

Links (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/links/>) Archives (<http://nl.newsbank.com/sites/chlp/>)

Classifieds (<https://classifieds2015/>) Careers (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/careers/>)

chestnut hill local

(<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com>)

Contact (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/contact/>) About (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/about/>)

Subscribe (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/subscribe/>)



(https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Holiday_Layout-1-16.1.pdf)

The challenges of preserving an architectural and historical home

Posted on January 24, 2020 (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2020/01/24/the-challenges-of-preserving-an-architectural-and-historical-home/>), updated on January 24, 2020 (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2020/01/24/the-challenges-of-preserving-an-architectural-and-historical-home/>) by Contributor (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/author/contributor/>)

By **Patricia Cove**





A 1970 “mirrored wall modernization” (top) is transformed last year into a restored, raised-panel wall and fireplace mantel (bottom) in a local historic home.

Georgian, Federal, Tudor, Queen Ann — the numerous architecturally designed buildings throughout Philadelphia, and especially Chestnut Hill, provide us all with masterpieces seldom found in such abundance or proximity. And because we are surrounded by them, it is easy to stop seeing their materials, design and magnificent stature and rarely consider how their owners must strive to preserve and maintain these structures under increasingly difficult conditions.

The challenges to the upkeep of these buildings are many, both outside and in, and I am always amazed at how their owners work to keep both the beauty and the usefulness of these structures alive within walls that once were opulent spaces that supported lifestyles quite different from those of today, both socially and economically. How do you keep these architectural treasures living and breathing in a world not meant for- such grandeur? And how do we live lives of the 21st century within walls of the 18th?

If you are fortunate enough to own an architecturally designed home, you face questions like this all the time. When it comes time to restore or renovate, preservation is usually a top priority. Saving the original architectural features present throughout each room, and the search for design solutions that will enhance and preserve these features, is one of the biggest challenges to those involved in the renovation. Often, one wonders why it is so important to save interior architectural features. Value appreciation is the main reason, on par with their beauty in style and design that gives the spaces their glorious atmosphere inherent to a particular place in history. The crown moldings, chair rails, paneling, friezes, and medallions evident in antique homes are hand carved and craftsman-built out of plaster and materials that cannot be used today often because of the sheer cost and time factors involved.

These ornaments alone can increase the value of a property simply by their presence and when preserved- become a well sought after historic feature that gives the home its warmth and character.

An 1865 Chestnut Hill Georgian mansion was appraised in 1958 at \$32,000. The deep moldings present throughout each room had been damaged over the years, and several pieces had been cut to make way for new closets. Sections of plaster ceiling and relief fretwork had been removed to make space for track lighting, but despite these bastardizations, the house sold in 1994 for nearly \$700,000. After restoration it is now worth more than \$1 million.

Architectural features such as these are virtually irreplaceable, but techniques do exist to conserve and repair these ornaments, and the results more than compensate for the initial expense. But it is truly the genuine love of old buildings that prompts owners to take on such challenges, knowing that they can lead to immense rewards.

Often though, the mere size of the home is a daunting factor to renovation. Even if each room had been meticulously cared for, it does not solve the problem of how a family today can live within such enormous spaces.

Adaptive re-use, although not the most preferred route by strict preservationists, is one way of keeping older buildings alive through new and creative uses. The forty-room mansion of yesterday often becomes a business or corporate headquarters or multi-residential apartment building. On projects such as these, strict preservation guidelines are incorporated in saving and re-using decorative moldings, doorways and distinct architectural features, even if they must be relocated to other areas. The character of the building is preserved while new life is restored. Adaptive re-use projects are a much more attractive alternative to the new modern glass and steel structures more commonly associated with business and apartment living. It becomes a win-win-win situation. The building is saved, the owners are compensated and the new residents inhabit a building rich in architectural character and history.

The renovation and restoration of historic buildings also present a milieu of design questions. Should furnishings, fabrics and motifs be in the same architectural period of the building, or can a Federal building contain furnishings from the Art Deco period?

As a purist at heart, it would be a challenge to mix architectural design and decoration, but economics and individual taste often necessitate alternate directions. If you are considering mixing interior decoration styles within a distinct architecturally designed building, feel free to do so, but only with some precepts in mind.

Maintain the integrity of the interior spaces through the use of quality materials and fabrics. Pay close attention to the scale and proportion of your furnishings, making sure that they are in balance with the scale of the rooms. Larger rooms will

require larger scale pieces or a multi-dimensional floor plan to balance the oversized space. Create a color scheme that incorporates the architecture with the interior furnishings, yet also allows for each feature to stand as an integral element of design.

