



BEST TRADITIONAL HOME

Our 2018 award for Best Traditional Home goes to Paul Hagman of RBF CoLab Architecture and Design. Built to replace the original house, Hagman's design remains true to the Greek-revival style yet incorporates a floor plan better suited for modern living and entertaining.

Resurrecting a Greek Revival

After a devastating fire destroyed this mid-1800s home, the owners and architect teamed up to rebuild a classic

BY PAUL HAGMAN

Years of extensive restoration performed by the owners of a mid-1800s Greek-revival house in the historic Village of Poland, Ohio, came to a tragic end when a devastating fire broke out one afternoon. While the fire destroyed the house beyond repair, it also ignited a resilience within the owners to rebuild their home with the same degree of care and craftsmanship they had put into restoring the original house.

The village of Poland is a study in traditional architecture, with well-maintained examples of almost every house style of the 19th and 20th centuries. This house is situated near the former childhood home

of President William McKinley, and is surrounded by a variety of Italianate, Second Empire, and colonial houses. One of the homeowners helped write the village's historic preservation guidelines, so the couple understood well the importance of preserving the character of the historic district.

After the owners decided to rebuild, a mutual friend put us in contact. Although they had worked with other architects over the years during renovations, this undertaking was of a different scale entirely. The homeowners wanted to remain faithful to the original home's style, proportions, and siting, which took advantage of the gently ris-



ing lot and offered views of nearby Yellow Creek. In one of our meetings, the owners shared with me, “This community was so supportive during the renovation, and during the loss, and that motivated us to build a home that honored the spirit and character of our town.”

Planning makes perfect

Although rebuilding was unanticipated, the structural damage caused by the fire left no other option. While the choice to design the new house in a Greek-revival style seems an obvious one, the new house would not just be a replica of the old. When the owners first



Keeping it classic.
A respect for the historic charm of the neighborhood and the owners' original mid-1800s home inspired the owners and architect to rebuild in the classic Greek-revival style.



The French-door connection. *The most-used spaces in the new house are the four-season room and the patio. These transitional spaces blend the interior and exterior and offer an ideal spot for year-round living. In the warm months, guests are able to take in views of the wooded rear lot and appreciate the fine landscaping from the patio, while the northeast Ohio winters are best appreciated from inside this cozy space.*

approached me to help with the project, it was unclear whether the interior layout should imitate the layout of the former home or if a new approach should be taken to suit modern living. The new build offered a unique opportunity to carefully reconsider the floor plan and to introduce modern conveniences and building systems into a traditional-style home.

After I analyzed the original home's floor plan, it became evident that the largest challenge in working with that plan was the centrally located staircase. This historic location of the stair, coupled with the modest size of the house, would have dictated the layout of all the other rooms and flexibility in the floor plan would have been severely limited. The solution to this problem was to move the staircase along the length of the house. The remaining space then became available for more creative planning to incorporate view corridors, a gallery wall, and unobstructed views across the creek to the park and historic village hall.

To add to the challenge, the previous home had received multiple renovations, additions, and reconfigurations over the years. The progressive changes were a part of its history and told a story about the people who lived there. Each alteration added a layer of interest that the owners appreciated and weren't eager to erase. Together we decided that a successful approach to the new home would include the appearance of having received additions over time, giving the home a more comfortable, broken-in presence in keeping with its village context.

Attention to detail

The process of creating the plans took several iterations, as spaces were arranged and rearranged on paper. A fully updated floor plan might better accommodate modern living, but risked feeling too sterile, uninterrupted, or inauthentic. We experimented with the appropriate blend of individual rooms and open sightlines, always keeping



