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Green Bottom Inn

Thoughts on Renovation of Our House on Randolph Street

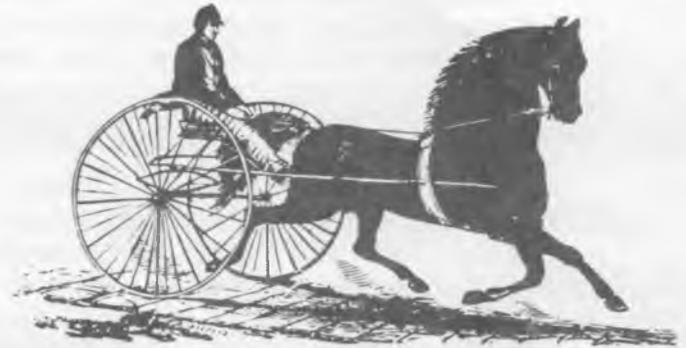
by
Peter and Lee Barber

One day early last fall my wife, Lee, and I were told of an old house for sale on Randolph Avenue close to town. We both loved the downtown area and had been hoping to find an old house for some time. The next day Lee rode by the house and took me by after work. Before we got there, she said "squint your eyes and try to imagine it without the front porch." I must confess on first seeing the house I wanted to turn around, go home, and forget the whole thing--but the longer I looked at it and the more I squinted my eyes, the more I began to see the Late Federal Architecture behind the huge ugly front porch. Our next step was to call Harvie Jones and ask him to come look at the house and verify its structural soundness. Harvie told us he had known of the house for many years and was hoping that someone would come along and restore it. He told us that the original part of the house was built around 1832 and was structurally sound. In approximately 1920 a huge concrete and brick front porch was added along with a six-room addition to the back part of the house. The entire house was stuccoed at that time also. After two or three weeks of discussing it, Lee and I decided that we would like to have the house.

The next step was to get a bid from a construction company. Clark Hereford of Hereford Construction Company offered to bid on the restoration. Before he could make a bid he needed to know exactly what we proposed to do to the house. Working through Harvie Jones, we had an "as is" floor plan done. In other words, a draftsman came out, measured every square inch of the house and drew scale, finished plans of the house as it then stood. Lee and I then worked with Harvie Jones for several weeks telling him in detail exactly what we wanted and needed to do to the house. The first thing was, of course, to remove the front porch that was added in 1920. After many discussions, Harvie came up with a new set of plans and we were then able to proceed with the contractor's bid. Hereford Construction submitted a firm contractual bid which we then took to a local

savings and loan association. We made arrangements with this institution for financing that would cover the purchase price of the house and the total cost of construction and restoration. Included in our reconstruction plan was removal of the front porch, central heat and air, all new electrical wiring, two and a half baths, all new plumbing, and all new wall and ceiling surfaces. Work began on January 1, 1976. For the first few weeks things seemed to move along very, very rapidly. Old walls were being torn down, new sheetrock was being put up, electricians were there, plumbers were there, and we could really see things taking shape. Within eight to ten weeks all of the above mentioned work was nearly completed. The old part of the house had plaster walls, all of which were covered with ten to twelve layers of wallpaper. This wallpaper had to come off as it was torn, cracked and buckling in many, many places. Lee and I borrowed a wallpaper steamer and steamed off every square inch of wall paper. It took us three or four weeks of hard work to get it all off. Much to our horror, we found that 50 to 60 percent of the plaster behind the wallpaper was rotten and had to be replaced. We had been told by people who had themselves restored old houses to expect to find many, many expenses that we had not planned on. The rotten plaster was the first. We next discovered that the plaster had separated from all the ceilings in the old part of the house and would have to be replastered or sheetrocked. We decided to sheetrock all the ceilings in the old part of the house. This was the second expense we had that we had not planned on. Around the first of April we had blown fiberglass insulation people come and spray the attic full of insulation. While the man was in the attic spraying, he found a 12 inch by 5 foot hole in the roof hidden from view from the outside. We then had to have a new roof put on including new decking. This was the third surprise. As time went on, we had the ceiling sheetrocked, the plaster patched, the new roof put on, and many, many other minor surprises taken care of. Around mid April, Hereford came to us and said they were through. All the major work had been done. To save money, Lee and I decided to handle all of the

