

A new lease on life

Batavia builder transforms dilapidated Victorian home into a 'gorgeous' abode

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Before work began

When Batavia builder Brian Hinds bought the stately old Victorian home at 213 N. Jackson St. last November, he had a vision-to make it new again.

The house had seen better days: Its white paint was peeling and some of the aging windows were in poor condition. Even the screen hemming in the front porch had fallen into disrepair.

"This (house) was in pretty bad condition," said Hinds.

New owner Doug Marsh agreed, adding the house was hard to see from the street when he and his wife, Barb, first saw it.

"It was pretty overgrown," he said. "With all the trees, it was covered up."

Hinds bought the two lots that made up the property for \$150,000, he said. Next, he surveyed the house and started envisioning giving it a new lease on life.

Then came the difficult task of renovating the old house.

"All the windows were replaced, so was a lot of the siding," Hinds said, standing outside the refinished home. "It's got an all new roof and gutters. All the electric's been redone. There's a new dormer at the master bedroom."

The biggest change that could be seen between how the outside of the house looked before and after the renovation is perhaps one of the first attributes people notice on a home its exterior color.

"It got a good power washing and paint a lot of paint," Hinds said with a laugh.

The interior of the house underwent a major transformation from the original early 1900s layout that Hinds found when he started the project.

While the original shell of the house, its floor and beam-construction structure were left intact, all the walls and the original staircase were torn out.



New windows are in



New siding on the south side of the house.

Hinds showed the house to the Batavia Republican in December 2003, while renovation was under way. The walls had come out on both the first and second floors, but the original, narrow staircase to the second floor was still intact.

"The (building) code wouldn't allow us to have something like that now," he said. So, a new, wider staircase was built, allowing a wide turning radius as the stairs lead upward. New walls on the second floor formed three bedrooms, two bathrooms and a hallway. The master bedroom, which featured a private bathroom, also leads to the sleeping porch the only part of the interior that Hinds said he left relatively untouched.

Hinds repaired the windows in the sleeping porch, updated the electrical wiring, installed a ceiling fan and painted it. While the second floor is lushly carpeted, the lower level features modern oak flooring.

The walls of four tiny rooms in the back of the house disappeared, creating an open family room area with a direct-vent gas fireplace, said Hinds. The gas fireplace was chosen over a traditional wood burning hearth because of the need to keep the rear of the house unobstructed.

"We didn't want to run a chimney (up there) because of the sleeping porch," said Hinds.

Hinds' project received a lot of attention, mostly because of the "for sale" sign that sat in front of it while he worked on the renovation. He said 40 to 50 people inquired about the old house.

All the hard work the builder put into the house paid off handsomely. The Marshes agreed to buy it for \$410,000, said Hinds.

Doug Marsh, a former Batavian who runs TimePilot Corp. on McKee Street, had not planned to move back to town for a couple of years, he said. That all changed when he and his wife saw the old Victorian and talked with Hinds about the project he was undertaking.

"It's a gorgeous house," Doug said, adding it was "a shock" finding the house when and where they did.



The front porch roof is rebuilt.

The Marshes' timing on agreeing to purchase the home allowed them to make some decisions on construction, such as lighting and plumbing fixtures, said Hinds.

"We got involved early enough in the course of his doing the house to put things to our liking," Doug said.

While the couple is working on moving in, plans already are being made for a new addition to the old turned new house. Doug plans to invite some friends over to help build a deck on the back next year to finish the project, he said.



The rear of the house, with the sleeping porch above.

Kai Tarum, Batavia community development director, approved of Hinds' work, saying that renovating was better than the teardown of homes other towns have experienced.

"It's the recycling theory: reduce, reuse, recycle," she said. "If you can reuse what's there, (it's better)."

The city plans to review its infill ordinance-the part of city code that governs what lots adjacent to development can be redeveloped and how developers go about their projects. Infill properties are defined as any lot that was recorded prior to April 19,1971, and is bounded on at least one side by a property with an existing structure, according to city code. Part of the reason city officials want to revise the infill ordinance is the number of odd lots, properties that appear buildable, but by ordinance are not, said Tarum.

The two lots Hinds bought were 50 feet wide, not buildable because the city's zoning code requires lots in the R 2 residential zoning district be at least 60 feet wide. Hinds disagrees.

"A 50 foot lot is a buildable lot. A 50 foot lot with a house is good," he said.

No date has been set for revising the city's infill ordinance, Tarum said.

The city received eight requests in 2003 for construction permits on properties with existing buildings, most of which were razed to make room for newer housing, according to the city.



The finished product.