

## Repointing, Repainting, Repairing, Restoring

The recently completed exterior restoration of Mark Twain's Hartford home and carriage house showcases one of America's finest examples of domestic architecture and preserves the National Register Historic Landmark for future generations.

Since the Clemens family sold the property to the Bissell family in 1903 the fate of the author's home has at times been precarious. Real estate speculators who purchased the land and buildings in 1927 planned to demolish the house, anticipating profits from the sale of an empty lot situated on one of the city's major thoroughfares. A visionary group of volunteers calling themselves the Friends of Hartford acquired the property in 1929 with a mortgage. Their motive was not to profit from the value of real estate but to invest in the richness of America's cultural heritage by preserving Mark Twain's legacy.

In 1955 the mortgage was paid in full, and the trustees of the Mark Twain Memorial undertook the first restoration of the house. Donations of Clemens family objects came from all over, and other pieces of Victorian furniture and decorative arts were added to recreate the 1874-1891 period of the family's residency. Skilled craftsmen replicated the exquisite Aesthetic Movement details of the Tiffany-decorated rooms. The exterior was also restored to its nineteenth-century appearance.

The work was largely completed for the house's 1974 centennial, at which occasion the National

Trust for Historic Preservation honored the institution with the David E. Finley award for "exemplary restoration." The restoration became a model for the nation at a time when Victorian architecture and interior design were not understood or appreciated as they are today.

Twenty-five years have passed since that restoration of Mark Twain's house was completed. During that time, several projects have helped uncover evidence that has provided more details about the interior and exterior of both the house and the carriage house. A team of students from the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), led by Professor John White of the Texas Tech University College of Architecture, spent the summer of 1995 creating measured drawings accurate to within an eighth of an inch, large-format photographs, and a written design history of the interiors and exteriors of both buildings. In addition, Brian Powell, then architectural conservator for the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), conducted analyses of the exterior and interior materials, painstakingly uncovering original paint colors, wallpapers, and woodwork finishes. Together their work, which was compiled in the 1997 Historic Structures Report, provided the documentation Curator Marianne Curling needed to ensure accuracy in the next phase of restoration. The Maximillian E. and Marion O. Hoffman Foundation made possible the crucial investigations that went into creating the Historic Structures Report.

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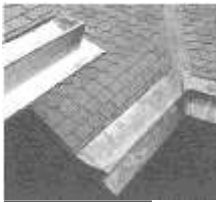
*Before its restoration, a chimney on The Mark Twain House shows an earlier attempt to copy the original designs of the Clemens home. Through the enlargement of historic images by photo digitization, Curator Marianne Curling discovered that the original chimneys were more sculptural in quality.*



*Each of the chimneys was torn down and rebuilt to replicate those seen in the Clemens-period images of The Mark Twain House*



*A newly rebuilt chimney before painting shows the complex patterning of brick in the original designs.*



The slate roof of the carriage house was restored to its original design, reflecting the colors and patterns of the main house.

Last year Kronenberger & Sons was hired to complete the exterior restoration of the house and carriage house. The restoration firm restored and replaced deteriorating pieces of wood, peeling paint, broken roof tiles, and damaged bricks, sandstone, and brownstone. The restoration guaranteed not only the buildings' structural stability but also the historic accuracy of their appearance. Sliding doors that were added to the facade of the carriage house after 1903 to accommodate the Bissell family's automobile were replaced by brick and windows. Slate tiles were laid in a pattern reflecting



Craftsmen paint exterior bricks black and vermilion to match the original designs.

that of the roof of the main house. Yankee-style wood and copper gutters were installed. Each of these changes has brought the carriage house a step closer to Edward Tuckerman Potter's original design.

The restoration process has benefited from the digitization of The Mark Twain House's extensive photo archives. Converted to digital format by PhotoArk of Vermont, historic photographs from the museum's collections have been enlarged on a computer screen to the extent that minute details, some of them never before seen, are revealed. Brick and paint patterns exposed through digitization guided the rebuilding of chimneys on both buildings-including one chimney that had been missing from the main house for several decades. As we move toward the complete interior restoration of the house, digitization will provide valuable help in selecting textiles, wallpapers, furniture, and other decorative objects to use in those rooms for which period photos exist.

Just as the museum's future was ensured by a group of dedicated supporters in 1929, today's exterior restoration, which was completed this spring, would not have been possible without funders who understand the value of preserving Mark Twain's house for Hartford and the nation.

We extend our sincere thanks to those whose generosity made this important work possible: the State of Connecticut, The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, The Hartford Courant Foundation, United Technologies Corporation, The Maximillian E. and Marion O. Hoffman Foundation, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the many individuals who provided support.



The Mark Twain House's restored chimneys appear at last as they originally were meant to be.



Ihor Budzinsky, a master carpenter from Kronenberger & Sons restoration firm, uses an epoxy solution to repair wooden supports on one of the porches (detail at right).





Mark Twain's carriage house before restoration featured wood doors that were installed on the facade in the early twentieth century to accommodate an automobile. The change was made by the Bissell family, who purchased the house from Samuel and Olivia Clemens.

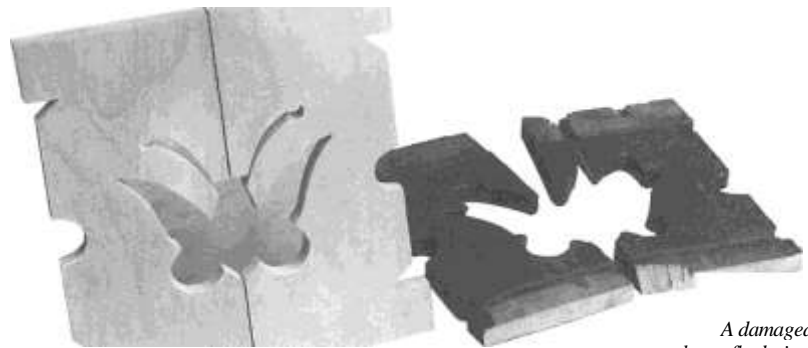


Bricklayers replaced the opening left by the removal of the doors with bricks carefully chosen to match the color of the original materials.



The newly restored brick facade features additional windows to match the original fenestration of the building.

A decorative wood element from the porch of the Billiard Room that was removed for restoration



A damaged original butterfly design from the porte-cochere is on the right, and a new carving that replicates the original appears on the left.

An original 1870s decorative bracket from the ombra of house is seen on the right, while on the left is one replicated by Thor Budzinsky. The new bracket is primed and ready for paint.



The restored slate roof of the carriage house was fitted with Yankee-style gutters. Made of wood and copper flashing, the gutters sit directly on the roof.