finishing work ourselves. This included painting every surface (ceilings and walls), refinishing and staining the floors, having the outside painted, and getting the landscape work done on the yard. We contracted out the outside painting, the landscape work, and the floor refinishing but painted the inside ourselves. We moved in on May 26, 1976. Generally speaking, what we found was that the more you get into an old house, the more you find you want to do and the more you find you have to do. There will always be surprise expenses in the restoration of an old house. The advice I would give to someone contemplating restoration, would be to figure every possible expense and add 25 percent. This is a good rule of thumb. Despite the unforeseen expenses, Lee and I feel the advantages of an old home far exceed the disadvantages. While the major work in the house is complete, we look forward to years of adding "finishing touches" to the house.



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EDITOR'S REPORT

Hope you like the article by the Barbers this month. Those restoring homes and other edifices can provide the prospective renovator many general ideas and helpful tips. People should be made aware of the hidden costs involved in renovation -- costs that keep quite a few projects from ever being completed, or if completed, less than fully satisfactory to those involved.

Our illustration on the front cover is a side view of the Green Bottom Inn, the famous early hostelry frequented by the famous, such as Andrew Jackson, and last used as the president's residence on the Campus of Alabama A&M University.

Clyde Broadway, Scottsboro artist and illustrator, found a catalog of the institution dating back to the 1890's in the A&M library that provided him with much of the information needed to develop this unusual and charming drawing.



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A Guide To Lighting The Old House

by Carolyn Flaherty

PERHAPS THE MOST DIFFICULT area to cope with in re-creating an appropriate interior style for the old house is lighting. It is the subject our readers ask most about.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF REASONS why lighting is such a problem. Few of us would care to read by candlelight or spend hours cleaning and filling oil lamps. Of course, fixtures can be electrified. But then the amount of light has to be worked out. Candle-power bulbs can be used but more lamps and fixtures will be needed. There is no question, however, that modern lighting fixtures do not look well in the period room. But reproductions are expensive (and Victorian reproductions almost non-existent) and antiques can be costly and require a great deal of shopping time to locate.

SO THE ANSWER FOR most old-house restorers is a compromise--a subtle use of unobtrusive modern lighting combined with as many period fixtures as you have the good fortune to come across.

HOWEVER, the period fixtures must be the right style and vintage. A massive black wrought iron antique or reproduction chandelier made for an Early American farmhouse would be ludicrous in an elegant Queen Anne. Old is not enough!

THIS GUIDE is meant to aid the old-house person in selecting those fixtures that will enhance the architectural style and age of your house--whether you are shopping in catalogs, yard sales, antique shops or Aunt Hattie's cast-offs.

Colonial: Up to 1790

IN COLONIAL AMERICA there were four ways to provide lighting in the home:

- 1) The huge, cavernous fireplaces provided some light for nighttime activities.
- 2) Tallow candles. Early chandeliers were suspended candlesticks. Candles were very costly, however, and used only by very prosperous families. Many ingenious devices were

constructed to hold candles on the backs of chairs or to hang from beams.

- 3) Crude substitutes for the tallow candle like the rushlight. Rushes were cut green from the marshes, soaked in grease and mounted in holders for burning.

- 4) Primitive lamps. By arranging a wick in a container of grease, oil, lard or any inflammable material, a bit of light could be provided at the cost of a good deal of smell and smoke.

LITTLE CHANGED in the development of lighting before the 19th century--most primitive lamps in Colonial America bear a remarkable resemblance to the kinds used by the Romans in the first century. These lamps were made of tin, iron and pottery in Pennsylvania. Some of the most popular were the "crusie" (the English name; sometimes called a "Phoebe" in New England); the "slut" ("slut" referred to a rag dipped in grease); and the "betty." The betty was made in many forms--on a stand, on a chain, or a small pot-like vessel sometimes having a cover.



