

important to Jennifer Strother, who has moved back to the neighborhood in which she, like her father before her, experienced a happy childhood.

Returning from the state of Washington, she found familiar neighbors and discovered things about her old neighborhood that she hadn't known before.

"We thought that this house was built in 1891, but we have learned that it must be later than 1893," said Strother. She calculates there have been at least three previous owners, and she enjoys encountering traces of their time in the home.

"One night I found the measurements of children written in pencil on a wall with the names and dates beside them. It gives me goosebumps imagining their lives here," she said.

Large rooms, a dramatic foyer and many elegant touches suggest that the home has always been gracious and welcoming. Sparkling art glass in the front-door transom and in a window on the landing of the stairway catch the eye; hardwood floors, a marble hearth and elongated windows add to the charm of the front room.

Strother's favorite is the living room, which she calls "just a comfortable room where you never want to leave."



Of course, moving into an older home entails hard work as well as imagination. There have been the big jobs — tuck pointing, a new roof, rebuilt porches and plumbing work.

Strother herself has "pretty much redone every room," tackling one big project each year. "Winter is a great time to launch into a project," she says. "It keeps the winter blahs away."



Jennifer Strother and her daughter, Kelsey, left, pose for a photo in front of one of the Christmas trees in their home at 1256 Kentucky, far left. The tree is in the corner of their dining room, which is pictured above.

H-W Photos/
Justin Sargasee

Some major tasks remain ahead.

For instance, Strother has found that the pocket doors between the front room and the kitchen are missing and "every stitch of woodwork except for the banister has been painted."

"I love natural woodwork, but when people ask whether I plan to strip it all, I ask, 'Me and what army?'" she says.

Strother's "big dream" is to reopen the stairwells. The back has been closed completely; the horseshoe railing that once appeared in the front hall of the second floor is now lodged in the attic.

With help from friends and family and the encouragement of her neighbors, Strother looks forward to continuing to renew her classic home. "It's a work in progress that will never be done," she says. "It's a house I can never outgrow."

Strother has turned her efforts into learning experiences.

"You make some mistakes, but you figure it out," she says.

Starting with "a brush, a can and instructions," she has taught herself how to do whatever she needed to complete each new venture. Kelsey has also picked up some of the skills of a born do-it-yourselfer.

"She has been a trouper," her mom states. "She has really learned patience."