

Practical & Pretty

The kitchen and bathrooms in the Ruppman's home pay homage to the past but work in the present.

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Winter 2001

We called Mel White, the former owner of our home, to ask some questions about the kitchen cupboard we are assembling from parts we found in the basement. We put the cabinet pieces together in our front parlor and asked Mel to come over and see if we did it right. He brought the cabinet doors, complete with hinges and latches that were original to the home. What a gift!—Joan Ruppman



Of all of the tasks that faced Walter and Joan Ruppman in the restoration of their 5,000-square-foot Victorian home in Washington, Illinois, the kitchen was the most daunting. How could they create a space that functioned well as a kitchen but also celebrated the home's Victorian roots? The Ruppman's, who purchased the home in 1999, started with the basics: They removed the carpeting, paneling, a drop ceiling and other elements that had been added to the c. 1884 home, formerly a funeral home from 1936 to 1999.

The central challenges were the kitchen's five doorways and three windows, that dotted every wall and made it tough to configure cabinets, a large refrigerator, a professional-grade Viking stove and other modern-day conveniences, such as a Bosch dishwasher. As they talked it through with their contractor, it quickly became apparent that something would have to give. The Ruppman's made the decision to remove a chimney and shift the doorway over by three feet to create a butler's pantry. Those adjustments would give them much-needed wall space for the refrigerator and stove. It would also free up wall space for cabinets.

Above: The dated cabinets and sink in the upstairs bathroom were functional but not as authentic as the Ruppman's wanted. The cabinets were replaced with an antique pedestal sink.

Opposite: The Victorian tile, sink and claw foot tub lend the upstairs bathroom its period look. Colors stayed muted in this bathroom to showcase the antique fixtures.

Left: Several built-in sinks that appear original to the home were welcome surprises. This corner sink, which was purchased from a neighbor, had the wainscot added to help it blend with the home's style.





Diary of a Restoration

An island topped by durable granite was a necessary workspace for the Ruppman's, who enjoy cooking and entertaining. The cabinet in the background is original to the home.





The Ruppman's chose to transform a room previously used as the funeral home office into their new kitchen. This view shows the door to the back staircase on the left and the door to the back porch on the right.

The cabinets were modeled on a built-in piece they knew belonged in the room. It was original to the kitchen but had been removed when the funeral home owners installed an elevator. Pieces of the cabinet were stored in the basement. The Ruppman's rummaged through the pieces and assembled them to the best of their ability. When they asked the home's previous owner about the cabinet, he showed up with the missing components necessary to complete the project. The Ruppman's used the simple, two-panel design of the cabinet doors as a model for the rest of the kitchen cupboards, even down to matching the styles of the pulls as closely as possible. An island in the center of the room topped with dark granite provides ample work space for the kitchen. Fortunately for the Ruppman's, the bathrooms didn't prove to be quite as challenging.

Summer 2001

Our neighbors bought a beautiful little corner sink for their restoration, which they aren't going to use. So we are going to buy it and install it in our downstairs bathroom. We've decided to install a full bath downstairs with a shower stall, so that if in later years we need a downstairs bedroom, we can turn the library into that space. Even though we're just putting a shower in, we want the room to have a Victorian feel, so that it fits with the rest of the house.—Walter Ruppman

The bathrooms in the Ruppman's house had some décor challenges. Fortunately, the couple was able to incorporate some of these elements into their Victorian décor. They added a beautiful floral sink—purchased from



Left: The Ruppman's shifted the doorway in the center of the photo to make room for the refrigerator. They also removed the dated paneling and carpeting, and replaced the light fixture.