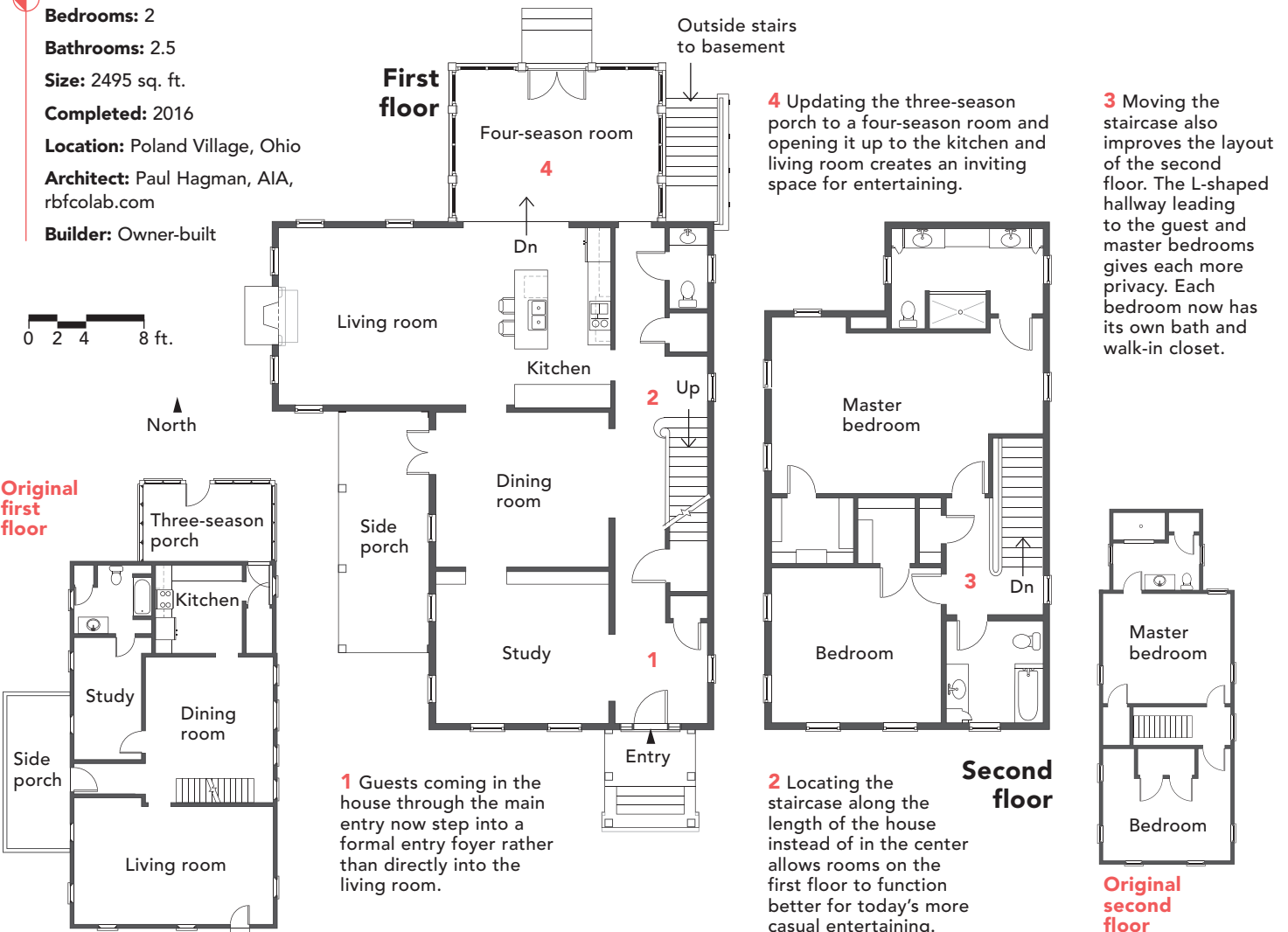
From little box to great room. No longer isolated from the rest of the house, the new kitchen space allows the homeowners to prepare meals and still enjoy interacting with guests.



Cozy living year-round. Warmth is brought into the home through the rubble-stone-and-brick fireplace and carried throughout on the honey-colored, quarter-sawn white-oak flooring. The large cottage-sash windows allow in ample natural light, highlighting the hardwood floors.

