

THE CENTURY-OLD CEDAR SHINGLE AND FIELDSTONE HOUSE, LARGELY UNTOUCHED OVER THE YEARS, BOASTS MANY OF ITS ORIGINAL WINDOWS AND COLUMNS.

All the Trimmings



An architecturally sensitive top-to-bottom renovation brings a long-neglected estate in Nashua, New Hampshire, back to its Edwardian beauty.

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As an avid antique collector, Elizabeth Foemmel always wanted to renovate an old house. “I grew up in a house designed by a Frank Lloyd Wright student, and I developed a passion for antiques and architecture when I was eleven or twelve,” she says. | But it wasn’t until she recovered from a bout with cancer that she decided to act

on her wish. While vacationing at her family’s summer place in Nova Scotia, Elizabeth went online to find old homes for sale. At the time, she and her husband, Richard, were living on Beacon Hill in Boston. Their son and daughter were both in college. Richard, who had recently sold his biomedical company, had one request: find

something within fifty miles of Boston.

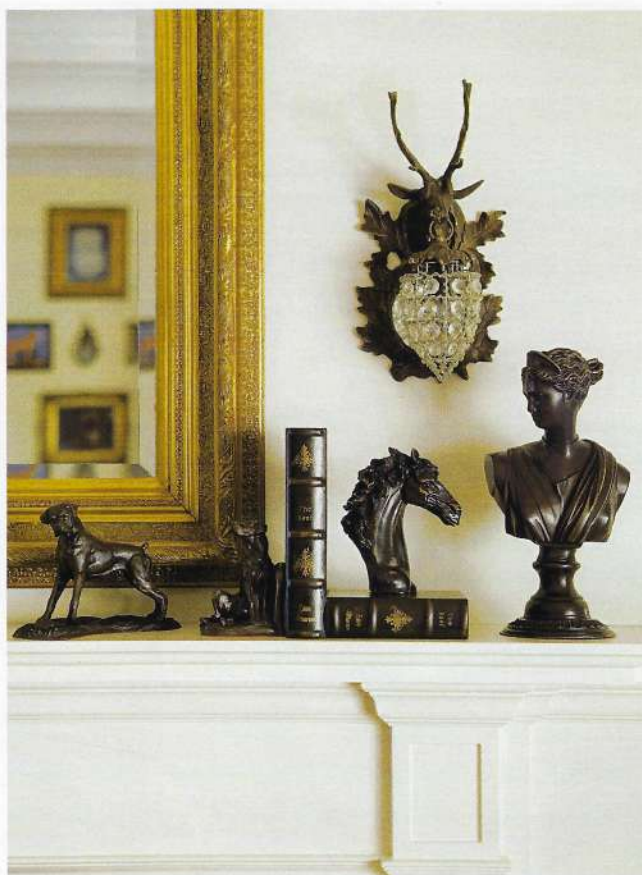
A 10,000-square-foot Edwardian house, built in 1901 by a prosperous icebox maker, piqued their interest. Along with its ten bedrooms and six baths, the cedar shingle and fieldstone residence featured an abundance of bay and Palladian windows and sat on two acres with a small pond.

THE CRISP WHITE OF THE PANELING PLAYS UP THE RICH DETAIL IN THE COLUMNS AND COFFERED CEILINGS OF THE GRAND FOYER. FACING PAGE: A LIVING ROOM VIGNETTE HINTS AT THE ROOM'S ENGLISH HUNT THEME.





THE MASSIVE HAND-CARVED 1860S CABINET OF BOG OAK FROM THE NORTH OF ENGLAND IS A COMMANDING PRESENCE IN THE LIVING ROOM. FACING PAGE: ANTIQUE BRONZE FIGURES LINE THE LIVING ROOM MANTEL.



"I had never heard of Nashua, New Hampshire," Elizabeth says, "but I quickly learned that the area was full of historic homes."

When the Foemmels first visited the house, says Elizabeth, "It was so dark. The bad thing was, no one had done anything to it. But the good thing was, no one had done anything to it. From that point of view we had a treasure."

That treasure included a bounty of wood paneling in the living and dining rooms, a library and music room, a glass-encased conservatory on the south side, wood coffered ceilings, leaded glass windows, six fireplaces and more than a dozen wood columns made of close-grain oak—"the type of wood that can't be duplicated," says Richard. There's even a gent's room at the top of the central stairway, complete with a built-in bar and early light-dimmer.

The Foemmels bought the house in 2002 and immediately set about restoring it. They hired DellaGatta Contracting of Nashua to manage the enormous project. Although they altered the footprint only minimally, they did gut and redesign the kitchen. They also reconfigured two bedrooms to his-and-her offices, and created a master bath out of a third bedroom.

