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## The River

Saving a Piece of History on the Hudson

# The River: Saving a Piece of History on the Hudson

## Part III: Interior Detailing

Two hundred and six years after being built, the River House has been pulled back together and shored up, been made comfortable and workable for an upstate

winter, and very much what the inner workings of a 2007 house should look like. Now it is time to begin putting personal touches on the renovation and make the house a home.

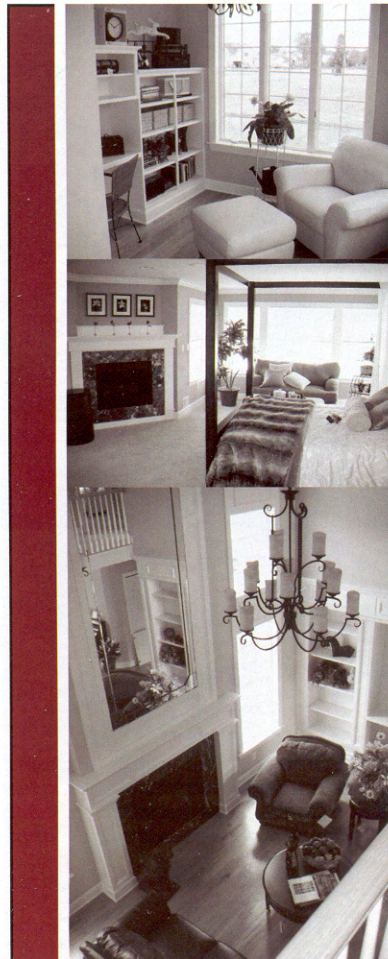
The homeowners have taken great care to add both aesthetic and pragmatic artistry to this house.

The owners contacted Deidre Gatta of Artistic Designs by Deidre, a decorative painter whose work they first saw several years ago at a local showcase of homes. "We always loved Deidre's work and thought that she would be a perfect fit to add works of art to our walls." They gave

Deidre carte blanche to create murals in the entry and "parlor," telling her that they should be peaceful and work with the landscape. Deidre applied a beautiful black and white hand-drawn graphic-repeat in the entry and a muted yet elegant landscape on the parlor walls. The landscape evokes a feeling of a foggy morning inside while getting a good sense of the river through the windows. "There are mornings when I almost can't tell what is painted and what is real," says the homeowner. In addition to these two murals, Deidre suggested a more realistic painting of the house over the riverside door. Deidre added the ho-



Deidre Gatta applies a hand-drawn graphic in the entry.



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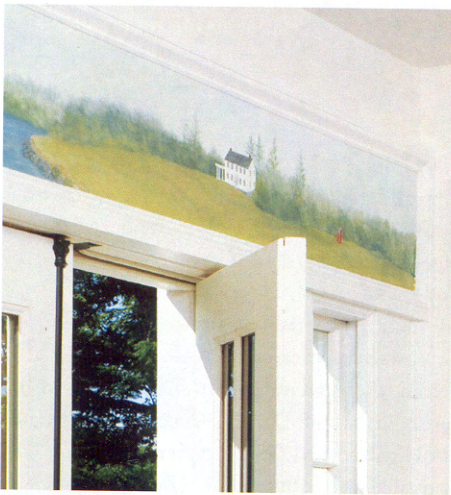
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**Painting of the house above the riverside door.**

meowners' two horses in this work of art (not shown in photo). Deidre says, "The horses can't come home yet, but I want everyone who visits the house to know that they are close!"

On the pragmatic side, yet another piece of art is the kitchen. The homeowners turned to Alex Stivala of Carpen House to not only build their kitchen, but to also design it. Having worked with Alex on several other projects, they gave him as much latitude as he needed to make a 21st century kitchen that could have been in the house for 200 years. The only instruction was that it wasn't to be "Country French or country (you know with chickens and things), but American." Alex began with the architectural elements and design ingredients that were imbedded in the walls. He "just captured the essence and blended them into a new recipe." Inspiration also came from the freedom given by the homeowners, as well as the beautiful natural surroundings.

Alex says, "A combination of Colonial and Federal fleur give this project the impressive posture and proportions. I just follow my instincts, and my thoughts were in retrospect, it was like going back in time." With the help of Alex and Carpen House, the homeowners were able to use local materials as much as possible as well as have an era-fitting kitchen that functions well in 2007.



