

# The Homeowner's Guide



A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM CHARLIE ALLEN RESTORATIONS

## Project Spotlight: Avon Hill Victorian

January 2009



A new cozy master suite

We're very proud of this recent project: an exterior and interior renovation of an 1870s Shingle Style Victorian in Cambridge. Following are a few highlights:

The process began with the exterior. Asphalt shingles were replaced with faux slate which is indistinguishable from natural slate, but far more long-lasting. Historically correct wood-turned spandrels were introduced to a railing, and the exterior was painted in colors selected thru the Cambridge **Historical Commission's** paint consultant process; period-appropriate tan and brown. The three-story house featured a turret built without a cone at its top—uncommon at the time and an anomaly in the neighborhood. A pe-

riod-appropriate turret cap, was built and installed blending seamlessly with **the house's original architecture.** The turret's original curved bay windows, which no longer operated properly, were restored and made functional again.

The interior was thoroughly reconsidered to make use of all available space, including the placement of a **children's toy** and coat closet in the foyer. Upstairs, the turret was transformed from a little used sitting area off the master bedroom to a much more functional and attractive walk-in closet/dressing space.

The kitchen had previously been designed to resemble the galley of a boat — a fun design choice, but one

that produced a cramped, dark workspace. Cabinets came down and storage was placed beneath the countertop, freeing space for additional windows—and more light. Sightlines to the adjacent breakfast nook were improved. Finally, with the addition of a kitchen island, workstations and appliances were relocated to improve flow and comfort.

Another critical element in the transformation of the house was the staircase. Years of paint and old stain were stripped from the first floor balusters. Between the second and third floors, the staircase was opened up, creating better air flow for the new air conditioning system and increased

natural lighting.

The new master bath blends period and modern elements to create a relaxing oasis. Placed on an inner wall, the once-dark room now features clerestory windows to welcome sunlight from adjacent windows. A spa-like deep soaker tub and open shower stall with river rock floor tiling and rain showerhead were introduced.

In the end, this large-scale renovation creates a comfortable, beautiful home — and restores a neighborhood jewel to its former glory.



A brighter kitchen with better flow...

# The Homeowner's Guide

---

## News From CAR

### BIG NEWS, SHORT LIST



hanley wood  
Several months ago, Charlie Allen Restorations was named to *Remodeling Magazine's Big 50*: an annual list of fifty American companies who have set the national standard for professionalism and integrity. CAR was

specifically recognized for "Fine Design," a category honoring remodelers with particularly high aesthetic standards.

### CERTIFIED AND READY

Being the best requires staying on top of our client's needs. Recently Charlie Allen and project development manager Mark Philben completed the National Association of Home Builder's Aging in Place certification program, while Philben was also named a Certified Green Remodeler after completing the National Association of the Remodeling Industry's program. Still somewhat rare in the local marketplace, these two certifications provide expertise for issues that are expected to become increasingly important in coming years. Please call us at 617/661-7411 to learn more about how green and aging-in-place renovations can improve your home.

### FOR PERIOD HOME OWNERS

Please join Charlie Allen at the Cambridge Center for Adult Education, 56 Brattle Street in Cambridge, on Wednesday, January 28 at 8 p.m. for insider tips and strategies related to renovating your period home. Some of the issues that Charlie will address include the best ways to integrate modern amenities while preserving period charm, methods for determin-

ing historically appropriate paint colors, materials, and designs, and tips for maximizing energy efficiency. And feel free to share your own period home dilemma, too!

The cost of this event is \$10. To join us, please call the CCAE at 617/547-6789.

### CHARLIE ALLEN RESTORATIONS JOINS CAMBRIDGE LOCAL FIRST

Charlie Allen Restorations has been based in Cambridge since 1978, and Charlie himself has been here since 1966, when he moved from Washington State to attend Harvard University. This community is very important to us, **and that's why we've** joined Cambridge



Local First, a network of more than 250 locally owned and independent businesses in Cambridge. CLF members share a commitment to building a strong local economy and a vibrant, distinct community. In fact, the **group posts ten reasons why it's better to buy local** at their website: [www.cambridgelocalfirst.com](http://www.cambridgelocalfirst.com) Number One? Significantly more money re-circulates in Cambridge when purchases are made at locally owned, rather than nationally owned, businesses. Another favorite reason? Customer service is better!

Your home is your most valuable possession. Is it time to renovate, repair, or restore?

Please give us a call: 617/661-7411

## News From CAR

### MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR HOME

Charlie Allen Restorations has always been focused on helping you make the most of your period home, and the media are noticing. Recently, two bathrooms that we introduced into existing but rarely-used spaces have been featured in national magazines. *Old House Journal* showcased an attic renovation that produced a playful family bath and adjacent playroom. Meanwhile, *This Old House* presented our renovation of an 1853 Greek Revival home that lacked a master bathroom on its second floor. We took an unused guest room and turned it into a period appropriate master bath and dressing area with modern amenities. Could your home be more functional?



### Cambridge Then— From the Cambridge Historical Society

Foyers are among the most revealing parts of any residence. As homeowners, we give them little thought, passing through on our way in or out. But for guests, the foyer is sometimes a first chance to assess who we are and how we live.

These two shots—each of a different late-nineteenth century Cambridge residence—welcome us to a world long gone by.



On the right, this dramatic entrance hall with armored sentry on duty once welcomed visitors to 125 Prospect Street, near the present day site of the Whole Foods supermarket. No one knows what became of that fantastic suit of armor (or where it came from), but it was clearly a proud possession.



The home on the left once stood at 163 Brattle Street, and was later owned by Edwin H. Land, inventor of the Polaroid photograph, before burning down. The well-lit entry reveals an expansive, welcoming interior—and a great fondness for oriental rugs.

E-mail: [info@charlie-allen.com](mailto:info@charlie-allen.com)  
Fax: 617.491.2245  
Phone: 617.661.7411  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
91 River Street



## What is a Period Home?

This month, we take a close look at the Mansard—a home style most popular during the Victorian era, from about 1870 until 1915. The architectural concept that led to Mansard homes is quite a bit older though, having been first conceived by the seventeenth century French architect Francois Mansart (1598 – 1666). Mansard-style dwellings took off in France in the 1850s during the reign of Louis Napoleon, and some suspect that the primary reason was a French tax policy of the time that taxed homeowners based on the

number of residential floors below the roof. **With the Mansard's** steeply pitched roof allowing comfortable living space *above* the roofline, residents of these dwellings gained extra living space without paying higher taxes.

**The Mansard's roof** (usually slate, sometimes shingled) is its signature feature. However, like other architectural styles of its era including the **Victorian, the Mansard's** exterior design is typically intricate and elaborate. Columned porches and entries, tall, arched windows, including dormers

that project from the roof on upper floors, and wrought-iron cresting atop the roof are some typical Mansard embellishments. Here in America, many Mansards feature elements of other architectural styles, including the Italianate and the Gothic Revival. The Cambridge area is home to many Mansard-style residences, including this beautiful 1875 home that was fully restored by

Charlie Allen Restorations in 2005.

