makes up the interior, can help ensure that a truly compatible use for the building, one that requires minimal alteration to the building, is selected.



Researching The Building's History

A review of the building's history will reveal why and when the building achieved significance or how it contributes to the significance of the district. This information helps to evaluate whether a particular rehabilitation treatment will be appropriate to the building and whether it will preserve those tangible components of the building that convey its significance for association with specific events or persons along with its architectural importance.

Figure 1. This architect-designed interior reflects early 20th century American taste: the checkerboard tile floor, wood wainscot, coffered ceiling, and open staircase are richly detailed and crafted by hand. Not only are the individual architectural features worthy of preservation, but the planned sequence of spaces—entry hall, stairs, stair landings, and loggia—imparts a grandeur that is characteristic of high style residences of this period. This interior is of Greystone, Los Angeles, California. Photography for HABS By Jack E. Boucher

Continued on page 4.

Canton Preservation Society

131 Wertz Avenue NW

Canton, Ohio 44708

Phone: (330) 452-9341

email: info@cantonpreservation.comwww.cantonpreservation.com

The Preservationist is published quarterly by the Canton Preservation Society as a benefit to Society members.

The Preservationist encourages your comments, ideas, and suggestions. Feel free to submit your letters to the Canton Preservation Society at the address listed above.

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

PRESERVING CANTON – ONE BUILDING AT A TIME

The year was 1987. I had just moved back to Canton from Lancaster, PA, where I spent four years renovating historical properties. An old school turned into 40 apartments in Lancaster, PA, a roller mill in Pottstown, PA, renovated into apartments and offices. In Pottsville, Massachusetts, a former hotel became 3 floors of office plus 4 floors of apartments. It was very rewarding work.

In Canton, the four (4) story red brick former “Gerber Beauty School” building at 400 North Market Ave was under contract to a local demolition firm who planned to raze the building and create surface parking.

Enter the late Mark Gasser, who I met attending Leadership Canton (now Leadership Stark County). Mark approached me and suggested we buy the building to save and renovate it.

I contacted the Buyer who had it under contract for \$175,000. He said he would sell it to us for \$200,000! Mark and I recruited other downtown proponents Scott Jackson, Joe Halter and Tim Putman. The five of us agreed to pay the premium, we secured a loan and the building was ours.

Immediately we received a Nuisance Notice that pigeons were roosting on the exterior fire escape on the east side of the building causing a nuisance. Upon inspection, it was rusted and structurally unstable. \$20,000 later, the four-story fire escape was down. Next the Market Ave RTA bus stop was relocated right in front of our building. Not the best first impression when walking law firms, accounting and financial planners through the building. Finally, we found the roof failing. Water is the silent destroyer of buildings, so we installed a new roof to preserve the interior. Then our architectural firm came through with the renovations budget. The 5 stop elevator alone was \$62,000. Final projections were over \$1m to renovate.

We realized that we did not have the stomach or resources to spend over a \$1,000,000 while searching for tenants. Enter Jim Bowers, President of the Stark Community Foundation (SCF).

Jim’s background was as an architect and when I walked him through, he saw potential. So, in 1994, we sold the building to them about breaking even. The SCF had the financial means to renovate the entire facility. Today it is home to the Stark Community Foundation, Board of Health of the Canton City Health Department, Stark Education Partnership, Community Building Partnership, Hoover Foundation and private offices.

Even though our group of five could not finish our dream, we are proud to have had a hand in saving this from the wrecking ball. The former St. Edward Hotel built around 1900 was preserved and adapted to a Class “A” office space for future generations to admire.

Wick Hartung,
President



Circa 1900



Today

A big thank you goes out to Patty Oryszak for underwriting a February utility bill at The Canton Preservation Re-sale store.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Members,

Normally this time of year we would be planning our annual meeting for 2021. I am sorry to say that again this year for the safety of our members and friends we will not be able to hold the annual meeting. We sure hope by the spring of 2022 we will be back on track and will be able to hold it. We sure miss seeing our members and friends.

It has been a long trying winter at the store with the bad winter weather and Covid-19. Sales and donations are lower than normal. I am sure when the weather changes we will be flooded with customers and with that we need the donation of your good resalable items. If you need large items picked up, we do have a pickup service available, just give us a call to make arrangements. Small items can be dropped off at the store during our business hours which you will find listed elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Land Bank undertakes additional demolitions with grant funds. In September 2020, the Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) reached out to Stark County Land Bank with the opportunity to receive additional Neighborhood Initiative Program (NIP) funds to complete eight more residential demolitions. These funds became available from a reserve of non-allocated funding available on a first-come, first-serve basis. The Land Bank was able to reserve funds to help complete these additional demolitions. The stipulation with these reserved funds required that demolitions be completed and reimbursement requested within a 90-day time frame, by December 14, 2020.