Early American: 1790-1850 (Federal and Greek Revival)

ELEGANT CANDELABRA and chandeliers had been used in the Georgian houses of America before the Revolution. Towards the end of the 18th century, publications from England popularized the Adam style which had long been fashionable in Britain. The graceful decoration of the Adam period required beautifully made fixtures with a good deal of crystal to enhance the light of the many candles used. These were used only by the wealthy merchants and ship owners who could afford both the English and French imported fixtures and the many candles they used.

AFTER INDEPENDENCE, popular taste ran to an emulation of the classical ancient Greece and taste was no longer solely influenced by Europe. American interpretation of the classic style called for simple and delicate ornament. However, cooking was still done at the huge fireplaces and for most of the population whale oil lamps were the chief source of light.



One of the most popular decorative features in the well furnished parlor of the Federal or Greek Revival home was the girandole—a large, convex mirror with an eagle surmounting it, usually with candle brackets at either side. A typical parlor or dining room would have, in addition to the girandole, an elegant chandelier suspended from a richly decorated ceiling rosette, candelabra and additional candle brackets on the walls.



THE SIMPLE WHALE OIL LAMPS used throughout this period were commonly made of tin and pewter, with pewterers turning out very lovely styles. Glass whale oil lamps also became widely used in a great variety of shapes and styles—both blown and pressed glass.



THE FIRST REALLY NEW IDEA in lighting devices was the Argand lamp. In 1783 a Swiss chemist, Aime Argand, invented a lamp that increased the draft and made the flame brighter—equal to ten candles. The Argand lamp burned vegetable or whale oil. It had a cylindrical wick that admitted air on both the inside and the outside of the burner, which made the light brighter as well as the glass chimney that held the flame steady. The Argand became very popular although never inexpensive.



TWO IMPROVEMENTS on the Argand lamp were the Astral and the Solar type. The Astral worked on the Argand principle but had a flat, circular tube with radiating arms attached to the lamp. It was meant to eliminate the annoying shadow cast by the Argand burner. Many Astrals were very well proportioned with lovely shades of ground or cut glass and often had crystal prisms hanging from the circular reservoir.



THE SOLAR LAMP was patented in Philadelphia in 1843. Similar to the Argand and the Astral, with the wick closely fitted into a round tube that extended through the bottom of the oil font—an inverted bell shaped reservoir. The Solar had a bulb-shaped chimney. Like the Astral, they were usually graceful with brass or bronze columns rising from a pedestal base.



ONE OF THE FEATURES OF interior decoration in the Greek Revival period was the use of classic symmetry. The Argand, Astral and Solar lamps were often made in pairs, especially for the mantel. Because they were made of fine metals and glass, they were too costly for general use.



THERE WERE MANY simple glass lamps in popular use from 1800 to mid-century. One of the most interesting is the "sparking" lamp. A cork was fitted tightly into the opening in the lamp and running through it were one or two parallel, short metal wick tubes. The little lamp gave about 15 mins. of light, since it held only a small amount of oil. They were often used to light the way to bed.

ONE OF THE MOST widely used lighting devices in the first half of the 19th century was the peg lamp. This was a thrifty device to use oil (as well as camphene and commercial fluids developed from 1830 on) and yet retain the many candlesticks most families had accumulated. Bowls to hold the fluid were made of tin, silver or glass with a peg at the bottom. The bowl was then inserted with the peg in the candlestick where the candle used to go. Like the sparking lamp, the peg lamp did not hold very much fluid and gave a poor light.



IN ELEGANT FEDERAL AND GREEK REVIVAL houses many of these lighting devices could be found in the same room. Argands and Astrals were also made as chandeliers for hallways. But no one lamp or fixture gave much light compared to today's electric bulb. So when using period fixtures electrified, use bulbs in low wattage—and preferably candlelight bulbs—except for reading lamps. Simpler farmhouses used only whale oil and peg lamps, and one or two antiques or reproductions of this type will add an authentic flavor to the house.

The Victorian Era (1851-1901)

DURING THE LAST HALF of the 19th century a wide variety of lighting devices were used in the home. While the gadget-conscious Victorians readily accepted the new types of fixtures developed for the new fuels and the wealthy Victorians used elaborate chandeliers and decorative fixtures, many homes continued to be lit with the older oil lamps.

