

# Newton's *Law*

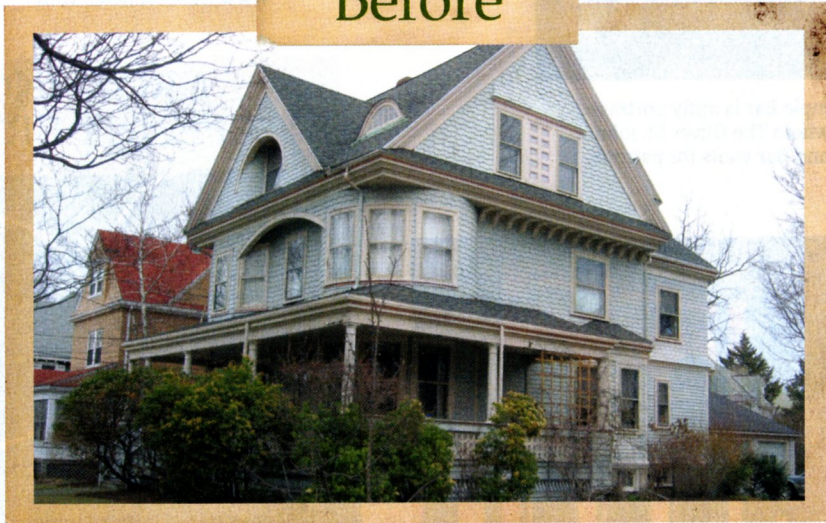
**The city's strict guidelines must be taken into account when residents want to repaint their homes.**

BY JAMES MARTIN AND MEGAN SCHLEGEL

*T*here are many features of this historic Newton, Massachusetts, home that make it unique and special. Beyond its wonderful architectural details, this Queen Anne Victorian, built in 1890 by Charles and Clara Somers, has had only four owners, including its current residents, Kimberly and Jonathan Davis. For better and for worse, little of the interior and exterior has changed in 118 years.

The city of Newton is comprised of 12 villages and neighborhoods, with this house residing in the village of Newtonville, one of the first Victorian “railroad villages” in Boston.

## Before



In fact, the commuter rail still runs to this village. Newtonville has been designated as one of two historic districts of Victorian homes in the city, so, according to covenant, any exterior changes—including paint colors—have to be approved by the historic commission.

When Kimberly approached us to design a color scheme for her home, she was ready for a complete change regarding exterior color. The large, three-story home felt too big, and the light blue color looked bleached out in the sunlight. She wanted to highlight the architectural elements—such as the varied windows and brackets—with a more dramatic contrast between those details and the body of the house. She wanted her home to make an “interesting statement.”

For starters, we needed to create a scheme that would pass the historic review. While we didn't want to make a museum piece, we wanted something appropriate to the period. When



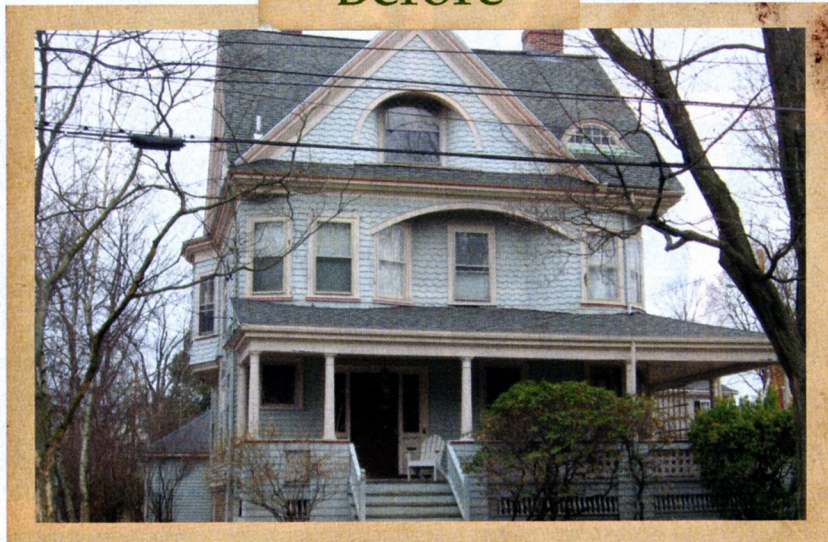
asked which colors she was attracted to, Kimberly envisioned a combination of plum, lilac, green blue and cream. She also wanted to use a medium-value color, one much darker than the current light blue. Kimberly knew she wanted colors that were somewhere between historical feeling and lighthearted, yet definitely not too cute or too bright. That's typically the difficulty in choosing exterior colors—finding something that makes a statement, but is not too loud; and finding colors that highlight details that have gone unnoticed for years but without calling too much attention to them.

With this in mind, we started by choosing a rich plum with a brown undertone for the main body color. Since red and green are opposite each other on the color wheel (complementary colors in color parlance), when used together they heighten each other's intensity. That means it's important to add a bit of brown to the plum, as the green in the environment will push the red in the color, and it will quickly grow in intensity if you're not careful. This was a great main color for this house because while not historically authentic it felt historical and allowed us to use vibrant colors to highlight the other architectural details. We used this body color for both the main floor as well as the second story so we could then use a lighter, fresher color in the mauve family on the dormers and gables as well as on the front porch balustrade and lattice. Using this two-tone body color scheme helped keep the house from feeling too big. By breaking up the mass of the body and using the secondary body color on the lower portion of the home, we kept the dormer and gables grounded.

We used a rich cream color for the main trim. This included all windows and doorframes as well as the soffits and belt courses that run around the middle of the house. The contrast between the body colors and the cream color really set off the windows and the main trim, and gave the entire home a crisp and clean feeling. Not using white—which is inauthentic and too much of a contrast—allowed us to give the details the sparkle Kimberly was looking for without having the features separate from the house.

We used accent colors to contrast the body colors and bring attention to the previously overlooked details. When Kimberly first contacted us, there was one small area of peach accent color used on the fascia and windowsills. With a house of this size, only picking out a small detail produces the opposite of the desired effect: Instead of seeing the fabulous

## Before





After





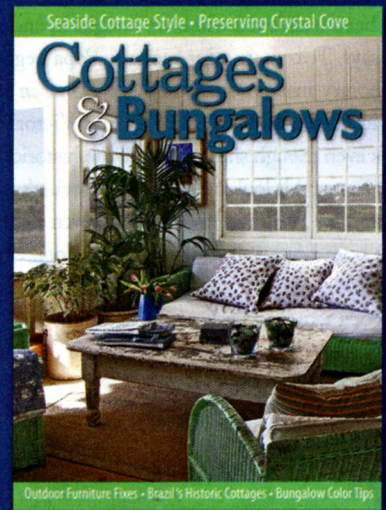
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moldings and craftsmanship of the wood work, you simply see a small peach band running the length of the home. To combat this, we designed a multi-tonal accent scheme by using an eggplant color for the fascia and gutters, and two shades of green to pick up the moldings and brackets. We used these same colors on the panels of the third-story windows and the porch floor to achieve a pleasing visual balance. When all the exterior colors are balanced, it ensures that the architectural whole is the first thing one sees. Viewers can enjoy the numerous details at their leisure since these items no longer scream for attention.

With the home's new color scheme, total strangers now stop Kimberly and her family to tell them how much they admire the new colors. It has brought the home from drab to fabulous, and it certainly makes more of a statement than it did before. In fact, with its beautiful plums and greens, it fits right in with Newton's adopted name: "The Garden City." ❀

*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](http://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](mailto:editorial@victorianhomesmag.com). Please put "Color Workshop" in the subject line.*



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