In partnership with the city of Canton, the Land Bank was able to complete those eight demolitions by the end of November, costing just over \$119,700. The SCLRC was able to submit for reimbursement to OHFA before the 90-day deadline and would receive reimbursement by January 2021.

Although the Land Bank does not anticipate there will be future opportunities to receive any additional NIP funding to help cover costs of demolition, the Land Bank does offer its own program available to help funding demolition projects in Stark County. The "Demolition Assistance Program" is available to county cities, villages and townships to complete demolition work by providing matched funding reimbursement up to 50% of hard-demolition costs of the project. For more information about the Land Bank's demolition program, please call Sarah Peters, Land Bank Administrator at 330-451-7387.

As I do not like to see structures being demolished sometimes it becomes necessary. Decaying structures in neighborhoods that do not reflect historic value and are beyond repair many times become necessary to tear down in order to improve a neighborhood and to stop further decay in neighborhoods.

Respectfully,
Joseph Engel, Executive Director

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Membership Renewal is due on your "issue date" anniversary. Statements are mailed out quarterly.

**Don't forget The
Canton Preservation Society
in your will or estate plan.**

ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR 2021-2024

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, CPS is again unable to hold an in-person Annual Meeting with our full membership. The 2021 election of members to the Board of Trustees, therefore, must be conducted by mail-in ballot.

A ballot is enclosed in this newsletter, on which you may record the vote of one or multiple members of your household, depending on your type of membership. In order to vote, your membership **dues must be current**.

Please be sure that **your name and return address** appear on the returning envelope, whether by mail or in person. This information is needed **only** to verify your membership status. The secrecy of your voting choices will be respected.

Ballots may be returned **by mail** to:

*Canton Preservation Society
131 Wertz Ave NW
Canton OH 44708*

Or you may wish to deliver your ballot **in person** to:

*CPS Resale Store
1227 West Tuscarawas Ave
Hours: Tuesday thru Friday, 10-3 or Saturday, 10-1*

Please return your ballot by **April 30**. If you have any questions about election procedures, please phone Joe Engel at 330-456-6881.

Thanks for your help in moving CPS along through this challenging time. By complying with healthy best practices, we look forward to gathering with you in future years when we can again conduct our business at an enjoyable Annual Meeting!

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REHABILITATING INTERIORS IN HISTORIC BUILDINGS *CONT.*

Continued from page 1.

In this regard, National Register files may prove useful in explaining why and for what period of time the building is significant. In some cases, research may show that later alterations are significant to the building; in other cases, the alterations may be without historical or architectural merit, and may be removed in the rehabilitation.

Identifying Interior Elements

Interiors of buildings can be seen as a series of primary and secondary spaces. The goal of the assessment is to identify which elements contribute to the building's character and which do not. Sometimes it will be the sequence and flow of spaces, and not just the individual rooms themselves, that contribute to the building's character. This is particularly evident in buildings that have strong central axes or those that are consciously asymmetrical in design. In other cases, it may be the size or shape of the space that is distinctive. The importance of some interiors may not be readily apparent based on a visual inspection; sometimes rooms that do not appear to be architecturally distinguished are associated with important persons and events that occurred within the building.

Primary spaces are found in all buildings, both monumental and modest. Examples may include foyers, corridors, elevator lobbies, assembly rooms, stair halls, and parlors. Often, they are the places in the building that the public uses and sees; sometimes they are the most architecturally detailed spaces in the building, carefully proportioned and finished with costly materials. They may be functionally and architecturally related to the building's external appearance. In a simpler building, a primary space may be distinguishable only by its location, size, proportions, or use. Primary spaces are always important to the character of the building and should be preserved.

Secondary spaces are generally more utilitarian in appearance and size than primary spaces. They may include areas and rooms that service the building, such as bathrooms, and kitchens. Examples of secondary spaces in a commercial or office structure

may include storerooms, service corridors, and in some cases, the offices themselves. Secondary spaces tend to be of less importance to the building and may, accept greater change in the course of work without compromising the building's historic character.

