

- OUR HOUSE -

When Steve Corrigan &
Doug Jackman Fell In Love
With An Antique House,
The Courtship Was Costly,
But Worth It

WALPOLE, N.H. — In October 2014, for the third year in conjunction with the five Vermont shows conducted during the first weekend of that month, Rockingham, Vt., dealers Steve Corrigan and Doug Jackman hosted an open house at their shop here. Visitors entering the 3,600-square-foot Georgian colonial located a brief jog off Interstate 91 no doubt felt like they were walking into not just an antiques shop but rather a historic and well-loved home.





"The Annunciation" by Henry O. Tanner (1859–1937), Philadelphia, 1898. A high point of the Philadelphia Museum's African American Collection is this work by Tanner, who spent most of his career as an expatriate in France. The bright yellow column at left suffuses the setting with a golden glow, magnifying the significance of the biblical scene, and demonstrating why Tanner is considered the greatest African American painter of the Nineteenth Century. Purchased with the W.P. Wiltach Fund in 1899, "Annunciation" was the first work by an African American to enter the museum's collection.

The dealers, who do business as Stephen-Douglas, make it look seamless and easy, but their mission, which concluded about three years ago, was an eight-year "rescue" after they bought the house on a whim, wanting to save it. "We were slowed by the recession," said Corrigan as he provided a tour through the three-story home. One of the earliest houses in Walpole, it was originally built

by the Baptists about 1775–80. Its most recent incarnation was as a former bookshop, which it had been since the 1930s, when the road passing out in front of it was the old Route 12. Now it is called Bookseller Road.

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The books are gone, however, replaced by the fine antique furniture and decorative accessories that are the stock in trade of Stephen-Douglas. “Everything’s for sale,” said Corrigan, adding that the dealers could easily refurnish its rooms many times over. “We have a lot of stuff.” Restoration of 61 Booksellers Road was no walk in the park, for the weight of history had not been kind to the structure. Just getting the basic necessary repairs done on the house cost \$100,000, including replacing the cement slab underneath, rebuilding much of the stonework, adding bathrooms and fixing the leaking



roof. In late November 2003, Corrigan and Jackman took stock of what they had acquired. “We were told the roof leaked,” said Corrigan, “so we tarped it right

away and waited until spring of 2004 to do anything further. It had a very primitive appeal — primitive, but essentially unliveable.”

The house was built into a steep embankment, added Corrigan. One of the first steps was to excavate all the embankment material from both sides, take it away from the house and jack the house up to put it on a solid footing. Retaining walls were built up on each side. Now, with the house sitting up off the ground, the addition of front steps was necessary. Its front once faced onto Route 12, but early in the Twentieth Century, Route 12 was straightened and now runs in back of the house, leaving its façade to now face old Route 12, now Bookseller Road — named for the bookshop that was on the premises. The bookshop was well established in the mid-Twentieth Century and remained in business until the latter part of the century. Indeed, Corrigan and Jackman bought the house from the third-generation booksellers, and when they bought it, the interior was lined with bookshelves in every room and on every floor.



Corrigan said that while the place is known as one of the earliest houses in town, scant historical information about it was available. “Everything except the stairwell was remarkably intact,” he said. Local history hinted that its earlier incarnation may have been a meat shop, presumably on the first level. The center stairway was long gone, and Corrigan speculated that this may have

been done to afford some privacy for the homeowner who lived on the second level. At some point an addition was put on to provide more living space and a kitchen. This section, approximately 10 by 30 feet, housed a “campish” circa 1930s-style kitchen and the front room, which the dealers dubbed the “cardboard room” as it was sheathed in cardboard boxes.





Doing some rough math in his head and reaching a figure of about \$600,000, Corrigan concluded, “Three bathrooms, a new discreet kitchen, a finished third floor, new electric, heating system, septic, roof, windows, plaster, foundation, insulation — it’s all ready for the

Twenty-First Century, with an Eighteenth Century ambience. “I’m thrilled with it. You can live extremely comfortably here,” he added, admitting that 12 miles away in Rockingham, he lives in a house very similar to this one. “I like this type of house.” Stephen-Douglas can be reached at, 802-463-4296.