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Regal Renaissance

A designer with a knack for finding diamonds in the rough embarks on a mission to return an aging Victorian brownstone in Boston to glory.



The high ceilings, layered moldings, and 6-foot-tall windows that grace the first level of Gerald Pomeroy's apartment command attention. "It's spectacular to have that kind of light and abundance of natural light," he says. Gerald used reflective surfaces in the receiving lounge to amplify the area's light intake.

Neglect does not often inspire

celebration, but designer Gerald Pomeroy was delighted to find a Victorian brownstone in Boston's South End that time—and everyone else, it seemed—had forgotten. Similar grand homes in the area were stripped of their original carved fireplace mantels and other architectural embellishments some 30 years ago when they were converted into apartments, but happily, one brownstone at least was overlooked.

Though the interior's ornate plasterwork had been painted a blinding hospital white, it was undamaged. No one bothered to clean or refinish the French walnut parquet floors, but they

were left in place. And perhaps most amazing, three mid-1800s Carrara marble fireplace surrounds and mantels remained intact, albeit spray-painted black.

The unfortunate color choices of the previous tenants were easy for Gerald, who is a veteran remodeler, to overlook. He bought the first and second floors of the four-level home and immediately had the walnut floors refinished and the black paint stripped from the fireplaces. To open the living room up to a terrace, he also replaced two windows with glass doors while staying within the original casements. "I have a wonderful contractor," Gerald says. "And with the right artisans, magic happens."

The first level is bisected by a staircase and now hosts a receiving lounge at one end and a living room at the other. The walls are painted a calming apricot-beige, which casts an old-world glow thanks to a lightly textured cheesecloth-applied glaze finish. "It reads warm and neutral and gives texture and tone," Gerald says.

Two 10-foot-tall Directoire-style cabinets designed by Gerald balance the ornate moldings bordering the 14-foot-tall ceilings. They also provide much-needed storage—the cabinet in the receiving lounge holds tableware, the second one in the living room houses electronics. Antiqued mirrored doors and a glazed finish add luster to the cabinets and complement the soothing creams and steely-blue accent hues of the room's upholstered pieces.

The upstairs rooms lacked the original charm of the first level, so Gerald beefed up the character of the 8-foot ceilings with crown moldings and added larger trim to the windows to give them greater prominence. New built-in shelves deliver practical storage and architectural oomph. Deep blue-gray walls in the office and a black-and-white toile wallcovering in the master bedroom create another layer of drama that Gerald enhanced with carefully selected antiques.

At 1,500 square feet, the apartment is not large, but its transformation, like the surrounding neighborhood's, has been astounding. "It's an exciting place to live," Gerald says.





To squeeze more function from the small living room, Gerald snuggled nesting tables up to armchairs and substituted a lidded ottoman for a traditional coffee table. Light fabric choices for the sofa and chair upholstery also trick the eye into thinking the space is larger than its square footage.



“Shutters keep the bedroom’s look clean and architectural.”

—DESIGNER AND HOMEOWNER GERALD POMEROY



Opposite, clockwise from top left: New built-in shelves flank the office's original fireplace. The kitchen's Calcutta marble countertops, sink, and backsplash reference the home's original marble fireplaces. Antique Regency chairs serve as bookends to an antique campaign chest. An antique secretary provides a landing spot for mail and keys. Above: Black-and-white toile wallcovering sets a cozy tone for the master bedroom. "It has a timeless feel," Gerald says.