

High Tolerance

Remodeling home has been a messy yet rewarding experience

By Ruth Hultz

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Six years ago, John and Cheryl Dooley committed themselves to restoring the house at 1634 Vermont that Cheryl Biggs Dooley's parents had bought in 1966.

The house was built in 1898 by Michael and Eleanor Piggott. The elegant Queen Anne house remained in the Piggott family for 56 years.

And ever since the Dooleys moved in, there has been a project in the works.

Luckily, the Dooleys have a high tolerance for mess.

"You know, when you tear up one room, you mess up two others, and one project leads to another," Dooley said. "But it is a lot of fun and it is very rewarding."

When the Dooleys started the renovation, they spent hours reclaiming the upstairs. The master bedroom plaster walls had to be stripped of multiple layers of old wallpaper. John and Cheryl tackled it themselves and then repaired



the crumbling plaster walls.

The back stairway had been boarded up and the steps removed. The Dooleys thought it was important to have it rebuilt.

"I am glad we did it," Dooley said. "It helps the house ventilation. These houses were designed to open up the basement windows, transoms and stairwells to get the breeze going through. I wanted to bring it back more to the original."

They took out all the 1950s orange shag carpeting and Dooley tried his hand at floor stripping in the foyer. The result is a great improvement to the grand foyer, which has a magnificent butternut stair case with carved newel post finials.

Luckily, most of the butternut trim and five panel doors were still in good shape and Dooley didn't have to strip any more wood.

Some of the elegant home's original features are gone forever, such as the four fireplaces and the foyer butler bench. But the two sets of pocket doors and the built-in china cabinet are stored away for possible future renovations.

Dooleys did a complete remodeling of the 1950s kitchen, as well as the bathroom which the previous owners had made from the large former butler's pantry. For the kitchen, they searched until they found just the right cherry kitchen cabinets to match the color of the clear pine kitchen trim. The Dooleys also added central air to the large home.

The Dooleys have done plenty of work on the outside, too. They repaired some original bracket trim before having the many Queen Anne details painted. They also had the side porch shored up and rebuilt.

Dooley had a good time hauling gravel and sand and building a brick patio using neighborhood sidewalk bricks. Cheryl created the gardens around the patio and they planted hemlocks for privacy.



AT A GLANCE

■ **Original Owner:** Michael and Eleanor A. Piggott. Piggott was a captain in the United States Army during the Civil War and lost his leg in battle. In Quincy, he was a deputy United States assessor, contractor and later was appointed postmaster by President Ulysses S. Grant

■ **Date of Construction:** 1898.

■ **Style:** patterned masonry Queen

Anne.

■ **Special features:** Hip roof with multiple detailed gables and dormers, decorative brick work, wrap-around front porch, double classical columns, brackets and dentils at roof cornice, leaded glass windows, decorative brick hood and keystone on west landing window, east two-story bay area and second-floor bay.