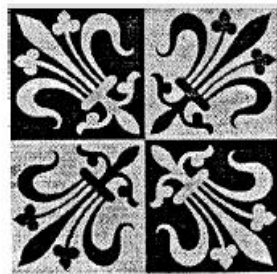




The "Brick House"
Darien, Connecticut



by Eric M. Rose, Builder
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The History

Henry Davis Weed built the "Brick House," as Darien residents fondly refer to it, circa 1871. Evidence exists throughout the house of the period during which it was built. Patent dates on original manufactured hardware, and, pages from the Savannah Advertiser newspaper from July 1871 were discovered. These papers were found rolled up and used as filler to caulk a joint in moldings on the third floor. The Weed family, a prominent one in Darien since the eighteenth century, commissioned the house as a summer home following the Civil War.

Henry Davis Weed left Connecticut as a boy to seek his fortunes in the south. Settling in Savannah, Georgia, Henry began selling knives in the streets. Over the years, his efforts grew into a huge regional hardware business selling goods throughout the south. During the Great Conflict the Weed business sold British hardware to the south in defiance of the northern blockades. Wisely, Henry Weed accepted payment for his goods in cotton, instead of the doomed confederate currency. Throughout the war, the Weed business amassed huge stores of cotton in warehouses in Savannah from where they would ship it to Europe and sell it.

Nearing the end of the war, General Tecumseh Sherman, leading 60,000 troops east across the southern states, entered Savannah making contact with the Union Fleet on December 13, 1864. Confederate troops led by General Hardee, evacuated Savannah shortly afterward, leaving Sherman's army to destroy everything, including a substantial portion of the Weed wealth stored in warehouses there.

Following the war, Henry Weed used his northern roots to bring suit against the newly reunited federal government. Suing for war reparations for the cotton destroyed, Weed and his family won a substantial judgement against the government totaling \$249,000 (tens of millions of dollars in today's currency). They say that the proceeds of this suit provided the wealth to build the Brick House. However, they settled the suit in early 1873 which would appear to be after the date they built the house.

The Architect

The style of the house is Victorian Gothic (1860-1890), characterized by a polychromatic exterior finish using materials of different colors and textures juxtaposed such as stone, brick and wood. The Brick House incorporates the look of massive wooden beams at the roof eaves that were common in timber framed buildings of the same style. Balconets (small decorative balconies), polychromatic voussoirs (alternating colored stone arches), gable trim, gothic arch window openings, decorative stone bands, all are elements incorporated into the exterior design of the Brick House and are characteristic of this distinguished style of architecture. The brownstone was traced to Portland, CT where the largest brownstone quarry in the country was operated until 1906 when the Great Flood filled the quarry with 150' of water.

It is believed that the famed English architect, Calvert Vaux (1824-1895), designed the house. A founder of the American Institute of Architects, Calvert Vaux was a prominent architect of his day. A partner with Frederick Law Olmstead among others, Vaux and Olmstead designed New York's Central Park. It was in fact Calvert Vaux that named the profession of "Landscape Architecture" and who convinced Frederick Law Olmstead to take up the practice. Often using details from the architecture of the Moors, Vaux was known for his High Victorian style. Many details in the Brick House are indicative of Vaux' hand.

The Victorian Gothic style of the house and many of its details are traits of Calvert Vaux designs. A detail drawing of a "sill" taken from Vaux's design of the West Side Lodging House for Boys in New York City, circa 1878, shows the same molding detail as that found in the house. The Bradbury's architect, Dean Telfer, duplicated this molding design for the crown molding atop the new kitchen cabinets.

The Restorers

The Bradbury family of Brazilian and English descent purchased the Brick House in April 1996. During the ensuing twelve months, the house was substantially renovated and restored to its original grandeur. The Bradburys retained the firm of E.M. Rose Builders, Inc. in February of 1996, before buying the house. Together, the Bradburys and Eric Rose, president of E.M. Rose, began to develop a plan for the restoration of the house. Rose's firm prepared drawings of the existing structure. In May, the Bradburys retained Dean Telfer, AIA, ARIBA, a renowned New Canaan architect, who guided the design effort that ended with the spectacular results on view today. Construction began in earnest in August 1996 with the completion of Dean Telfer's conceptual drawings. E.M. Rose's crews worked through the winter to substantially complete construction by April 1997.

The team of Dean Telfer, the Bradburys and E.M. Rose Builders worked closely throughout construction making each minute decision together. The Bradburys watched every stage of construction first hand. They moved to the third floor of the house in October 1996, at the height of construction. It was love for the house, shared by the entire team, that insured that its historic fabric would be preserved. The completed restoration has made this a truly unique modern home.