Collecting Art Pottery

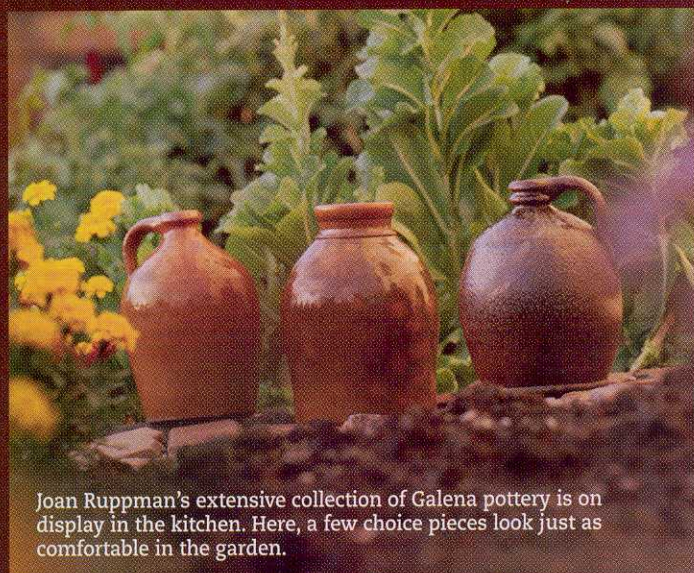
Walter and Joan Ruppman are collectors, and one of their most extensive collections is Galena pottery created in northwestern Illinois.

The Ruppman's display the collection on top of their kitchen cabinets, which are lighted to showcase the pieces. Joan started the collection about 20 years ago, and she now owns approximately 30 pieces, which were made in the first half of the 19th century. The simple pieces were used to store food before modern canning methods were invented.

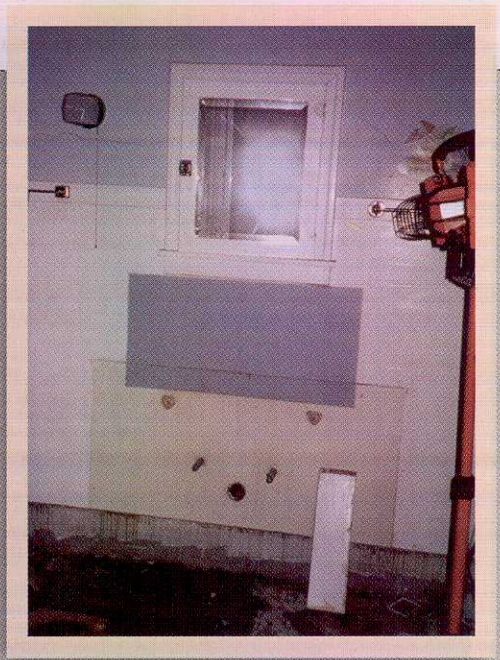
Because the crockery is soft, most of it is chipped. But even with imperfections, Galena pottery has skyrocketed in value; however, it is not marked, according to Joan. "You have to recognize it by its color, the shape of the neck and its handles," she explains. "The handles are more like ears, not exactly like handles."

The coloring resembles pumpkin pie and often has a spotty appearance. While Galena pottery pieces have increased in recent years to several hundreds of dollars per piece, the Ruppman's have many pieces that cost less than \$100.

Other types of pottery are not as expensive and are easier to find, Joan says. For example, Peoria pottery, made just a few miles down the road from where the Ruppman's live, sells for about \$50, depending on the piece and its condition.



Joan Ruppman's extensive collection of Galena pottery is on display in the kitchen. Here, a few choice pieces look just as comfortable in the garden.



a neighbor—to a fully functional downstairs bathroom that had only a shower stall. With its marble top and floral pattern on the bowl, the sink was a perfect addition to the space. They recycled wainscoting from the kitchen, transforming it into cabinetry that surrounded the sink.

Upstairs in another bathroom, a c. 1929 medicine cabinet was simply stripped and left in place, while the sink, toilet, tub and floor were replaced with either quality reproductions or antiques. The sink came from an architectural salvage dealer in Chicago, and the tub was a gift from a neighbor. While all of this was going on inside, major progress was being made outside to re-create some of the home's lavish exterior embellishment.

Fall 2001

Turn-of-the-century photos show how the home looked in all of its Victorian splendor.

We want to re-create that look and bring the house back to as original appearance, as much as possible.—Walter Ruppman

Next issue: The exterior

Above: The upstairs bathroom was remodeled by previous owners in 1929, but needed another makeover to help it fit in with the home's Victorian style. The Ruppmans gutted the bathroom to make way for the antique fixtures.

Left: A tall Victorian shaving stand, purchased at an antiques show, was the perfect piece for the upstairs bathroom. Fitting into a narrow spot, it provided storage and became a lovely focal point in the room.