

# House of the Week: Victorian Redux

September 14, 2021 by Jennifer Martella

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Recently I dined outdoors with friends at the Robert Morris Inn and our quartet included two fellow architects. After dinner we strolled across the street to admire the pair of Victorian houses on a short dead-end street facing the water. Both houses were charming but we especially appreciated the latter for its beautiful restoration of the front original part of the house and the glimpse of the rear addition that complemented the original house's historic form and character. When I later discovered from my best "Oxford Scout" that this house was now for sale and the Owners were the gifted duo of Landscape Designer Barbara Paca and Architect Philip Logan, I knew this would be a very special House of the Week.

When I arrived for my tour, I stopped at the edge of the brick driveway to admire the "L" shaped massing of the original house with gables at each end of the second floor. The low sloped hipped metal roof of the two-bay front porch wraps around the perimeter of the house and ends at the side breezeway. One bay of the porch frames the two over two windows of the parlor and the other frames the entry door set back from the front window wall. The sequence of delightful outdoor rooms begins with the brick sidewalk through the colorful front garden. Brick steps then lead from the garden to the front porch and another brick sidewalk blends into the breezeway. Behind the breezeway is a wood deck next to a wall of tall two over three windows and French doors below the second floor transoms. The ultimate outdoor room is the second floor screened sleeping porch over the breezeway. I learned all of the original trim and siding of the front part of the house facing the street was carefully stripped and restored to its former glory. The combination of blue accents of fretwork, eave fascia, porch roof and shutters against the texture of the white shiplap with its wonderful shadow lines creates a warm and inviting composition with the openness of the porch and breezeway.

The side of the house facing the water telescopes down in height and width and a new box bay projection with its wrap-around windows becomes a sunroom. A new two-story hyphen with a low sloped roof connects the house to the family room/office rear addition. The exquisite rear elevation of the addition was inspired by the Orangery at Wye House and reinterpreted by the Owner Architect's gifted hands. I stood and savored his symmetrical arrangement of a trio of tall insulated six over six jib windows between single French doors and transoms above. The rear wall of the addition and the front wall of the guest house are "bookends" for the outdoor space of the pool. The detailing of the guest house's front elevation takes its cue from the main house's rear elevation with its symmetry of three dormers in the metal roof centered over another trio of long windows flanked by French doors and single windows.

Preserving the historic character, sustainability and accessibility guided the design. I was amazed to learn that the windows and doors throughout the house had been carefully stripped for reuse. I can't imagine the patience and time it took for Ms. Paca's brother to deconstruct the window frames, number each part, strip layers of paint, replace any frayed ropes and recalibrate the sashes-a true labor of brotherly love. He was also the artisan who sought recycled wood to infill gaps in the trim and moldings that included fluted jambs and rosette corners, now fully restored and protected by a new transparent finish. The sustainability search was greatly enhanced by obtaining antique doors and railings from the historic Plinhimmon House after they learned the new owners had removed them, a fitting coda since that house had once been owned by the Paca family.

The front door opens to the magnificent stair that spirals up to the second floor. The entry wall is infilled with wood and glass four from the paneled wood door, half glass, half paneled sidelights and full transom. I admired the juxtaposition of the fully stripped front door wall near the door under the stairs with some residue of its original finish as an accent.

From the entrance hall, a wide cased opening leads to the living room whose spaciousness is due to a previous owner's combination of two former parlors. The fireplace was also an addition with a black and white diamond patterned marble hearth. The room's windows on three sides, beautiful original wood floors, neutral upholstered furnishings, accents of colorful accent pillows, antiques and floor to ceiling built-in millwork for books and art, become a harbinger of the exquisite interior design throughout the house.

At the end of the entrance hall, another cased opening leads to a wide hall gently sloped for accessibility with a vista past the open plan dining room and kitchen to the family room/office at the rear of the house. On the day I visited, deep diagonal sunlight patterns penetrated the space from the wall of French doors and windows to the adjacent deck. The dining room's focal point of its original built-in hutch with white cabinets, wood counter and backsplash with inset Delft tiles was restored and all doors and drawers are now fully operational. The massive wood portal that may have once been an old sailboat keel frames the opening from the dining room to the sunroom's box bay projection that must be a delightful space for guests to keep the cooks company.

Unfortunately, the dining area's original flooring was not salvageable and was replaced with recycled antique heart pine boards that were also used for the other rooms on the rest of this floor. Adjacent to the dining room, the addition begins with the new kitchen and an accessible powder room and elevator off the hall. A small secondary stair is tucked behind one wall of cabinets leading to one of the second floor bedrooms. The kitchen's wood floors and cabinets, white marble countertops and stainless steel appliances would please any cook.

The showcase of the addition is the two story office/studio with the second floor space set back to overlook the first floor below. The south facing wall of windows, doors and railing from Plinhimmon, reclaimed floor and decking, side wall of doors rescued from a barn in North Carolina that cleverly hide office materials, pilasters between the rear windows and the diagonal black and white marble floor create a dramatic effect. The room's literal centerpiece is the large tiled stove elevated off the floor as the heat source for the room. The antique piece was dismantled and rebuilt and now keeps the space warm for a twelve hour period with only two logs for fuel.

I chose to ascend the secondary stair off the kitchen to access the second floor and discovered a cozy guest bedroom decorated in shades of pink including the toile canopy and drapes for the Swedish style bed that folds up into the freestanding wood cabinet at the foot of the bed. The front bedroom has water views from its corner walls and the antique furnishings and walls adorned with historic portraits beautifully evokes the house's architectural period. Another bedroom has French doors leading to a deck over the sunroom below for water views. As charming as the guest rooms are, if I were a guest during the summer, I would claim a spot on the large screened porch. As part of the minimal restoration that was necessary for the second floor rooms, access to the front attic space was changed from a ladder to a stair tucked into a former closet space. This space would be a fantastic multi-purpose room with bird's eye views across the Tred Avon River.

into the 21st century with its historical character fully intact and restored. Bravo and Brava to the vision of its talented Owners!























For more information about this property contact Jane McCarthy with Benson and Mangold at 410-822-1415 (o), 410-310-6692(c) or [jmcarthy310@gmail.com](mailto:jmcarthy310@gmail.com). For more photographs and pricing, visit [www.oxfordmaryland.com](http://www.oxfordmaryland.com), Equal Housing Opportunity".

Photography by Jim McKee

Spy House of the Week is an ongoing series that selects a different home each week. The Spy's Habitat editor Jennifer Martella makes these selections based exclusively on her experience as a architect.

Jennifer Martella has pursued her dual careers in architecture and real estate since she moved to the Eastern Shore in 2004. Her award winning work has ranged from revitalization projects to a collaboration with the Maya Lin Studio for the Children's Defense Fund's corporate retreat in her home state of Tennessee.

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