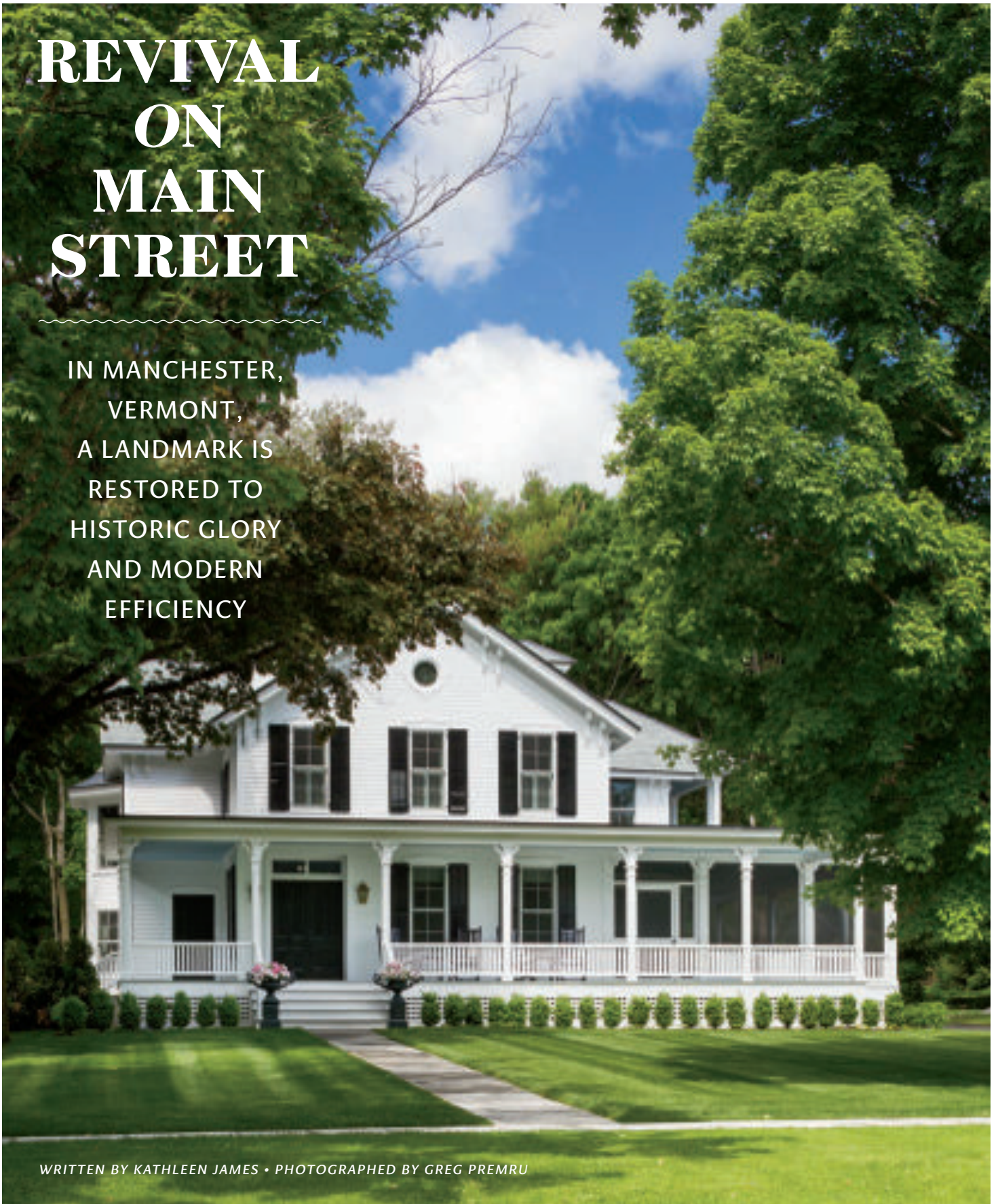


REVIVAL ON MAIN STREET

IN MANCHESTER,
VERMONT,
A LANDMARK IS
RESTORED TO
HISTORIC GLORY
AND MODERN
EFFICIENCY



WRITTEN BY KATHLEEN JAMES • PHOTOGRAPHED BY GREG PREMURU

BUILT SOMETIME BETWEEN 1799 and 1820, the 4,100-square-foot Victorian house (FACING PAGE) had fallen into disrepair by the time a Toronto couple purchased it in 2011. The renovation included a new mudroom and staircase at the back of the house. The balustrade's maple-leaf motif celebrates the family's Vermont-Canada connection.





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or several years, the once-regal house on Main Street stood empty, languishing on the market. A residential icon in a historic district of Manchester, Vermont, the 4,100-square-foot building was a major fixer-upper by the time a Toronto couple bought it in July 2011.

The porches sagged and the clapboards were rotting. Moss and saplings had sprouted on the roof. Water trickled through rubble in the dirt-floor basement. And a small band of raccoons had taken up residence, ripping away wallpaper to eat the paste beneath. “Other than that, the home was in perfect move-in condition,” jokes Ramsay Gourd, the Vermont architect and designer who masterminded its revival.

The new owners were looking for a four-season vacation home in Manchester, a southwestern Vermont tourist town anchored by three ski areas and the luxury Equinox Resort & Spa. Undeterred by the building’s dilapidated condition, they were charmed by its classic Victorian style and deep wraparound porch. They had seen Gourd’s work at Battenkill Meadows, a residential development north of town, and hired him to oversee the renovation, from architecture to interiors.

