

Proven Tract *Record*

This home's color scheme achieves a welcome balance between standing out and blending in.

BY JAMES MARTIN AND MEGAN SCHLEGEL

When you think about tract homes, do you immediately picture beige, cookie cutter, non-descript homes? Most people do. The fact is that architects and builders have been producing tract homes for ages, especially since the advent of frame construction, when it became cost-effective to build homes quickly by simply changing a few details on the façade. There are many cities where you can find nearly identical houses, some dating back to the 19th century. There may be a couple of similar homes on the same street or in concurrent blocks; but often these houses are found in pairs, right next to one another.

Such is the case with our featured home. These twin brick cottages, built in 1886, have almost identical carved stone lintels and lacy wooden details in the eaves and gables, and are situated alongside each other in a neighborhood that is seeing recent renewal and growth. When we were brought on board to design a color scheme for this home, the owner wanted to retain its historic feeling and charm, but also work with the newer, modern apartment building he was constructing to the right of the home. Like many other historic neighborhoods across America, older areas are seeing an influx of new architecture, most of which reflects styles divergent from what currently exists. Our challenge was to create a color design that sets one home apart from its identical counterpart but also makes the old architecture work with the new, and vice versa.

Painted all white, our featured house was a blank canvas just waiting to be brought back to life. Since it is flanked by an identical home painted white and a new building with warm woods and light brick, we determined that using a mid-value color (value is the scale from light to dark) for the house would be best. When choosing a body color, it's important to take note of the surrounding homes—if they are light, you do not want to use a color darker than a mid-value, as it will make the house stand out and look out of place. In this case, the size of the home also dictated that we not use a dark color for the body which would make the small cottage appear even smaller. We used a pleasant, warm brick color that did not create too much contrast with the white house and picked up the wood tones from the apartment building. We then chose a rich sandstone color for the stone lintels and foundation in a slightly darker color than the body of the cottage to highlight the differing construction materials.

There is a tremendous amount of gorgeous millwork in the gable of the home, and we wanted to highlight it in a way that did not overwhelm the rest of the house. When a house has a lot of fretwork, people tend to paint every detail, making the fretwork look

like it has been stuck on without relating to the rest of the building. Remember—a little house wants to make a little statement.

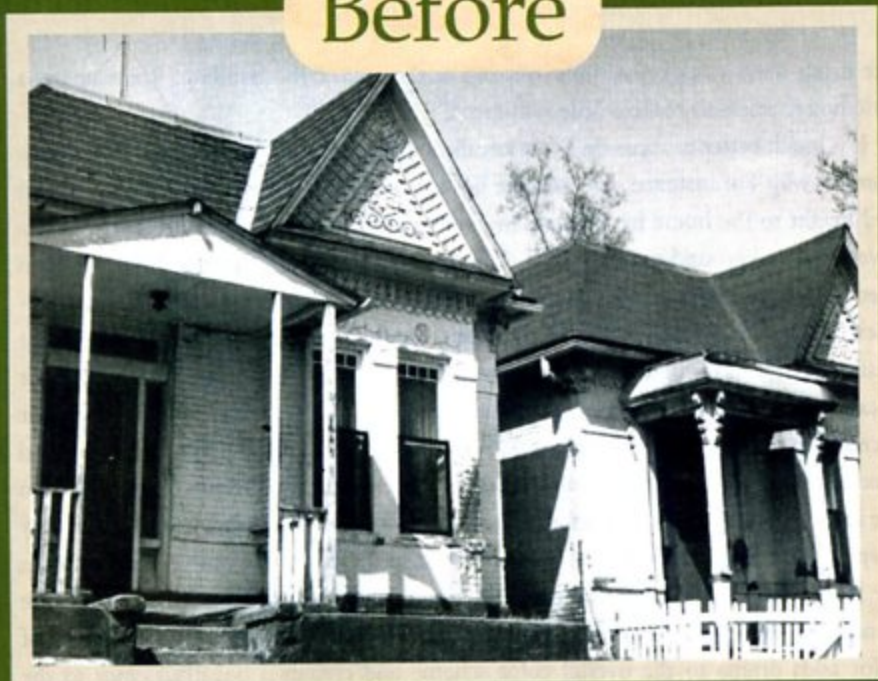
It is much better to focus on a few key elements, using paint in an effective and economical way. For instance, we used the body color behind the triangular millwork to add height to the home by bringing the body color up into the gable. We also shadowed the background so the millwork is more noticeable in the forefront. We then used a lively yellow on all the panels in the gables and the frieze, the inset of the sandwich brackets and the flowers of the stone lintels to create a balance in the color design. The yellow highlights the gorgeous woodwork's intricate cutout patterns because the light color emphasizes the deep shadows made by the cut wood. To further accentuate the details of the millwork, we framed the panels in a luscious green and used the same color on the moldings and brackets, which also "framed" the yellow on the inset of the sandwich bracket as well as on the leaf details on the window lintels. By keeping the accent trim colors in a value similar to the body color, the exquisite details are highlighted in a manner that calls attention to them in a subtle way. To add a little punch, we chose a regal aubergine for the fascia, gutters and front door. This pop of color adds drama to the overall color scheme and creates a beautiful entry to the home.

Painted in the new color scheme, the cottage nestles between the past and the future—and works beautifully with both. ✨

Megan and James are colorists with The Color People and have been designing color schemes for historic buildings for more than 25 years. They can be reached at www.colorpeople.com. To submit your home for consideration in the column, please send your contact information, along with high-resolution jpegs of your home, to: editorial@victorianhomesmag.com. Please put "Color Workshop" in the subject line.



Before



After