The work of Dean Telfer and the wisdom of the Bradburys can be seen throughout the house, not only in the care taken to preserve what it is, but to incorporate new elements using designs and colors that would be consistent with the original architect's tastes. In every room, even in those completely reconstructed for modern uses, the visitor feels transported back in time. A time in our history when life passed more slowly and homes such as these were commissioned only by the fabulously wealthy.

The House

As you leave the hustle and bustle of modern life on the Boston Post Road only a mile away, you drive past the usual colonial homes. Only a short distance before the beach, you are startled by the presence of the Brick House just as you pass the 15' tall wall of Hemlocks that border the property on the north. You turn into the driveway entering upon a beautiful new asphalt driveway finished in a unique cream-colored stone. Your eyes are drawn down the drive to the front facade of the house where the windows and the fifty-foot gable are trimmed with paint matching the color of the stone driveway.

Mature grounds that have been newly manicured surround the house. Unique trees around the property include a thirty-foot Magnolia tree and a spectacular spreading Japanese Chestnut. The pool in the rear of the property is beautifully secluded. With conveniences such as telephone and television, the heated pool is the center of social life in the summer starting early in the morning as steam rises off the water. Next to the pool, provision has been made to build a permanent gas barbecue.

At night, the buildings' front facade, the great Tulip trees and the soft color of the driveway all glow from a flood of lights that create an image unlike any other home in Darien. Your trip back in time has begun as you leave your car under the cast Victorian light fixtures in front of the house. The massive granite steps to the front door are illuminated by the light emanating from an original leaded crystal chandelier just inside the front vestibule. Once inside, you are standing on a Minton encaustic tile floor that the Minton Hollins Tile Company of England helped restore in 1997 by manufacturing identical tiles to those they had made for the house 130 years earlier.

The vestibule, painted white when the house was purchased, has now been entirely restored. The naturally finished mahogany and burlwood had laid in hiding since the 50's when it was first painted. As you pass through the double set of four-inch thick mahogany doors into the main hall, you can see the intricately decorated bronze hinges that hold the doors. The cast bronze handles are just like so many others throughout the first floor of the house. Each of these hinges and door knobs are engraved with the original manufacture date, the latest of which is 1871.

Over head, you are presented with the first of two matching original Victorian leaded glass chandeliers. When the project began, most of the parts of these chandeliers were missing, some broken and beyond repair. Wilkinson, PLC of London England (craftspeople to the Royal House of Windsor) reproduced missing leaded crystal bebesches. Originally gas, these chandeliers were converted to electricity, probably in the 1930's, by the Nickerson's who were the first non-Weed owners of the house. Push button switches inlaid with mother-of-pearl, having elaborate internal mechanisms, turn on the chandelier's six bulbs in pairs of opposing arms. With three pushes of the button, all six arms are lit.

As you stand in the 9' wide 35' long main hallway under this remarkable and rare Victorian chandelier, you feel dwarfed by the thirteen foot ceilings and the nine-foot mahogany pocket doors on either side of you. Nearly out of sight are the main stairs to the private quarters on the upper floors, a trademark of Calvert Vaux. Each room on the first floor is nearly six hundred square feet and each floor of the house approximately three thousand eight hundred square feet.

As your eyes pan the majestic rooms and long hallway, it becomes impossible to imagine that only months ago everything you see was painted a pure homogenous white. Prior owners had painted white, each of the magnificent mahogany, walnut and chestnut doors on the first floor. The doors were painstakingly stripped by hand, refinished and hand-rubbed to a French polish finish. The trim throughout the main hall has been faux-painted to match the spectacular mahogany pocket doors. The hardware was also stripped, then polished and lacquered.

Today, the subdued colors used by Eliane Bradbury to decorate the first floor soften the brightness of the summer sun. These colors are in stark contrast to the white glare that nearly prevented the Bradburys from discovering what they had **really** found in this corner of Darien more than a year ago.

Henry Weed, a southerner at heart, learned well how to take advantage of the relentless southern sun to brighten each room, while he also learned how to build a shelter from it. The design of the building is remarkable and fascinating, although, in the Plantation South, probably not uncommon. The outside walls, nearly two-feet thick, incorporate a thick blanket of air in its design that protects the interior of the house from the outdoor temperature year around. The house is remarkably cool in summer, aided by the romantic shutters in every room. Oriented directly east, the layout of the house, with all of the major rooms protected from the north, assures that dramatic sunlight will pour through all of the building's tremendous windows throughout the day. Naturally warming sunlight and new furnaces together keep the house comfortably warm in winter.

As you continue your journey through time, you leave the hallway for the Dining Room on your right. Exquisite for formal dining, it is outside the flow of the first floor, saved for its special purpose in the evening when a burning fire makes every part of the room glow with its flickering flame. A room where one can enjoy late evenings with good friends into the morning hours without ever wanting to move to another. You have to experience it to understand it. On a more mundane note, the dining room fireplace and each of the four chimney flues in this chimney were completely rebuilt using modern poured-in-place concrete. Even the chimney above the roof was completely rebuilt using salvaged brownstone and new brick laid exactly as the original chimney was.