SPECS

- Bedrooms:** 2
- Bathrooms:** 2.5
- Size:** 2495 sq. ft.
- Completed:** 2016
- Location:** Poland Village, Ohio
- Architect:** Paul Hagman, AIA, rbfcolab.com
- Builder:** Owner-built



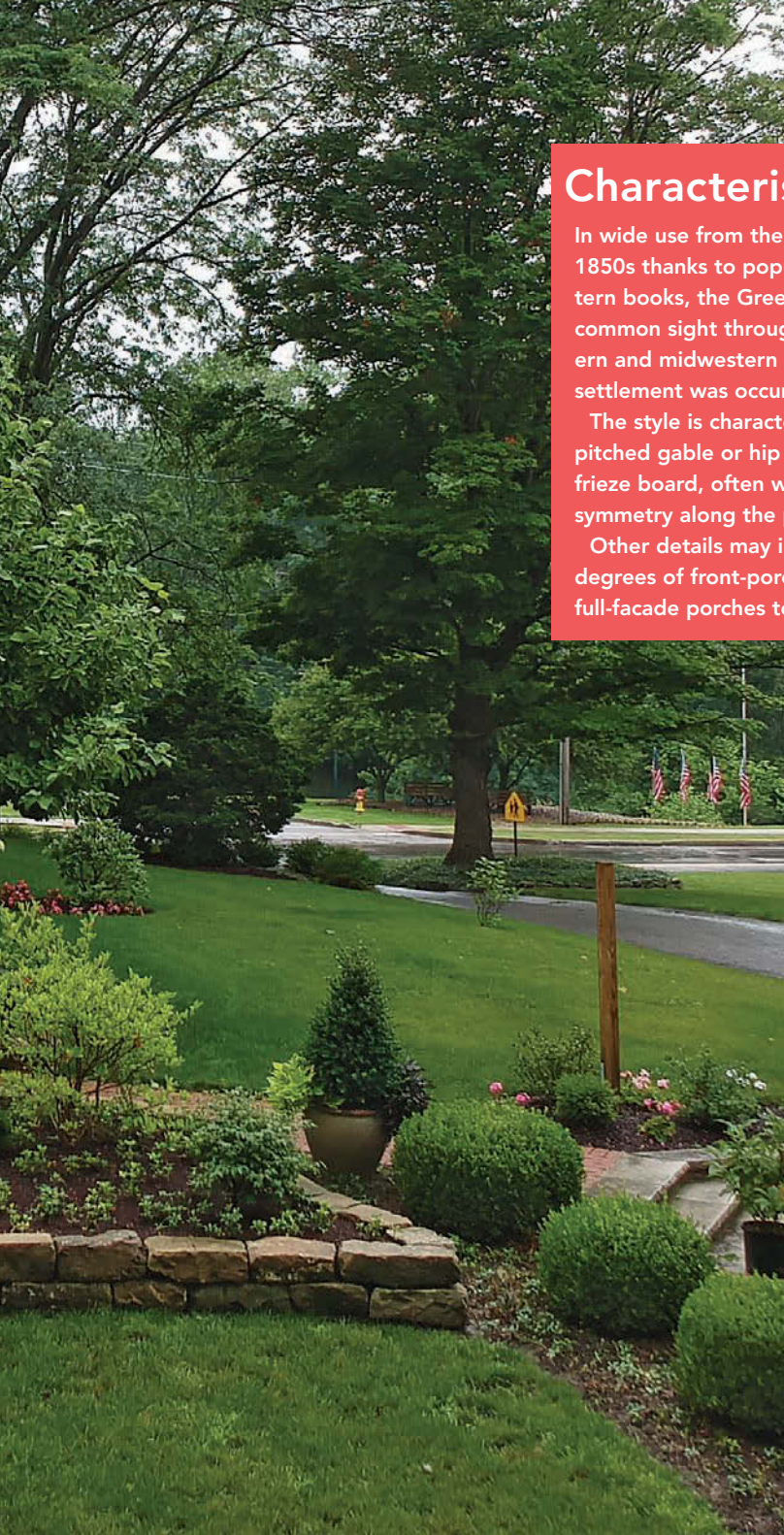


the former home in mind. The fireplace was relocated several times to maintain views to the outdoors. The floor plan that finally emerged has a less formal arrangement of rooms. It places the focus on the kitchen, living room, and four-season room, but still retains a formal dining room, study, and shotgun entry hall.

