



Built between 1812 and 1818 by James Withrow, this large colonial home is located on 9 acres in the heart of Lewisburg, WV.

Owned by only 3 families, this single family residence has been in continuous use for just under 200 years.

John Sydenstricker, secretary of agriculture for WV, bought the home in 1905 from James Withrow II. He sold it to Dr. John F. Montgomery, later president of Greenbrier College, in 1942. Montgomery died in 2002 at the age of 96. His daughter Mary Lindquist and husband Paul now own the home.

Included on the National Register of historic places, the home was once visited by Robert E. Lee for a Sunday Tea reception held in his honor in 1867.

Clifford Gillilan of Valcon, Inc. was approached by the Lindquists to restore the house to "as close to original as possible", said Gillilan. For 1-1/2 years he and his crew have worked closely with historic preservation consultant Mike Gioulis of Sutton, WV to assure that preservation efforts are documented and executed accurately.

The grounds include a barn where it is presumed Lee's horse Traveller stayed during the tea reception. A small log cabin was moved to the property from a farm west of Lewisburg in 1974 and was used as a blacksmith shop.

A smaller rear office building was moved to its location in the late 1800's from its original position on Rt. 219. The servants quarters next to the house was originally separate, but was later connected to the main house.

West Virginia Contractor Works To Restore A Piece Of History

By Ellen Walker

Before efforts could begin on the main house, considerable work was required on the grounds to make the project accessible for trucks and equipment. A new driveway and front entrance was prepared and 55 truck-loads of debris were removed from the front of the house. There was so much debris that "some people didn't know the house existed," said Gillilan.



The stone retaining wall and stairs were repaired once the debris was removed.

The bricks on the structure were repointed. Those that were crumbling were replaced by bricks uncovered in the garden. The asbestos roof was removed and the owners chose to replace it with a standing seam copper roof with matching copper gutters and down spouts.

As work began on the connector to the servants quarters adjacent to the main house, large stones were uncovered which evidently served as stepping stones for servants as they carried prepared food to the serving kitchen. The serving kitchen is now the main kitchen, and the servants quarters is now used as a rental apartment. The quarters still have the original hand pegged windows which have been resized to secure a tighter fit.

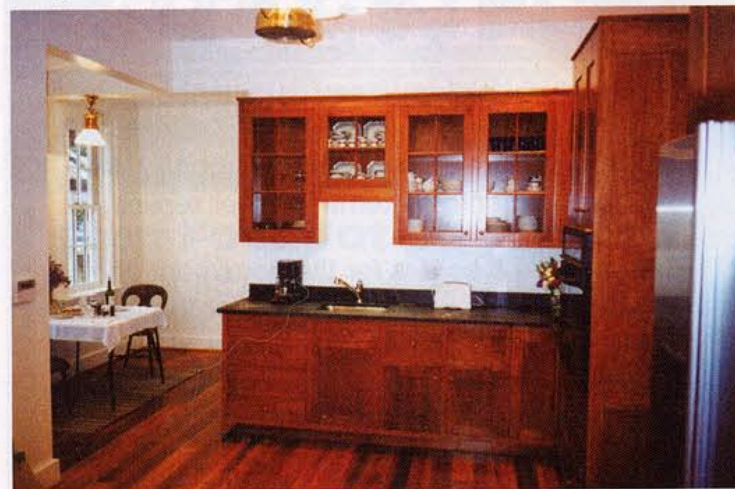
The old blacksmith shop was moved on the property to make room for the new entrance to the house. New chinking was applied and the building was wired for electricity, heating and air conditioning.



The barn is the next phase of the project. The adjacent garage will be moved a short distance away from the original barn so that work on the barn can begin. The lower portion has deteriorated due to water and weather damage, but materials have already been collected that will be used to replicate what can not be recycled. The structure will eventually be used as a pottery and ceramic studio below and art studio above.



All of the floors in the house are original and the cherry kitchen cabinets were custom made by a nephew. The countertops are a green Italian soapstone and the appliances are by GE.