Spaces are often designed to interrelate both visually and functionally. The **sequence of spaces**, such as vestibule-hall-parlor or foyer-lobby-stair-auditorium or stair hall-corridor-classroom, can define and express the building's historic function and unique character. Important sequences of spaces should be identified and retained in the rehabilitation project. Floor plans may also be distinctive and characteristic of a style of architecture or a region. Examples include Greek Revival and shotgun houses. Floor plans may also reflect social, educational, and medical theories of the period. Many 19th century psychiatric institutions, for example, had plans based on the ideas of Thomas Kirkbride, a Philadelphia doctor who authored a book on asylum design. In addition to evaluating the relative importance of the various spaces, the assessment should identify architectural features and finishes that are part of the interior's history and character. Marble or wood wainscoting in corridors, elevator cabs, crown molding, baseboards, mantels, ceiling medallions, window and door trim, tile and parquet floors, and staircases are among those **features** that can be found in historic buildings. Architectural **finishes** of note may include grained woodwork, marbleized columns, and plastered walls. Those features that are characteristic of the building's style and period of construction should, again, be retained in the rehabilitation.

Features and finishes, even if machine-made and *not* exhibiting particularly fine craftsmanship, may be character-defining; these would include pressed metal ceilings and millwork around windows and doors. The interior of a plain, simple detailed worker's house of the 19th century may be as important historically as a richly ornamented, high-style townhouse of the same period. Both resources, if equally intact, convey important information about the early inhabitants and deserve the same careful attention to detail in the preservation process. The location and condition of the building's existing heating, plumbing, and electrical systems also need to be noted in the assessment. The visible features of historic systems—radiators, grilles, light fixtures, switch plates, bathtubs, etc.—can contribute to the overall character of the building, even if the systems themselves need upgrading.

Assessing Alterations and Deterioration

In assessing a building's interior, it is important to ascertain the extent of alteration and deterioration that may have taken place over the years; these factors help determine what degree of change is appropriate in the project. Close examination of existing fabric and original floorplans, where available, can reveal which alterations have been **additive**, such as new partitions inserted for functional or structural reasons and historic features covered up rather than destroyed. It can also reveal which have been **subtractive**, such as key walls removed, and architectural features destroyed. If an interior has been modified by additive changes and if these changes have not acquired significance, it may be relatively easy to remove the alterations and return the interior to its historic appearance. If an interior has been greatly altered through subtractive changes, there may be more latitude in



Figure 2. The interiors of mills and industrial buildings frequently are open, unadorned spaces with exposed structural elements. While the new uses to which this space could be put are many retail, residential, or office—the generous floor-to-ceiling height and exposed truss system are important character-defining features and should be retained in the process of rehabilitation.

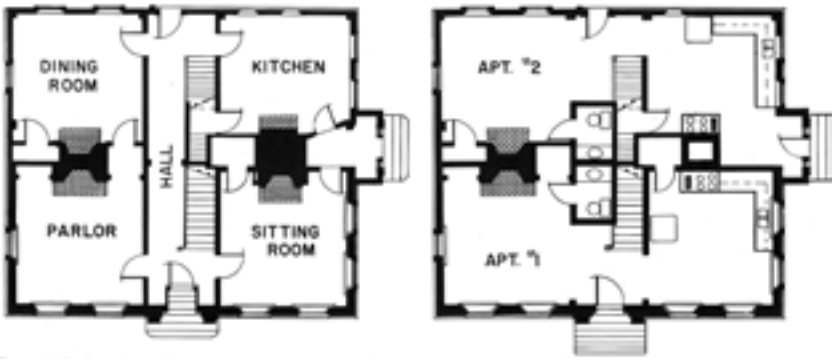


Figure 3. The floor plan at left is characteristic of many 19th century Greek Revival houses, with large rooms flanking a central hall. In the process of rehabilitation, the plan (at right) was drastically altered to accommodate two duplex apartments. The open stair was replaced with one that is enclosed, two fireplaces were eliminated, and Greek Revival trim around windows and doors was removed. The symmetry of the rooms themselves was destroyed with the insertion of bathrooms and kitchens. Few vestiges of the 19th century interior survived the rehabilitation. Drawing by Neal A. Vogel



Figure 4. Many institutional buildings possess distinctive spaces or floor plans that are important in conveying the significance of the property. Finding new compatible uses for these buildings and preserving the buildings' historic character can be a difficult, if not impossible, task. One such case is Mechanics Hall in Worcester, Massachusetts, constructed between 1855 and 1857. This grand hall, which occupies the entire third floor of the building, could not be subdivided without destroying the integrity of the space.

making further alterations in the process of rehabilitation because the integrity of the interior has been compromised. At the same time, if the interior had been exceptionally significant, and solid documentation on its historic condition is available, reconstruction of the missing features may be the preferred option. It is always a recommended practice to photograph interior spaces and features thoroughly prior to rehabilitation. Measured floor plans showing the existing conditions are extremely useful. This documentation is invaluable in drawing up rehabilitation plans and specifications and in assessing the impact of changes to the property for historic preservation certification purposes.