THE FIRST IMPORTANT CHANGE in lighting after mid-century was the development of kerosene as a fuel. Kerosene was far safer than camphene and less expensive than all other fuels. It also gave a stronger light. With the use of the flat wick burner, arranged so that a clear glass lamp chimney could be attached, the turnip-shaped oil reservoir replaced the elongated type. The burner could be easily unscrewed from the font for filling and cleansing.



THE FIRST POPULAR TYPE of kerosene lamp was the peg lamp formerly used with oil. At first made for candlesticks, the pressed glass industry now produced them in enormous quantities for insertion into lamp mounts. They were very similar to the earlier types in form.

ONE OF THE MOST ELEGANT glass lamps of the 1850's and 1860's was the Overlay lamp. Made by manufacturers like Sandwich in New England, the cased glass was cut away in spots to show the color of the base layer. They often had marble and brass bases. All of the table lamps of this period were similar in form to the oil lamps of previous decades, though usually converted to use with kerosene.

AS LAMPS DEVELOPED specifically for use with kerosene, the variety of burners, lamp chimneys and globes were enormous. Kerosene lamps are hard to date because the most popular types were made throughout the 19th century and are still produced for use in rural areas. A kerosene lamp will be appropriate in any setting after 1860.

THE STUDENT LAMP was the most popular of the patent and novelty lamps. The distinguishable feature is a detachable oil or kerosene font that fed the fuel through a tube to a burner part arranged on an arm so that shadows were not cast on the table. It was similar to the Astral mantel lamp, but of a much more functional design. It had a heavily weighted base to prevent it from being knocked over.

Student lamps were made in double or single lights, and in bracket, hanging and stand versions as well as the table lamp type. Although their widest popularity was from 1875 to 1900, they are still reproduced today in colonial types, Victorian styles, and modern adaptations, and almost always electrified.

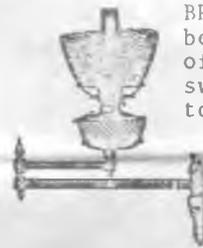


BEFORE KEROSENE, could be used only because the hanging a large amount of kerosene hanging popular. Working counterpoise principle could be pulled and cleaning. Hang commonly used for glass globes were and pinks or etched frequently in the were used dangling glass shade to add



hanging oil lamps by the well-to-do lamp required such oil. But the lamp became quite on a chain and ciple, the lamp down for filling ing lamps were most hallways and the cranberry, blues glass. Also used library, prisms from a decorated to the brilliance.

CHANDELIERS were made to use all the various fuels; oil, kerosene, and later on, gas. They were made in an endless variety from plain to fancy, of brass, bronze and ormolu with decorative white and colored globes. Some of the most elaborate chandeliers of the late 19th century imitated 18th century candle chandeliers.



BRACKET LAMPS became widely used. They were made of metal or glass and set in a swinging iron frame attached to the to the wall. Bracket lamps were favored for kitchens and bedrooms. Bracket lamps sometimes had a reflector of mercury glass or tin, and those used in hallways often had an additional decorative glass shade.

GAS LIGHTING was known in England as early as 1792. It gradually came into use in America at first for street lighting and was piped into many houses during the latter part of the 19th century.



The most commonly used gas fixture was the gasolier--or gas chandelier. Clear glass globes were seldom used for gas fixtures. Kerosene lamps had often used clear glass chimneys so as not to diffuse its relatively feeble light, but the higher candle power of gas light caused glare. So domes, shades and globes were colored, frosted, milk and egg

white and later were made in a wide range of brilliant hues.



GAS BRACKET LIGHTS were used throughout the house and the brackets were often quite elaborate.

A popular form of gas fixture was the newel light. Set atop a newel post in the hall, the base was often a metal statue holding aloft the globe. Clusters of imitation candles were also common.