"The biggest challenge," says Jim DellaGatta, who's been in the contracting business for thirty-

THE THIRTEEN-INCH-DEEP COFFERS
LEND EXTRA DEPTH TO THE DRAMATIC
DINING ROOM. FACING PAGE: THE HOME-
OWNERS' COLLECTION OF FINDS FROM
FLEA MARKETS THROUGHOUT EUROPE.



two years, “was making the house look like the original. We really wanted to keep the style and restore it to its original condition.”

Over the next ten months, DellaGatta’s team of craftsmen worked on all the interior finishes: mechanical, electrical and carpentry. The old knob and tube wiring, for example, was still in place. “We had to cut trenches in the wall and then replaster the old-fashioned way—mixing plaster with wire mesh,” he says. “We took original baseboard off and ran the wire behind it, then put the baseboard back on.”

They also refinished the walnut floors. “Back at the turn of the [twentieth] century they used walnut, not oak, because walnut was readily available,” says DellaGatta. “Now, walnut trees are scarce.”

Exterior work focused on repairing rotted shingles and building a section of missing roof. “When we bought the house, it didn’t have a roof covering the front porch,” says Elizabeth. DellaGatta used a 1930s photo of the house to replicate the overhang that connects the terrace to the conservatory, making the porch once again integral to the structure.

Richard worked with DellaGatta to design a new kitchen on the back end of the house. A twelve-foot-long,

where, neighbors tell them, children often skated in winters past.

Cathy Kert, formerly with Beckonings and now the owner of Cathy Kert Interiors in Nashua, helped the Foem-

With antique chandeliers and sconces, the dining room “absolutely glows at night,” says the homeowner.

black-granite-topped island anchors the 250-square-foot room. Glossy white cabinetry provides an English feel, while stainless steel appliances, including a separate refrigerator and full-sized freezer, accommodate the Foemels’ passion for cooking and entertaining. French doors open onto a new balcony and a view of the duck pond

mels choose all their window treatments, wall coverings and colors. To begin the process, Kert visited the couple’s brownstone in Boston. “Elizabeth showed me their furnishings, colors, artwork and I began to gather a feeling for their tastes and lifestyle,” says Kert. “We communicated well, which is imperative to a successful design project.”



IN THE SECOND-FLOOR GENTLEMEN'S ROOM, TARTAN FABRIC ACCENTS THE TUFTED GREEN VELVET—A REPLACEMENT FOR THE ORANGE VINYL THAT COVERED THE BUILT-IN SOFA WHEN THE HOMEOWNERS MOVED IN. *FACING PAGE:* A GUEST BEDROOM SPORTS AN EXTRA-LONG BIEDERMEIER SLEIGH BED.



In the grand foyer, for example, says Elizabeth, “The question of what gets painted and what gets stained was a major issue.” They struck a balance by painting some of the paneling and staining the columns. A built-in seat, with its down and feather cushion, doubles as a resting spot and a disguise for the radiator behind it.

Old World European furniture and Oriental rugs from years of collecting and living abroad dominate the Foemmels’ personal style. An enormous fifteen-foot, intricately hand-carved cabinet fits handsomely in the Nashua home’s living room. Made in the 1860s from bog oak, the hunt chest came from a hunting lodge in northern England. “We looked at another house but it didn’t have the wall space for this piece,” says Elizabeth.

Upstairs, the Old World feel continues. In a guest bedroom, behind an extra-long Biedermeier sleigh bed, hangs a lush treatment of fully lined drapery panels with a custom-made corona “to quiet and add a luxurious, comforting feeling to the room,” says Kert. Elizabeth found all their antique light fixtures online, and she and Richard rewired and restored them. Sconces and chandeliers light up stairways and hallways, an effect that’s

Indeed, they do.

Whether they’re hosting a Christmas party for a hundred neighbors, their daughter’s wedding or a visit from their son who lives in London, or catching up with friends from

Old World European furniture and Oriental rugs from years of collecting dominate the Foemmels’ personal style.

magical against dark paneling. The dining room, for example, with its thirteen-inch-deep coffered ceilings “absolutely glows at night,” says Elizabeth.

Soon after the Foemmels moved in they found a note scrawled by a child in a bedroom closet on the third floor. It said, “*I hope you enjoy the duck pond house as much as I do.*”

abroad, the house adapts easily and joyfully to their needs. “It sounds crazy to say we’re using all the space in a 10,000-square-foot house,” says Elizabeth, “but it’s a rare month that we don’t have sets of people staying here. It’s a great home to have guests and family.” **NEH**

RESOURCES For more information about this home see page 279.