Because the owners wanted to maintain a historic feel, not only did we thicken the exterior wall for improved insulation, but we also gave visual heft to many interior walls by using 2x8 construction, offering a truer representation of common mid-1800s building practices. This also provided an opportunity for additional detail to wrap around

the cased openings. In order to achieve accurate and pleasing proportions of the Greek-revival style, we carefully proportioned and dimensioned friezes and eave returns. The result is a warm home that acknowledges its traditional context, accommodates today's modern needs, and engages guests with delightful details.

Attention to construction methods and their impact on the environment were important from the outset. In addition to the 2x6 exterior-wall construction, the house was also wrapped in 2 in. of rigid insulation and taped before being clad. Raised-heel trusses were used throughout in order to achieve higher attic R-values, especially



Characteristics of Greek-revival homes

In wide use from the 1830s through the 1850s thanks to popular carpenters' pattern books, the Greek-revival style is a common sight through much of the eastern and midwestern regions where rapid settlement was occurring at that time.

The style is characterized by a low-pitched gable or hip roof and a strong frieze board, often with a high degree of symmetry along the primary facade.

Other details may include varying degrees of front-porch construction, from full-facade porches to the smaller entry

porch shown on this home. The porch is typically supported by columns or pilasters of a simple order.

Elaborate entry-door configurations and surrounds are a hallmark of the Greek-revival style. The exact execution of these details can vary regionally and from builder to builder, but narrow sidelights and transoms are typical of the door composition. Contrasting with the decorative entry are relatively simple window surrounds, which frame the 6-over-6 sashes common to the style.

shows that the best results come from a detailed set of plans and clear expectations developed in collaboration with the owners. This means taking the time to fully develop ideas and assess their suitability.

This project also benefited from the owners' hands-on approach to construction. Supervision of the construction process was undertaken by one of the homeowners, who, having grown up in a construction family, was able to make decisions and refinements along the way. When unforeseen circumstances arose which required changes, he was prepared.

Engaging with true craftsmen throughout the process yielded some exquisite details. Performance Homeworks meticulously executed the finish carpentry, from the three-piece stacked moldings to the authentic two-piece window casings manufactured by Baird Brothers Fine Hardwoods. Unique marble and subway-tile combinations in the master and guest baths were designed by the homeowners and installed by Aayers Flooring, which complement the custom bath and kitchen cabinetry by Pine Hollow Woodcraft. The exterior hemlock clapboard siding from Granville Manufacturing Company of Granville, Vermont, frieze boards, and cornice work were expertly installed by CDT Construction Inc.

The story continues

The loss of the historic home was a tragedy, but elements of it persist. The original home's finely detailed portico and columns were salvaged to create a formal entryway for strangers and unexpected guests. The weighty front door was handcrafted by one of the owners using lumber salvaged from the original house. Horse-hitching stones and foundation stones salvaged from the fire were used as handsome accents on the patio. Although the historic home is no longer standing, with great dedication and skilled craftsmanship of their own, the owners honored each of the craftsmen who had a hand in shaping the former home while adding their own chapter to the story of the homestead. □

Paul Hagman, AIA, is the founder of RBF CoLab Architecture and Design in Youngstown, Ohio. Photos by David Pokrivnak (pokrivnak.com) courtesy of RBF CoLab, except where noted.

at the eaves where R-values often get reduced, causing ice dams in our region. We used low-e windows throughout the house, paid attention to careful sealing for air infiltration, and gave a lot of thought to natural lighting. We also installed a two-stage high-efficiency furnace and instant hot water heater to help even out the gas usage when demand isn't as great.

Path to success

One should expect the planning and execution of a home as well crafted as this to take a bit longer than most homes. My experience