The finishes of the Dining Room include base moldings more than fourteen inches tall. The door and window casings are three inches thick in places and eight inches wide. Plaster cornices reach more than a foot out from the wall and nearly a foot and a half from the ceiling to its lower edge on the wall. These molding details are in every room of the house with each successive floor having an appropriately lesser design. The wallpaper, carefully chosen by Eliane Bradbury is a deep Terra Cotta color.

The ceiling is elaborately decorated with a plaster molding set in a geometric pattern. At the center of the design is an original plaster medallion three feet in diameter. The medallion is highlighted in gold and a terra cotta color that echoes the color of the walls. The chandelier, installed in the 1950's by the Edmundsen family, is antiqued gold leaf and nearly five feet across.

At the end of the room, around the fireplace, is a spectacular burlwood, walnut and mahogany mantle decorated with the Victorian welcome symbol, a hand-carved pineapple. All this craftsmanship lies beneath an original eight-foot tall mirror adorned with the stylized monogram of the home's master builder, Henry Weed, hand-carved in mahogany. Long since removed from the long walls of the dining room is the 8" wide chair rail seen now only at the end of the room. Sconces on the wall opposite the Dining Room's entrance were added to create a truly intimate atmosphere.

At the opposite end of the Dining Room is a massive bay window having three seven-foot tall double-hung windows. These windows look out upon the recently laid front lawn, sprawling and lavish as all great Victorian lawns were. Completely maintained by an automatic sprinkler system, the view is certain to remain green and lush.

Through a door to the right of the fireplace is a pantry. Completely wired to fit a second full kitchen, the Bradburys decided that it would be kept as an intimate lounge. The Bradburys can be found there enjoying a drink with friends at their centuries old antique Brazilian bar. Once a true butler's pantry, this room was once served by a dumbwaiter that can still be seen abandoned in the room directly below in the basement. Since the 1920's, this room served as the only kitchen until the Bradburys established a new location for the kitchen in the northwest corner of the first floor. It is believed that the Nickerson family moved the kitchen up from the basement when they moved in in 1929. All evidence of its intended modern use discreetly sponge painted to disguise its presence, this room can easily be transformed into a butler's pantry by the simple addition of cabinets and appliances. The flooring in the pantry is solid maple which replaced the vinyl tile that was there when the Bradburys bought the house. Over the doorway leading back to the Dining Room is the doorbell which reminds you of the house's rich history when it rings.

Back through the Dining Room, you travel across the main hallway to reach the parlor. The pocket door, weighing several hundred pounds, can be pushed aside with one hand as it glides across new custom-made tracks designed to match the originals. The door disappears into a pocket between two plastered wood frame walls, unlike most of the other walls in the house's interior which are solid brick. To close the door behind you, you simply press a button on the original bronze hardware and a handle pops out of the door for you to grasp. The leaf springs in the handles of each of these pocket doors were carefully restored. The doors could not be pulled out of the walls when the Bradburys bought the house. Massive base moldings in the hallway conceal the tracks, and are held in place by giant wood screws that were painstakingly uncovered to remove the moldings.

Inside the parlor you cannot help but notice the beautiful cast-iron floor register in the corner finished in porcelain. These registers are found throughout the house. So unique and beautiful are these porcelain registers compared to the steel heating registers that we purposely hide from view today. The ceiling's rectangular patterns of plaster molding provide a pattern to the room for furniture layouts below. The Victorian design on the English wallpaper chosen by Dean Telfer creates a formality unlike any other room in the house.

Each window in the room is actually a pair of French casement doors. The front windows lead out onto a charming teak balconet that has a beautiful cast-iron balustrade and bronze handrail. The bronze handrail is identical in design to the original cast-iron rail lost because of years of rust and corrosion. Matching railings also exist at each side of the front steps and at a matching teak balconet outside the pantry next to the dining room. Fleurs-de-lys decorate the top of each picket in the balustrade, finished in antiqued gold leaf.

In the center of the long wall of the Parlor is a hand-carved Dolomite Marble fireplace surround. An original cast-iron cover closes this working fireplace. Covers like these are on several fireplaces in the house serving as dampers and helping to radiate heat. Dampers built-into the top of a firebox like those used today didn't exist when they built this house.

Two more French casement doors flank the fireplace leading out onto a beautiful columned porch. The details of the porch columns are taken from the brownstone and sandstone columns at the front door. The Bradburys virtually rebuilt this porch as rot and ice damage had destroyed the cornice and arches and several columns. Added to each porch around the house are electrical boxes that can accommodate wall sconces. Switches found conveniently inside the doors of the parlor make it easy to join the porch to a summer evening with friends. Dean Telfer chose colors for the porch columns that would give the appearance of **being** brownstone and sandstone. These colors make the porch resemble the masonry structure of the house instead of standing apart from it.