Drawing Up Plans and Executing Work

If the historic building is to be rehabilitated, it is critical that the new use not require substantial alteration of distinctive spaces

or removal of character defining architectural features or finishes. If an interior loses the physical vestiges of its past as well as its historic function, the sense of time and place associated both with the building and the district in which it is located is lost.

The recommended approaches that follow address common problems associated with the rehabilitation of historic interiors and have been adapted from the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings. Adherence to these suggestions can help ensure that character-defining interior elements are preserved in the process of rehabilitation. The checklist covers a range of situations and is not intended to be all-inclusive. Readers are strongly encouraged to review the full set of guidelines before undertaking any rehabilitation project.

This article will continue in the next issue of The Preservationist.



Figure 5. The interior of a simply detailed worker's house of the 19th century may be as important historically as the richly ornamented interior seen in figure 1. Although the interior of this house has not been properly maintained, the wide baseboards, flat window trim, and four-panel door are characteristic of workers' housing during this period and deserve retention during rehabilitation.

Figure 6. This corridor, located in the historic Monadnock Building in Chicago, has glazed walls, oak trim, and marble wainscoting, and is typical of those found in late 19th and early 20th century office buildings. Despite the simplicity of the features, a careful attention to detail can be noted in the patterned tile floor, bronze mail chute, and door hardware.



The retention of corridors like this one should be a priority in rehabilitation projects involving commercial buildings.

FROM SPLENDOR TO SPLINTERS - SHAME, SHAME!

Editor's note: From time to time I am asked what happened to the McKinley Home which once stood on Market Ave. I found this article that appeared in our vintage May 1988 Preservationist which answers the question.



The McKinley Home, which stood at Market Avenue and Eighth Street Northwest on a property which abutted St. Peter's Catholic Church was the scene of William McKinley's Front Porch Campaign for the presidency.

by Janet Immler

Bring up the subject of "preservation" in Canton, and you can bet on it: it won't be long until someone says, "They should never have torn down the McKinley house." And, of course, it is true. But after all these years, we wonder: Who were "they"? And what exactly happened?

For those who came in late, we should, perhaps, explain that the McKinley Home stood on the southwest corner of North Market Avenue and what is now Eighth Street. It was the scene of the famous Front Porch Campaign of 1896, which made Canton, for a time, the center of the nation. It was the house where the handsome young Major and his bride, Ida Saxton, set up housekeeping; the home where his widow lived until her death in 1907.

The comfortable, Victorian residence was a wedding gift to the young couple from the bride's father, the wealthy banker, Mr. James Saxton. Ida and William occupied it, for the first time, from their marriage in 1871 until shortly before McKinley was elected to Congress in 1876. When they left for Washington, they sold the property and moved into Ida's girlhood home, the Saxton House, which became their headquarters in Canton for many years.

There is no question that William McKinley was ambitious and that he enjoyed political life to the fullest. But he was also extremely sentimental, and never lost his nostalgic affection for the home on North Market where he had been so happy. Imagine, then, his delight when he found, shortly before the end of his second term as Governor of Ohio, that the house was available and for rent.

He lost no time in having it furnished and decorated in high Victorian style, and it was said that he and Ida were as happy as newlyweds when they settled in, for the second and final time—just before the Front Porch Campaign brought hordes of their fellow citizens pouring into town to trample the shrubbery, tear down the picket fence, and create havoc in general.

When these stirring events sent the McKinley's to Washington once again, this time as President and First Lady, they continued to maintain the residence on a rental basis. And we might say here, to correct a common but mistaken belief, that McKinley did not actually buy the property until 1899. In July of that year, he paid (to the Harter Estate) the sum of \$14,500—and for the first time in his life owned a home of his own, a home where he planned to retire when his days of public service were over.

As we all know, this dream was shattered abruptly by his assassination in September of 1901. When Mrs. McKinley died six years later, she made no provision for keeping the home as a memorial, and it was purchased a year later by Mrs. Rose Klorer who paid \$20,000. She presented it to the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland (of which Canton was then a part) to be used as a hospital. The home served in that capacity for about twenty years, when plans were drawn for new and larger facilities on the site.

Recognizing the historic importance of the structure, Bishop Schrembs offered the community a second chance to keep the home as a memorial, without charge, but with the proviso that it be moved. The Civitan Club was quick to accept the responsibility, and the Repository of May 29, 1929 carried an optimistic headline: MCKINLEY HOME TO BE A MEMORIAL. It would be, they predicted, "a mecca for thousands of visitors ... from all parts of the United States."