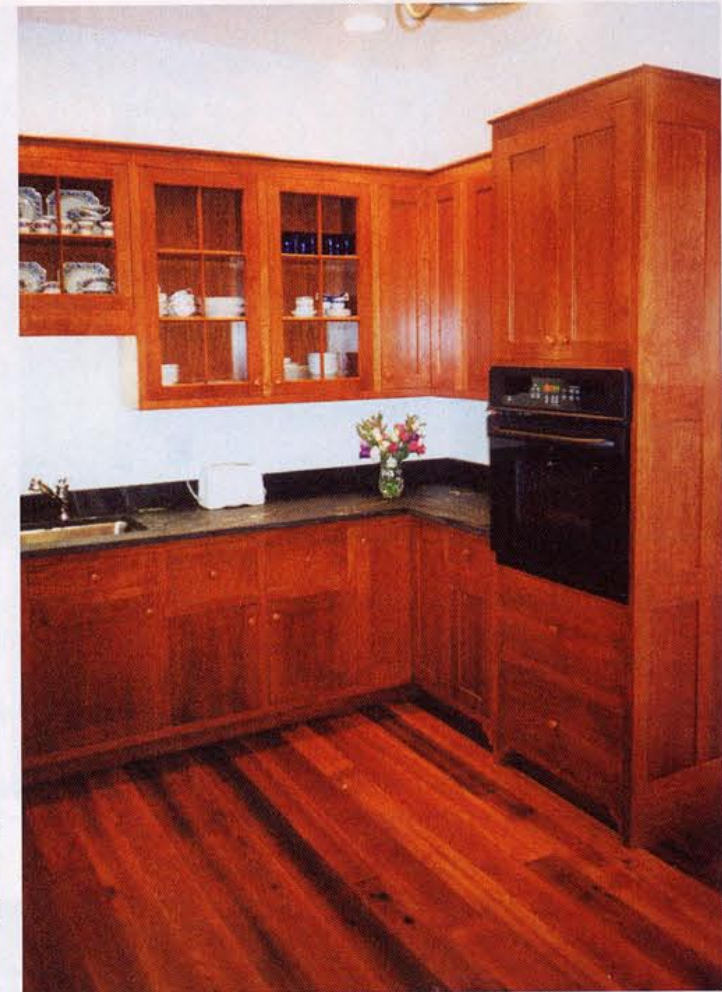


A small breakfast area is adjacent to the kitchen, which in turn opens to a newly created Butler's pantry which shares part of the connector area. In that pantry is one of the original cherry cabinets.



The connector also houses a laundry area with staircase leading to the wine cellar and 6 ft. high doorway leading to the servants quarters.

The philosophy for the project is "As is, Where is," said Gillilan. That means that things that had been changed through the years could be updated or adjusted. However, things such as wainscoting with pegs, had to be repegged with wooden pegs, not nails.



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The walls of the house are solid brick, so raceways had to be chiseled for pipes and wiring. The walls were then replastered, applying it directly to the brick and the wainscotting repegged with wooden pegs.

The paint colors are original to each room and were discovered as the old paint was removed. Stenciling in the bedrooms was preserved onto patterns for later replication.

There are 5 boilers for the house and the exterior office which are used for the forced air heat exchanger. The house is also air conditioned and wired for tv, computers and phone in each room including the entry.

Many of the light fixtures have been purchased at auctions by the home owners.

The windows in the main house had been replaced in the 1940's, so Valcon was allowed to update them with custom windows by Marvin, which were purchased through Home Builder Association member 84 Lumber. However windows in the exterior office were original and had to be retained. Lumber used in the project was supplied by HBA member S.J. Neathawk.



The original front door features two doors opening from the center and a large arched window with side windows. There is an equally sized second floor landing with exterior door to the balcony. A third floor arched window is currently covered by the portico, which was added about 100 years after the home was built.



The dining room chandelier was bought in the 1940's. The chairs in the parlor and the fireplace anirons are original to the house. There are 12 fireplaces. All have been reworked and relined and are workable for wood or gas. The home has four bedrooms in the main house and two in the servants quarters. A lot of the furniture is original to the house or the period. All of the doors are original.



The exterior office had fallen into disrepair. The floor was rotten and had to be dug out and built up for utilities. The building is now equipped with infloor heating, radiant electric and convection air conditioning and has a hearth for a woodburning stove. Because it is an all masonry building and a lot of book shelving was anticipated, it became important to control moisture and humidity in the building, thus the variety of heating systems.



Clifford Gillilan began Valcon Inc. in 1973 and started doing historic restorations in 1978. For many years he belonged to the state Home Builders Association, but there was no local group to which he could belong. In 1987-88 Bob Ritenour of Charleston helped Gillilan and John Bell begin the Greater Greenbrier Association. Gillilan is the current president of the local association and served as the state president for 2001 and 2002.

"I would not be a success if it were not for the association," said Gillilan. The most positive impact on his business has been "the ability to share ideas with builders from all across the state, and likewise across the country," he said. These ideas range from how to structure your business to accounting practices and information about materials. "That's something you can't buy or put a price on," he added.

Gillilan and his wife Catherine have been married for 33 years and have two children, Kristen and John. To contact Valcon, Inc. see their ad on page 37.