

# LOVE IS BLIND

When Restoring A 19th Century Home, What You See Is Not Always What You Get

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY HOLLY LEPERE

The restoration of Steve and Prudy Handelman's Santa Barbara treasure, christened "The Olives" in 1886 by its first owner Lucy Brinkerhoff, has been an on-going love affair, a romancing of stone, brick, mortar, wood and plaster to bring the historic Upper Eastside home back to its original glory. Contemplating the challenges they surmounted over the last two years, the couple agrees, "It was love at first sight, but love can be blind."

"You have to be in love to take on a project like this," adds Prudy, a native Santa Barbaran whose grandmother lived within a stone's throw from the property. Indeed, Prudy feels her invisible hand was instrumental to the acquisition. "There were other prospective buyers, but I believe my grandmother held it for us."

This "family farmhouse," as Steve calls it, rests serenely in the shadow of the Santa Barbara Mission, where ancient Chumash Indian history mingles with that of Colonial Spain, Mexico and influential American Yankees who gave the Upper Eastside its distinctive character. "The Olives" was one of its first wooden homes, as wood was not available until the wharf was built in 1878 when redwood logs were herded down from northern mills on the open waters. Prior to that, all homes were built of adobe. A unique hybrid of late nineteenth century Craftsman architecture superimposed upon the original Eastlake Victorian style, the home comfortably combines the more masculine elements of the former—simplicity of line and func-



tionality—with the more feminine echoes of the latter—such as color, scale and the signature element of the porch.

"The porch linked us all together in old time America," says Steve, "fostering neighborliness and hospitality. We try to keep that tradition, and invite our neighbors in for a glass of wine if they happen to be passing by at sunset."

The owner of Steve Handleman Studios, a Santa Barbara atelier boasting an international client roster of the rich and famous, he brought his own skills to bear as artist, designer and manufacturer to the restoration, designing or redesigning of every lighting fixture, firescreen, the stained glass artwork, the rebuilt garage, even the rafter details. Sparing no expense, the couple had to reinvent what couldn't be restored. Preservation minded, Steve says, "I draw on history and interpret it. I'm historically appropriate without being slavishly devoted."

The house was originally constructed of clear-heart, old-grove redwood, which is particularly hardy, and the rea-

son the house endured more than a century of heavy rains and earthquakes. All the interior crown molding was duplicated using redwood, as well as the exterior siding, which was specially milled. A crew of twenty five labored daily for two years, as the Handelmans supervised the disassembling and reassembling of every doorhandle or hinge, that of the original mouth-blown glass windows with their giant Craftsman hung bars, as well as the numerous leaded glass windows throughout. From electrical to plumbing systems, from the entire sandstone foundation to the shingled roof to the origi-

ABOVE Unique for its combination of Craftsman and Victorian architecture, Steve and Prudy Handelman's Upper Eastside estate, "The Olives," is one of the earliest examples of the Yankee influence in Santa Barbara. OPPOSITE With its eclectic mixture of wicker, Oriental carpets resting on the original fir flooring, and artifacts from around the world, the Queen Anne style porch was converted in 1906 by the second owners into a year-round sunroom "reminiscent of the Grand Hotel on Makinaw Island," says Steve.