“I gave them fair warning,” says Gourd, who earned his architectural degree at Cornell University in 1988 and established his firm, Ramsay Gourd Architects, which has offices in Manchester and Burlington, Vermont, in 1996. “I wanted to be sure they knew what they were getting into. But they had a vision. They fell in love with the idea of what the house once might have been.”

Built sometime between 1799 and 1820 by the Hawley family, the building was one of many summer houses in Manchester that were occupied by affluent New Yorkers, Bostonians, and other urban dwellers looking for a seasonal escape from the city. By the Civil War, the village had become a well-known vacation destination: Orvis, the high-end fly-fishing and hunting company, was founded there in 1856, and in 1905, Robert Todd Lincoln, son of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln, who had spent a summer in Manchester as a boy, built Hildene, a grand estate now a nonprofit house museum.

“It needed a lot of work, but you could see it was a beautiful home,” says one of the new owners. “We liked the way it felt. So we hired Ramsay and got to work.” Their goal was to create an informal,

A MAHOGANY American Empire game table (ABOVE LEFT) that architect Ramsay Gourd found at a Brimfield Antique and Collectibles Show in Brimfield, Massachusetts, punctuates the front stair hall. To the right (not shown), a laundry room is concealed under the stair behind a panel door. The TV room (LEFT) is furnished with custom-designed pieces, including a Toronto Ottoman from Ramsay Gourd Home. On the first floor, the contractor ripped out several small rooms at the back of the house to create an open living space, with an elegant dining area (FACING PAGE, TOP) and kitchen (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM).









energy-efficient home that stayed true to the building's historic style. They also paid close attention to the village's strict design criteria; while not formally registered, the building is considered to be a "contributing structure" to the historic district of Manchester Village.

The work began by jacking up the building, excavating a deeper basement, pouring a new foundation, rebuilding the chimney, and putting on a new slate roof. Gourd and contractor Paul Mackson of Belmax Contracting Co. in East Dorset, Vermont, documented dozens of architectural details, taking photos and measurements, and salvaged whatever they could, including doors and hardwood flooring, before stripping the interior to the studs. To make the building energy-efficient, they installed two layers of insulation: spray-foam in the interior

THE COMPLETELY REBUILT fireplace in the living room (FACING PAGE, TOP) has an Imperial Danby marble surround. The soft blues, purples, and greens of the landscape painting by Toronto artist Carol Kapuscinsky inspired the color palette throughout the house. Gourd designed the table lamp (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM LEFT), which was made by Authentic Designs in Rupert, Vermont, in the first-floor library, where built-in bookcases, wainscot, and wood trim (FACING PAGE, RIGHT) are painted a warm gray. The screened porch (ABOVE) on the north side of the house is a favorite place to spend summer afternoons.

wall cavities and rigid foam board on the exterior beneath the clapboards. "We basically took a wooden sieve and created an ultratight, high-performance envelope," says Gourd.

Inside, the first floor was transformed by opening up a warren of small rooms at the back of the house to create space for an expanded kitchen, an adjoining mudroom, which is lined with storage cubbies, and a half-bath. Gourd also designed a wide back staircase with maple leaf-shaped cutouts in the balustrade to reflect the couple's Canada-Vermont connection.

The spacious kitchen was planned with family vacations in mind (the couple have two grown daughters and lots of relatives within driving distance) and is outfitted with a central island, a granite-topped bar with stools, a 60-inch Wolf range, and a big Sub-Zero refrigerator. From there, the space flows through a dining area to a casual TV room furnished with custom pieces designed by Gourd. There is also a living room off the dining area.

The palette throughout was inspired by a landscape painting by Toronto artist Carol Kapuscinsky that hangs in the living room. In soft blues, purples, and greens, it depicts a peaceful rural pasture. "The painting is what we started with," says Gourd. "It really helped me





to understand their aesthetic DNA. From there, we just keep rolling with the drawings, the interior details, the furniture, and the fabrics.” There’s also a comfortable library and, hidden under the front staircase, a laundry room accessed through a swinging door that’s painted and trimmed to match the surrounding wood paneling.

From the living room, French doors lead to a deep porch that wraps around three sides of the house, with a new screened section on the north side, facing the side yard.

Upstairs, a long central hallway leads past five bedrooms, each with its own bath, including the master suite, which has one of the four fireplaces that feed off the central chimney. Each room showcases a unique color scheme: The master bedroom, punctuated with a paint-

IN ADDITION TO the seating area near the fireplace, the living room (FACING PAGE) has a small steel dining table with a French industrial base for intimate parties or playing games. In one of the five bedrooms on the second floor (ABOVE), a large bay of windows provides an alcove for a sitting area, where matching armchairs are upholstered in rich cobalt-blue fabric that complements the deep indigo blue on the patterned headboard and pillows.

ing of a garden shed by Vermont artist Pam Marron, is done in silvery blue while the guest bedrooms are in various shades of turquoise and plum, turquoise and salmon, khaki and cobalt, and muted gray, green, and gold.

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The renovation included finishing the basement to accommodate an exercise area, utility room, storage, wine cellar, and dog-washing station.

During the 18-month project, the couple drove six and a half hours from Toronto at least one weekend a month, staying in a local inn and consulting closely with Gourd on every decision. “It’s wonderful to find the rare client who appreciates the value of restoring a worthy building,” says Gourd. “They’ve created a built legacy for themselves and for the community to enjoy for the next millennium.”

“We brought our daughters to the final walk-through, before we closed on the house,” says the husband, who notes the couple are planning an eventual Vermont retirement. “It needed a lot of work, to say the least, and our daughters said, ‘Are you sure about this?’ But I’ve learned to trust my wife’s insight. She just knew.” ■