THE MAJOR INCONVENIENCE with gas as a fuel was that fixtures had to be stationary. (The quickest way to spot a gas chandelier is the pipe leading to the ceiling in which the gas line is contained.) To use gas for a table fixture an unsightly hose was attached to the ceiling or wall fixture.

GAS WAS NOT available outside the larger cities. Individual acetylene plants were sometimes used out in the country, but they were dangerous and could explode.



BY 1890 gas was being widely used for lighting and electricity was making inroads. But it was during the 1890's that the parlor oil or kerosene lamp had its golden age. The most popular was the ball-shaded glass lamp usually decorated with painted flowers. The bottom glass portion held a concealed oil font. These parlor lamps are often known today as Gone With The Wind lamps because of their use in the famous motion picture. But they were used incorrectly in a background for the Civil War era as they were not introduced in the U.S. until the 1880's.



WHILE THE Gone With The Wind lamp was the most popular, many other kinds of lamps were in use and usually many different kinds in one home. The plainer oil lamps like the Rochester were used in bedrooms. And the banquet lamp, shaded lamp with a fanciful metal base generally in form of a cherub, had its place in the parlor.



LATE VICTORIAN LAMPSHADES were frilly affairs trimmed with silk, lace and ribbons. They were used on the banquet lamp, piano lamps and standing lamps. The Victorian matron also spent many hours making shades of fabric, of heavy paper with cutout designs, and even hand-painted glass shades.

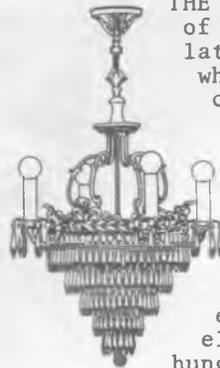
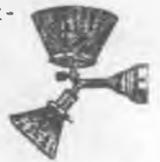
The Edwardian Era (1902 - 1914)

IT WAS AFTER THE TURN OF THE CENTURY that the public showed a real interest in using electricity for domestic lighting. The first electric fixtures were nothing more than a naked bulb hanging by wires from the ceiling.

SOME PEOPLE BEGAN TO ADAPT the parlor lamp to electricity by placing an incandescent bulb inside the flowered globes or even in the glass bowl surrounding the old brass oil font. Converters were sold specially for converting the parlor oil lamp to electricity. Wires were generally hidden under table covers.



COMBINATION ELECTRIC AND GAS fixtures in both chandelier and bracket form were used in the latter part of the 19th century and continued to be used after the turn of the century to provide an alternate means of light during the not uncommon power failures.



THE FIRST WIDELY MANUFACTURED type of electric fixtures were simulated candles. Candle sockets in which a bulb was screwed and then covered with a shade appeared in the early 1900's. Until the 1920's electric chandeliers, wall sconces, newel fixtures and some lamps aped the 18th century candle-holding type of lighting device. Glass prisms were used for added brilliance. True to their earlier counterparts, these electric candle chandeliers were hung from the ceiling by a chain--with the electric wire winding unattractively through it up into the ceiling.

THE DOMED LEADED lamp was popularized by Louis Comfort Tiffany at the turn of the century. It was actually the first type of lighting the electric bulb. The style exemplified the Art Noveau and were shaped chandeliers, lily-of-the-valley library lamps. well as their imi- quite sought after today.