If you are the fortunate owner of an architectural treasure, be creative, be innovative and be daring, but always be respectful to the architect and his or her masterpiece. With that, you will always be secure that the masterpiece will surely reflect you.

Patricia Marian Cove is Principal of Architectural Interiors and Design in Chestnut Hill, and serves as Vice President for Preservation of the Chestnut Hill Conservancy.

This entry was posted in By Design (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/category/by-design/>) and tagged By Design (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/tag/by-design/>). Bookmark the permalink (<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2020/01/24/the-challenges-of-preserving-an-architectural-and-historical-home/>).

← Pioneering black play makes Philly premiere in Mt. Airy
(<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2020/01/24/pioneering-black-play-makes-philly-premiere-in-mt-airy/>)

The Benson Architectural Legacy In Chestnut Hill (part one) →
(<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2020/01/24/the-benson-architectural-legacy-in-chestnut-hill-part-one/>)

Sponsored

Protos

AY

LEARN MORE

The perfect food pairing

0 Comments

Chestnut Hill Local

1


 Login

Recommend

Tweet

Share

Sort by Best



Start the discussion...

LOG IN WITH

OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS ?

Name

Be the first to comment.

Subscribe

Add Disqus to your siteAdd DisqusAdd

Disqus' Privacy PolicyPrivacy PolicyPrivacy

Sponsored

BEST BUY

Best Buy

SHOP NOW.

Devices running slowly?

...



LOWNES FAMILY Funeral Home
5 Generations since 1888

One Name, One Family, One Purpose...
To Provide funerals and Cremations
at affordable prices to you!

**Celebration of Life and
Cremation Specialists**

659 Germantown Pike, Lafayette Hill, Pa 19444
610-828-4430 • www.lownes.com

(<http://lownes.com>)



Gifts for Every Occasion

ARTISANS ON THE AVENUE
8440 Germantown Avenue | Philadelphia, PA 19118
215.381.0582
artisansontheavenue.com

(<http://www.artisansontheavenue.com>)

Localendar

WED 29	Hilarious Colombian Americans Punch Line Philly Philadelphia, PA
MON 27	French Conversation -- Rooms 1 & 2 Center on the Hill Philadelphia, PA
MON 27	Conifers Tour Morris Arboretum Philadelphia, PA
MON 27	ESL Conversation Group Chestnut Hill Bran... Philadelphia, PA
MON 27	Rev War Lecture on the Battle of th... Scoogi's Italian K... Flourtown, PA
MON 27	Individual Nutrition Counseling (B... Center on the Hill Philadelphia, PA

	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	27	28	29	30	31	1

 See all events  Add your event

Twitter

Tweets


by @TheCHLocal

ch

Chestnut Hill Local

@TheCHLocal

New exhibit by Mt. Airy lover of “heroic, erotic rain” [ow.ly/3rPq30qc6oU](#)



New exhibit by Mt. Airy lover of “heroic, erotic rain”

Mt. Airy abstract artist Stuart Shils will exhibit his work in “The ...

[chestnuthilllocal.com](#)

Jan 24, 2020

ch

Chestnut Hill Local

@TheCHLocal

SCH students to host 5th annual diversity conference


Jan 24, 2020

ch

Chestnut Hill Local

@TheCHLocal

What being a meme means to me: How a 30-year old sentence found a life of its own [ow.ly/zJnP30qc6nY](#)



What being a meme means to me: How a 30-year old sente...

A Chinese collection of “Wit and Wisdom” contains a sentence...

Embed

View on Twitter

- People
- Recent
- Popular


Most Discussed

- Springfield Township to form new historic commission
(<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2020/01/08/springfield-township-to-form-new-historic-commission/>)
1 comment · 2 weeks ago

community on [DISQUS](https://disqus.com) (<https://disqus.com>)

This Week's Circulars

STOP & SHOP



Save


hundreds

with digital coupon


\$5 OFF

Hover for Circular

Popcorn

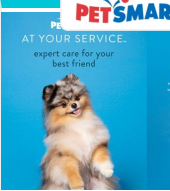


Both & Save

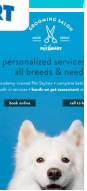


Hover for Circular

PETSMART




At Your Service




Hover for Circular

JCPenney



70% OFF



Hover for Circular

<https://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2020/01/24/the-challenges-of-preserving-an-architectural-and-historical-home/>

6/7



(<http://www.generation3electric.com>)

Copyright 2019 - All rights reserved.