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QUEEN *for Today*

Interior designer Daen Scheiber shows there's a fresh way to dress up a grand old lady.



FAR LEFT: To lighten the living room, interior designer Daen Scheiber painted the dark woodwork a creamy white and the walls a soft celadon. Yards of beige cotton, cinched with oversized tassels, showcase the windows in the primary seating area. **LEFT:** An example of late Queen Anne Victorian style, this 1905 house was featured in the 1996 film *Jack*, starring Robin Williams. **BELOW:** Scheiber turned the odd placement of the living room fireplace into an intimate seating area that provides a graceful segue into the dining room.



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With the boom of the 1849 California gold rush, San Francisco blossomed from a muddy crossroads to a full-fledged center of commerce. The Bay Area's new citizenry brought with it some of the finer aspects of Western culture, including a gold mine of Victorian decorative arts and architecture. The Queen Anne style, in particular, caught on, and to this day, numerous fine examples that remind us of that bygone era remain, in spite of the 1906 earthquake.

Though rooms filled with heavily

carved mahogany furniture and windows swaddled in dark velvet drapery were *de rigueur* a century ago, today's active families generally prefer a lighter, crisper decor. Just such a challenge—to transform a 1905 Victorian into a home for the 1990s—faced interior designer Daen Scheiber when he accepted a Bay Area redo.

Scheiber's clients, having recently remodeled the kitchen, were ready to approach the remainder of the house. The designer's overall expertise and fresh approach were in sync with their vision, and Scheiber was confident he

ABOVE: The hand-stenciled ceiling is the work of artist Kathy Coomer, who loosely based the pattern on a William Morris design. Using a stipple brush, she applied four colors of latex paint that she sparingly accented with bronzing powders to add depth. After the stenciling was completed, Coomer sponged on a top coat of ochre oil glaze.

RIGHT: Dominant features of the dining room include the original walnut paneling, ceiling beams, and fireplace surround. Scheiber's fabric selections were based on the ceramic tile colors of the surround. Wanting to keep the windows exposed as much as possible, he dressed them in an opulent print, with bamboo shades to filter the light. Two chandeliers original to the house, each with scarred and broken pieces, were merged to create the crown jewel of the room. The carpet is an early 20th-century Persian Mahal.





could stay true to the character and integrity of the house while still fulfilling the family's needs.

Step one was to establish the flow of the rooms, upgrade the electrical and plumbing systems, install a new radiant-heating system, bring the bathrooms into modern-day function, and install new windows. Once the basic structure gelled, Scheiber was ready to focus on the interiors. Above all, his clients wanted the house to look and feel lived in, to be a comfortable space for everyday family life, and welcoming when entertaining guests.

"We set out to create a house that felt

like it had evolved naturally over the years," Scheiber explains. "The homeowners showed me a picture of a faded country house that appealed to them, as did a photo of Jacqueline Onassis' home in Manhattan. They liked the way all of her things, her treasured pieces from different periods in her life, blended together and resulted in a wonderful style."

To help accomplish this, Scheiber retained original details, such as heavy walnut moldings, in some areas while altering them in others. His fabric choices were "a series of near misses on purpose," as he puts it, with most of the

LEFT: Kitchen designer Sandra Bird drew much of her inspiration for the major kitchen remodel from archival photos. Comprising two tables with one wood top, the large iron-and-wood island has a rollout unit tucked into the center. This unit holds the recycling bins and has a butcher-block top for heavy-duty jobs. Bird designed the cherry cabinets in the Victorian style, and incorporated other touches that recall that period, including the green marble countertops, beaded board, and a pine plate rack. The French range resembles the one in Claude Monet's Giverny home. **ABOVE:** Installed during the remodeling, the picture window allows light to flood the breakfast area with its custom-made table and chairs. Scheiber added the curtains and bamboo shades. Though it is a period piece, the chandelier has not been authenticated to the house.



fabrics having slightly toned-down or faded colors. In this way, he was able to balance the lightness of the '90s with the need for a feeling of establishment.

No structural changes were made in the living and dining rooms. Each offered fine old architectural detail, such as large-scale moldings and a generous bay that followed the curve of a turret. Scheiber, however, found these spaces dark and strangely configured. "I needed to make square furniture work in the round space of the bay," he says, "and then tie that in with a fireplace that was off in an odd corner of the room."

Scheiber's solution was to create two distinct seating areas united by a medley of patterned fabric in variations of red and green. The dark woodwork warmed under a coat of cream paint, and the entire room became much more cheerful when bathed in mossy green.

Ornate dark woodwork, a crystal chandelier, and an elaborately stenciled ceiling make the dining room the most formal room in the house. A round, antique oak dining table and early-1900s Persian rug enhance the feeling of history and longevity the homeowners desired.

The clients wanted the library to be a space where the family could relax and listen to music, and where the children could study. This also was the area where the homeowners would take care of family paperwork. All the home office equipment, along with a sound

system, needed to be hidden from view when not in use. With a picture of an 18th-century French library as a reference point, Scheiber designed an elaborate wall system that easily disappears behind six paneled doors made of walnut. To the uninformed, the room appears original to the house.

Prior to Scheiber's involvement with the project, the kitchen had been remodeled by kitchen designer Sandra Bird. With a mandate from her clients that she create a kitchen for the 1990s that had the look of one rooted in the 1890s, Bird drew inspiration heavily from archival photos of two historical references: the kitchen in the private residence of Calvin Coolidge in Washington, D.C. and the kitchen in Claude Monet's home in Giverny.

Beginning with a warren of seven rooms—a tiny kitchen, breakfast room, two butler's pantries, a laundry room, broom closet, and bath—Bird transformed the spaces into the current kitchen/family dining area. Bird says: "Of course, everything we used was new, but we included touches like beaded-board paneling that might cause people to think, 'Was it left behind? Is it new?'"

Upstairs, Scheiber extended a second-floor room over the kitchen and back porch to create a large master suite. This most personal of spaces departs ever so slightly in mood and decor from the rest of the house. Here, natural-stain woods and soft, neutral colors dominate, and it is the only room

LEFT: To house a home office in the family room, Scheiber designed a series of walnut panels along one wall. His client "fell in love with [the exotic print fabric], and that established the direction we were going in here," Scheiber says. "It's a small room and since so many people come in here we needed as much seating as possible." An eight-point star ottoman helps out in that regard, while also serving as a footrest or a coffee table.

Queen for Today



grounded in wall-to-wall carpeting. "Everything in this room is meant to soothe and relax," Scheiber says.

This statement, in fact, could be applied to the whole house. Every turn provides another distinct interior view, yet there is a warmth that prevails. This is a house at peace with itself, and it stands as a lesson that comfort can be shaped by a series of smart choices over a lifetime or merely in the course of a remodeling. □



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RIGHT: An 18th-century Irish blanket chest at the foot of the bed signals the separation of sleeping and sitting areas in the master suite. **TOP:** To break up the long, narrow room—and to allow for necessary electrical wiring and air-conditioning ducts—Scheiber situated the fireplace on the diagonal. Large in diameter, yet relatively shallow in depth, the Fortuny silk lighting fixture works well on the 9-foot-high ceiling. **ABOVE:** Plumped up with a flannel interlining, striped silk curtains provide maximum light blockage without skimping on style. The little fan pleats add pizzazz and help hide the drapery mechanism.

