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THE VINTAGE HOUSE

A Guide to Successful Renovations and Additions

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standing of classical principles, the vernacular of the townhouse type, can expand and augment a residential property according to principles outlined in Chapter 2: massing, modules, and facade composition.

The Charleston Single House is one of the most distinctive dwelling types in America, studied by scholars and prized by residents. It is rare that a truly fine example comes on the market, and rarer still to find one capable of restoration. Such was the case with the William C. Gatewood House, an 1843 Greek Revival gem that was purchased by a film-industry veteran and a management consultant in 2003. The couple, one of whom is a tenth-generation Charlestonian, were ready for a full-scale restoration and upgrade, but perhaps not one that would take four years.

Charleston is home to one of the few institutions in the U.S. to grant a college degree in building restoration trades: the American College of the Building Arts, located in a former jail downtown and on a low-country plantation up river. It is also home to the College of Charleston, which offers preservation courses as well as training in classical architecture.

Taking advantage of local talent, the new owners of the Gatewood House retained Richard "Moby" Marks as the contractor on their project. Known locally for his knowledge of low-country houses, Marks has taught preservation for years in addition to running his specialty restoration firm. Gil Schafer, a New York architect renowned for his classical houses, joined the team as the design professional in charge.

The Gatewood house in Charleston is a classic nineteenth-century town house that had fallen into disrepair. Architect Gil Schafer joined with Moby Marks, a contractor, in helping the new owners restore it in 2003. The project took four years to complete. (Courtesy of G.P. Schafer Architects PLLC.)

The characteristic piazza has a window to the street to conceal its presence as a circulation space. (Courtesy of G.P. Schafer Architects PLLC.)

Schafer was impressed by the expertise and passion Marks brought to the job, and entrusted him with more than the execution of the construction documents.

Marks does what many restoration contractors do before starting construction: he removes sections of walls, floors, and ceilings in order to discover the hidden features that tell the story of the building's construction. Only when all the "ghosts" and structural secrets are known does he begin to work. Schafer appreciated having a detective on the premises to give him cues on how to design and renovate.

The house had serious structural problems that were uncovered during this discovery phase, issues that had escaped the inspector before the home was purchased. Much of the building had to be disassembled and put back together, augmented by discreet structural reinforcement. Marks located an original floor plan of the house in a local archive and used an early inventory to gauge the degree of finish and furnishings in its early days. Once this information was culled, the restoration team went to work on an authentic restoration.

Schafer intended to modernize the bathrooms and provide large closets for his clients, but they would have nothing that wasn't provided in the original house—no walls would be moved to create additional space. That meant that Schafer would have to hide new amenities in nooks and crannies, such as disused servant rooms and the like. In the end he and the contractor managed to update the house with six new bathrooms, two kitchens, three extra staircases, central heating and air conditioning, new wiring, high-speed data

On the opposite side of the house is the beautiful stair hall, with its Greek Revival door surrounds and sinuous stair. (Courtesy of G.P. Schafer Architects PLLC.)

Fitting a bathroom into one of the guest bedrooms was a difficult trick—the architect managed to use a built-in wardrobe to conceal the small room. (Courtesy of G.P. Schafer Architects PLLC.)