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Interior Design by Weixler, Peterson & Luzzi
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AMERICAN BEAUTY

FREDERICK R. HAAS RESTORES
AN 1860 PHILADELPHIA GEM

Philadelphia, rather than New York or Boston, was the leading city of the Republic in the early days of the United States. Henry Adams, using British cities as examples, wrote that "Boston was our Bristol, New York our Liverpool, and Philadelphia our London."

Indeed, at the end of the eighteenth century, foreigners were struck by the elegance of the houses on Rittenhouse Square, Society Hill and other affluent areas near Independence Hall, the historic building where Thomas Jefferson presented the Declaration of Independence.

Throughout the nineteenth century little changed. In the last hundred years, however, an increasing number of the wealthier members of society moved to the lovely countryside outside Philadelphia known as the Main Line, coming into the city only for concerts or to conduct business. Happily, this is changing, and if you drive through Philadelphia's old streets at night, you are cheered by the sight of many a lighted window.

One of the pioneers determined to make the most of the city he loves is Frederick R. Haas, a young musician, composer and philanthropist, who has restored

an 1860 town house with interior designers Steven A. Weixler, Walter Bayard Peterson and Marcello A. Luzzi of the local firm Weixler, Peterson & Luzzi.

"This is a traditional Philadelphia residence, combining Georgian and Federal styles," says Weixler. "The Quaker influence makes it more restrained than, say, a New York town house of the same period."

Haas has discovered much about the history of the building. "This was one of the tallest structures around," he explains. "But people were afraid to buy town houses here during the Civil War, because they thought the top floors might be hit by cannonballs." The house eventually passed through various hands, the most recent owner being a friend of Haas's who also happened to be a musician. "There was a pipe organ, and I'd be invited to play there," Haas recalls. "I was dazzled by the space, and since I'm a piano lover, it was

"My dream was to renovate an older place," says Frederick R. Haas, whose 1860 town house in Philadelphia was restored by Weixler, Peterson & Luzzi. In the living room is a Duncan Phyfe tea table, Schumacher damask on open-arm chair. Scalamantré valance fringe.





ABOVE: "The house was designed for entertaining as well as livability," says Walter Bayard Peterson, center, with Marcello A. Luzzi, left, Steven A. Weisler and Haas, seated.

a dream come true when the property became available."

"The house allows Fred to entertain in many different ways, whether it's an eight-person dinner party or a big fund-raiser," says Peterson. In the music room, where Haas gives concerts, two fine grand pianos occupy the corners. There is also a remarkable neo-Gothic chamber organ built for the prince regent of England, later George IV, which Haas acquired from the estate of Rudolf Nureyev. "After the music has ended, tables are brought in, and the guests dine by candlelight, with the overflow seated in the rotunda just off the music room," says Peterson.

The designers transformed the rotunda—previously a dark, low-ceilinged space—by installing a glass dome, inspired by the painted starfish ceiling in London's Sir John Soane's Museum. An acanthus-leaf frieze rings the

LEFT: The double parlor became a dining room and a living room. Charles Peale Polk's *Mrs. Thomas Kell and Child*, circa 1790, hangs over a circa 1815 side table, from David Duncan Antiques. Dining table, George Subkoff Antiques. Chandeliers, Nesle. Waterford wineglasses.



OPPOSITE: Bookshelves were added in the library. "Anything new had to be seamless with the old," notes Peterson. Canterbury from George Subkoff Antiques, Brunswick & Fils low table and drapery fringe. Stroheim & Romann paisley chair fabric. Schumacher wallcovering.

opening, which is supported by pilasters and columns.

The rotunda serves as a passageway to the dining room and the living room. "These spaces were originally a double parlor," Peterson notes. "We restored one chimney and added gilt rosettes below the moldings so

the rooms mirror each other stylistically. The faux-stone block walls were common in the early part of the nineteenth century, and although this house was done a bit later, we added elements that reflect a broader historical scope." Haas wanted these

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ABOVE: In the bedroom are Asian and European pieces from Haas's travels. The George III bed and the Sèvres covered urn are from Christie's. Brunswick & Fils chair fabric, bedcovering, canopy lining and fringe. Lee Jofa shade damask. Whittaker & Woods wallcovering.