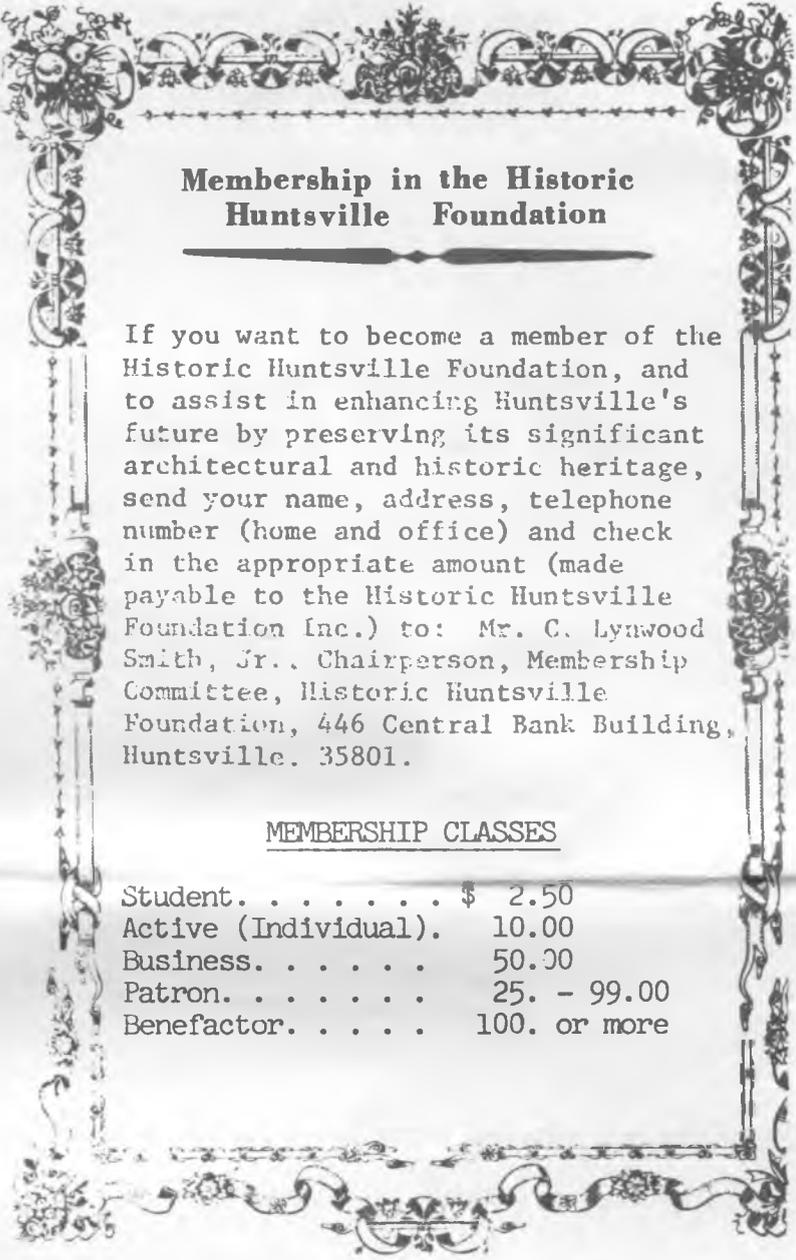


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ALSO DESIGNED ESPECIALLY for electricity during the same period were the boxy-shaped lamps of the Arts and Crafts style. These fixtures were often wood-framed and resembled the Mission furniture of the period. Like the Tiffany styles, these fanciful creations often did not provide sufficient illumination (by today's over-lit standards).

Shopping for lighting fixtures, antique or reproduction, is a complicated affair. Even more difficult, but rewarding, is finding parts--bases, glass shades, the rims, harps, etc.--and putting them together to make a correct period fixture. An excellent guide to the world of old lighting and its component parts is the classic book by Dr. Larry Freeman, "New Light On Old Lamps." It is available for \$9.75 from The Old-House Journal, 199 Berkeley Place, Brooklyn, N. Y. 11217.



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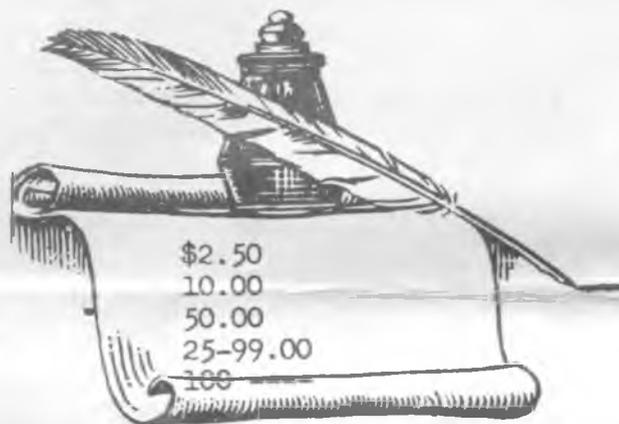
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