

By Ruth Hultz

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When Mark and Cathy Aleman talk about adventures in renovating their brick Queen Anne home at 415 S. 16th, two words dominate the conversation — authentic and original.

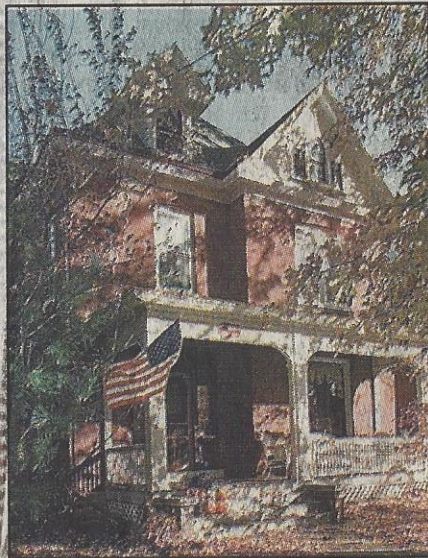
Although their work preferences differ — Mark likes one project at a time while Cathy likes many projects at once — they agree that when they are finished, the house will be as close to original as possible.

During the past four years, the Alems have waved their magic wand on each of the eight-plus rooms in the house, granting each one an early-1900s look.

The grand reception hall and staircase with turned balusters and five carved newel posts and drop finials make an impressive statement.

The carved dentils on the newel posts are repeated in the crown headers on windows and doors throughout the house. Double sliding doors with raised panels divide the living room from the large dining room. Highly profiled wood-trim oak on the first floor and cypress on the second floor highlight the whole house, including the kitchen and maid's room.

Committed to maintaining the peri-



The staircase, above, is one of the highlights of the Mark and Cathy Aleman home, lower left, at 415 S. 16th.

od feel of the house, the Alems search stores and Internet sites to find just the right items.

Currently, they are searching for reproduction tile to restore the fireplace — which was given a Craftsman facelift in the 1920s — to a Victorian look. They found original period light fixtures in Springfield and got old flooring in Quincy from Rick Dulaney, a historic preservationist.

The Alems make a good team: Cathy paints, strips wallpaper and makes window coverings while Mark does the rest. Both have the patience and determination to do the projects right.

Each project had its own set of challenges, but the most memorable was the kitchen. They removed an island to make room for a more homey kitchen

table and Mark made two stained-glass windows for the transoms. They even bought an Elmira brand “Cook’s Delight” reproduction stove.

The Alems also pried up two layers of linoleum and two layers of under-layment to expose the original fir floor.

Mark sanded, stained and polyurethaned the floor twice. The second time was after they took down the tin ceiling to strip it and the plaster and lathe ceiling above it tumbled down, too. They couldn’t salvage the tin panels so they ordered new ones.

Although the house was in great structural condition when the Alems bought it, they just planned to do cosmetic changes

But Mark said they found out that “‘just cosmetic’ is a lot of work.”

AT A GLANCE

❑ **Style of Architecture:** Queen Anne.

❑ **Date of Construction:** Circa 1905.

❑ **Architectural Features:** Hip roof with cross gables, front porch with dentil trim and turned balusters, single-pane front door with leaded glass sidelights and transom, two-story bay area with corbels at the cornice, false-shaped windows on the north, sawtooth shingles on gables, diamond-paned windows, third-floor Palladian attic window and a highly decorated front dormer.