Very little is known of the short-lived Civitan Club, apparently a men's service organization, which appeared in the City Directory for the first time in 1927. With all good intentions, they secured a site in Meyers Park, adjacent to Lincoln High School, and moved the structure in sections during the summer of 1929. But before they could raise funds to begin reconstruction, the Wall Street Crash put an end to the project. There was no hope, either locally or nationally, in those Dismal Days of Depression.

The Civitan Club folded, vandals moved into the once-lovely old home, and in the interest of public safety, Mayor Turnbull ordered its destruction. A hasty salvage effort yielded wood for a number of commemorative gavels . . . the rest of the historic structure was carted away as rubbish. As Ed Heald so indignantly wrote: "Thus a presidential home, which should have become a national shrine, passed into oblivion, an irreparable loss to Canton."

The shameful destruction left William McKinley with the dubious distinction of being the only president, **of all the forty**, without some kind of Residential Memorial. But we are fortunate: We have a final chance to establish such a memorial in the Saxton House - the last remaining residence (aside from the White House, of course) with close ties to the life of Canton's Favorite Son.



News men and backers from all over the nation flocked to the home to hear McKinley's orations.

ARE YOU LIVING IN A SEARS HOME?

Editor's note: The following article was reprinted from the February-March 1989 issue of Timeline, a publication of the Ohio Historical Society. We are grateful to Editor Christopher Duckworth of Timeline for permitting the reprint.

THE RODESSA



The Rodessa was described as "a most attractive little home" which was one of the company's most popular models. Priced at \$1,189, the Rodessa had four rooms and a bath. It was sold between 1919 and 1929.

To the dismay of researchers and preservationists, company records for the Modern Homes program were destroyed when Sears stopped production. What survives today are the catalogs, the accounts of home buyers, and, of course, the thousands of houses still standing.

How can a Sears house be identified? Clues may be found in the houses themselves. Sears' markings on bathroom and hardware fixtures are readily identifiable. The back of moldings may carry the label of the Norwood Sash and Door Manufacturing Company from Norwood, Ohio, the firm that prepared all of the millwork for Sears houses.

The prime sources of information on Sears houses are the twenty-odd catalogs for the Honor Bilt Modern Homes program. Original catalogs have become rare, and a page-by-page search through several can be time-consuming. *Houses By Mail: A Guide to Houses from Sears, Roebuck and Company*, published in 1986 by the Preservation Press, provides a good summary of information from the catalogs. Five annual catalogs were not located, so *Houses by Mail* probably does not include every Sears Honor Bilt design, nor does it include information on the smaller Standard Built or Simplex Sectional houses. It does encompass more than four hundred designs, which are grouped by four general characteristics to make easier the location of a specific example. Keep in mind that customers were able to customize, their houses by selecting-different finishes, windows, doors, and hardware-and by reversing floor plans-so there are likely to be some variations between catalog illustrations and the "as-built" house. Later remodeling may have altered the house in misleading ways.

Incontrovertible evidence may exist in the mortgage records in the county courthouse. Those houses whose owners obtained financing through Sears will be listed in the indices to the mortgagee files. A corporate official, not the company itself, will likely be listed as the mortgage holder. In the case of Franklin County, Ohio, Walker O. Lewis was the mortgage signatory for all Sears-financed houses between 1921 and 1931, and the paperwork was handled by the First National Bank of Chicago. Much of this information may also be found in a detailed property abstract.

THE MAGNOLIA



**PRIVATE RESIDENCE - 424 19th Street N.W.
Architectural Style: Colonial "Catalogue"**

At one time, most anything could be ordered through the Sears Roebuck Catalogue, even including a house. The "Magnolia," one such Sears "Catalogue" house, could be purchased for only \$5,140, not including cement, brick, or plaster. The style of this particular house was adapted from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The "top of the line" model in the 1918 Sears catalogue, only a few "Magnolias" were sold and the Ridgewood home is the only one known to still be in use as a private residence.

The entire house arrived on a pre-arranged schedule, pre-cut and disassembled in many assorted packages. Clarence R. Swallow, contractor of the job, supervised a two-man crew in putting the house together, which he compared to a "giant jig-saw puzzle." Many years later, he recalled that although top-quality materials were used, "sometimes it took as long to find the right piece as it would have taken to cut it." Tall Corinthian columns, three on each corner of the portico, support a cornice that extends around the entire building. A small pedimented dormer sits atop the flat portico roof, which once carried a balustrade. The front door boasts a fan-light and side lights, and pilasters on each side support a small balcony above. While the exterior has been modified somewhat, the basic structure is easily recognizable from the illustration in the 1918 Modern Homes catalogue.



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