**Kitchen cabinets are installed by Alex Stivala, owner of Carpen House, and a staff installer.**

To add just a bit of desired color the homeowners had a custom BlueStar range made in marigold.

"I can't believe this is my kitchen," says the homeowner. "It's pretty scary that Alex made exactly what I imagined with-



**The BlueStar range adds a bit of color to the kitchen.**

out that much input from me. Absolutely amazing!"

*For more information, visit:*

[www.adbydeidre.com](http://www.adbydeidre.com),

[www.bluestarranges.com](http://www.bluestarranges.com)

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**The library has been transformed from small and dreary into spacious and bright. The addition of a new gas stove into the old fireplace and the use of an original light fixture make the room cozy and warm.**

Alex Stivala, owner of Carpen House, an interior design master, lauds Lucianna and Mark for allowing him full creative license on the kitchen design. The only parameters given were a basic layout created by Lucianna, which included material specifications for a local marble, and the physical boundaries of the room itself. The Eureka Calacatta marble came right out of the mountain at Vermont Quarries in Danby, VT. Stivala added, “The marble feels like it could have been here 200 years ago.”

Stivala spent considerable time and energy in the design, taking into account the period, the layout and the proportions of the room, which were not perfect even after all the shoring up. Because the kitchen had differing wall depths and only one window — centered in the room — symmetry was a force to be reckoned with. He took advantage of the differing wall depth by designing freestanding cabinetry where wall hanging was not the best option. The new room is balanced and interesting, dressed in hard maple custom cabinetry, treated and stained to appear old.



What made the project so exciting for Stivala was the challenge of making something new fit into a different time period. In addition, “Lu’s good taste, the good energy of the site and the artistic synergy of the project made the job a pleasure.”

Artistic synergy of the owners and artist, Deidre Gatta, is apparent in the wall murals that can be found at both entrances to the home. Gatta, of Artistic Designs by Deidre, Slingerlands, was asked to “bring nature inside.” She analyzed the home’s surroundings and decided to paint a horizontal landscape over the original entry, which faces the river. She incorporated the landscape along with their two horses (Mr. Peabody and Leroy) languidly lingering around the water’s edge. The landscape exudes a dreamy stillness, an almost spiritual appeal that

**The living room and dining room were opened up by removing walls and part of the ceiling, as well as changing windows.**



PHOTOS BY MARK SAMU



**Original bricks from the home were used as part of the new fireplace. Bill Muscara constructed a mantel with rough-sawn lumber, which mirrors the materials and techniques that were employed almost two centuries ago.**



intentionally blurs the boundary between the home and the environment outside. Using latex and acrylic, she painted the home itself into one of the murals, making it hazy in a deliberate attempt to keep the home looking as generic as possible. Detail was muted, taking into account the overhead angle of viewers.

Completely different treatment was used on the now-new front entry. A large-scale black-and-white mural was sketched out in graphite after the initial drawing. Birds and birdhouses are featured in this artistic creation, with some of Lucianna's favorite things and other items that only nature can provide. Due to its scale, the piece was kept to a black-and-white so as not to overwhelm the visitor or

homeowner as they walked in, and acts as an enticement to encourage visitors through the home. It took at least two weeks to transfer the sketch to the walls and then needed to be weathered to look like it had always been there. The results are remarkable.

Like Stivala, Gatta was heartened to work with both Mark and Lucianna, whom she bills as "dream clients," because they gave carte blanche to creative expression. The collective talent on this project fueled creativity and energy culminating into a frenzy of design. Gatta said, "You do your best work when a client allows you to take control."

"It was so nice to work at that professional level."

The work on this home did not end with the interior. The exterior underwent a facelift as well. The roof was replaced and the entire house was repainted. Aubuchon Hardware in Greenwich worked to obtain the right paint for the exterior of this historic home. In addition to the roofing and paint, a front porch, side patio with pergola and deck at the river were all added. The work didn't end there. Lucianna and Mark called upon John DeLisle of Grasshopper Gardens to complete the landscaping. John oversaw the landscape design and succeeded in making the house look as finished on the outside as on the inside, without going over the top.

The level of commitment emanated from the Samus, who were living with two dogs, two cats and a teenage son in an 800-square-foot

**New narrow French doors look out at the river on the original front. The painting over the door by Deidre Gatta shows the house as it looked 200 years ago.**



PHOTOS BY MARK SAMU