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HLIFE

HOBOKEN BEFORE AND AFTER

STORY BY JACK SILBERT

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM, MOWERY MARSH ARCHITECTS, HALSTEAD,
PHOTOS BY PETER KUBILUS AND JOE EPSTEIN



Except for their stairs, some flooring, and exposed brick, the interior was gutted. The project was fully completed in only seven months, and the Marshes have lived happily ever after. “For the past 18 years, we’ve been working on other people’s homes, so this has been a real treat,” Jennifer says. “It’s given us everything we had hoped for and more.”

GARDEN STREET SPEC HOUSE

It was a “fixer-upper” to say the least. “There was mold, asbestos, thread-bare carpeting, squeaky stairs, and windows that didn’t work,” says J. Patryce Design founder Joan Enger about the Garden Street property. “You name it—it was terrible!”

After gutting the house, Enger and her team set out to create something spectacular. They added a custom stone fireplace mantle with herringbone brick interior, custom-designed stone and tile bathrooms, and high-end, designer-selected lighting—vintage and new.

The house sold ridiculously quickly, however the buyer had mentioned a treadmill to be moved into the basement, far too large for its entrance. “We came up with the idea of a secret/hidden wall that could swing open, heading to the basement,” Enger explains. “It’s a super cool feature and turned out to be extremely functional.”

For all involved, the renovation was a very satisfying experience. “We had an excellent team—true craftsmen—the architect, general contractor, tradesmen, woodworkers, etc.,” Enger says. “The buyers were

great to work with and really appreciated the love and attention to detail that we invested.”

THE CITADEL (450 Seventh Street)

His nickname was already Pupie when little Frank Raia attended Hoboken’s Public School 8, also known as the Sadie F. Leinkauf School. Did he like going there? “I loved my school so much that I bought it,” Raia, 63, explains today. “I wanted to live in my homeroom.”

The school, built in 1903, had been vacant when Raia purchased it in 1983. His plan was to convert it into 68 affordable residential units for a specific market: the working class who earned a little too much to qualify for subsidized housing. “I wanted to keep those people in Hoboken. Nobody knew what the hell I was talking about,” says Raia, noting that he had the last laugh: “I ended up selling them all in about 15 minutes.” (Raia says that a couple of the original buyers were his former teachers.)

With 24-inch brick walls, high ceilings, lots of natural light, and commercial space on the lower level, the Citadel remains very popular after more than three decades. In 1985, the Leinkauf School was added to the New Jersey Register of Historic Places. “It has a lot of meaning to me,” Raia explains. “I think it’s the most beautiful building in the entire city.”

612 GARDEN STREET

Interest in 612 Garden has reached a fever pitch, so it’s too bad that 1885 resident Henry Weinhagen isn’t still

around. He was a noted thermometer maker! That’s just one interesting fact that Lorraine Arnold of Legacy Roots dug up in her history of the property, which dates back to the 1860s along with its original owners, the well-known Bloomfield family.

In recent years, the townhouse had fallen into a state of serious disrepair. The Bloomfields and ol’ Weinhagen might now be rendered speechless by the stunning gut renovation by Hudson Realty Group at Halstead Properties, packed with ultra-modern luxury touches.

Sales associate Matt Brown says their goal was to “bring a feeling of history and old-world craftsmanship back into the home after removing almost all the original construction materials.”

Indeed, no expense was spared, with features including a professional chef’s kitchen, wide-plank hardwood floors, a professionally landscaped garden, and heated bathroom tiles. The cornice, facade, brownstone, and original staircase bannister were all lovingly restored. The end result is a five-bedroom townhouse that any family would be proud to call home.

“We drew on our collective experience of over 20 years,” Brown explains, “to create a property as close to ‘perfect’ as we could get.”

PARK AVENUE PROJECT

It was a quaint, 1960s-style kitchen—like something from an old sitcom—but it was definitely not ready for



prime time. Fifty-year-old cabinets and appliances were in rough condition. And then there was a wall, totally blocking off the kitchen from the rest of the floor. No light, no flow.

To the rescue: Robert Jenny Design Inc. and Robert Jenny Builders Inc., who promised to cook up something new and awe-inspiring in that kitchen area.

“Seeing beyond the original space to open it up,” explains Robert Jenny, principal of both firms, “we added a waterfall island to create more cooking and entertaining areas, and also designed and built a ‘desk nook’ for added space efficiency and two-tone top/bottom cabinets to best utilize the natural light.”

Of course, tight spaces are frequently an issue when renovating Hoboken’s century-old buildings. “We were trying to figure out how to get a huge cast-iron stove out,” Jenny recalls, “while finding a way to get a 300-pound fridge up a very narrow, old, twisty stairway.”

But for Robert Jenny and his talented teams, that effort is always worth it. “We love creating unique spaces that are functional and beautiful,” he says. “Our greatest joy is seeing the faces of homeowners the day they first see their finished space, and how happy they still are years later.”

**HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM
(1301 Hudson Street)**

It’s only appropriate that the home of the Hoboken Historical Museum is itself steeped in history. Its direc-

tor, Bob Foster, explains, “The building the museum is in was built as a working shipyard in the 1880s by a company called W. & A. Fletcher. Then in the late 1920s, Bethlehem Steel took it over.”

Bethlehem Steel’s machine shop originally ran from 14th Street to 13th. But for the war effort in the 1940s, the building was expanded down to 12th Street. It was a huge, open, garage-like space, with train tracks down the middle, and a giant hook overhead. The company operated 24 hours a day, quickly becoming one of Hoboken’s biggest employers.

By the 1980s, Bethlehem Steel had ceased operations in town. The property was eventually purchased by the Barry family’s Applied Companies. “Joe Barry offered us a small section in the machine shop as a permanent home for the museum,” Foster recalls. “It was a gift—pretty amazing. A 100-year lease for \$1 a year.”

The museum opened in its new space on April 12, 2001, and has been going strong ever since, shining a light on every aspect of the town’s compelling history. “...The architecture of the machine shop is inspiring,” Foster says.



Garden Street Spec House
Photo by Lisa Ross