Another set of French doors at the end of the porch lead to the Music Room. Like the Parlor and the Dining Room, the Music Room has massive mahogany pocket doors. When these doors are opened, they join the rooms to create a single enormous space for large parties. Nevertheless, each room retains its own character and ambience, so your friends will still feel they are part of small intimate groups as they move from room to room. The Music Room also has a bay window like the Dining Room. Both bay windows were in such poor condition when the Bradburys bought the house, the roofs were removed and rebuilt, and the plaster ceilings restored.

The Music Room trim, painted white when the house was purchased, was originally a dark mahogany with a French polish finish. Thought by the team to be real mahogany, the trim was stripped, only to find out that it was simple pine, faux-painted mahogany. Dean Telfer decided that the trim would be faux-painted again, this time to match the mahogany pocket doors. Because of the rich dark look of the trim, the Bradburys decided not to reinstall the dark colored louvered shutters at the windows as they had on all the other windows in the house.

Part of an extraordinary aspect of the house's design, each shutter is integral to keeping the house cool in summer, and, maintaining privacy year around. Folded louvered shutters can be found at every door and window in the house. Original, most of the shutters still have cast bronze hardware. Many had to be repaired and reinforced. The Bradburys also decided to leave the original finish on the shutters to maintain the antique feel of each room in the house.

The brick portion of the house walls is nearly 12" thick. The windows and doors are anchored within the masonry construction. Inside this masonry exterior is a second shell of wood frame and plaster. This inner layer of the wall construction adds another foot to its thickness and creates the depth necessary to form a pocket for each shutter to be folded into. There are 12 shutter panels for every door and window in

the house of which there are 45, totaling 528 shutters. Even the basement windows have their own custom shutters and shutter pockets. When folded into place, the dark shutters provide a visual frame to each window, helping to reduce its scale and providing a sense of warmth that one would only expect to get from art work hanging on the wall.

Noticeably interrupting the rich brown color around each window in the Music Room are silver screws in the window and door stops. Often seen held in with brass screws, silver ones in the stops is certainly a touch you would expect to see in such a magnificent home. However, this was a detail almost lost forever. During construction, assuming that the screws were brass (all the original ones were covered with paint), crews began to replace them with new brass ones. While window hardware was placed into paint stripper, and screws were being discarded, several ended up in the stripper as well. When later removed and washed with the hardware, a silver cap was exposed.

The screws are known as “button head” screws, rarely used today and not available in many sizes. Made of steel, they wrapped a jacket made of silver around the head to provide the rich finish. Searching to replace the old screws with new ones, it was learned that these screws were, in fact, mass produced during the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, none could be found. The remaining stocks, we were told, were consumed during the restoration rush of the late 1970's and 80's. As a gift to the Bradburys, E.M. Rose had six hundred button head screws plated in silver and rhodium. The rhodium assures that they will never tarnish only to be covered again by paint. As each room of the house was completed by the decorating crews, carpenters installed the finishing touch by replacing temporary brass screws with permanent silver ones. The only original silver screws remaining can be seen under the main staircase carriage.

Centered over the Music Room's working fireplace is another original, hand carved, mahogany and rosewood Victorian mirror measuring nearly 5' wide and 8' tall. During construction, more than 30 missing pieces had to be hand carved by E.M. Rose craftsmen. Using the faint outlines in the old finish as a guide, each missing piece was re-created and the entire mirror was refinished with a French polish.

Lighting this magnificent mirror are the six opaque white globes of another gas chandelier, since converted to electricity. This chandelier may not be original to the house with its brass body and thinly cut crystals. Nevertheless, its Victorian design of a later period only adds to the variety of emotion evoked by each room.

Conservative colors highlight the rectangular ceiling patterns, like those of the parlor. Chosen by Eliane Bradbury, the color makes you aware of the workmanship of the ceiling while not competing with the other parts of the room. When they built the house, these moldings were probably struck on the ground in straight sections and then adhered to the ceiling using Plaster-of-Paris. Remarkably strong, the plaster throughout the house has barely shown its age, while the paint that adhered to it over the decades did more damage than the passage of time itself. Several hundred feet of plaster moldings were re-created or restored around the house. New moldings were made using the same materials the original craftsmen used. The molds used to duplicate these original designs were made from space-age materials that reduced the time required to prepare for the work.

Throughout the house, an enormous amount of work was required to restore it to its original grandeur. Modern tools, materials and techniques were used to reduce the time required to duplicate the craftsmanship of the past. However, the final decision on how to proceed with each task was always decided based on the first rule of restoration: "let there be no distinction between the present and the past." Nowhere else in the house were we presented with greater challenges to that rule than in the kitchen.

Once two separate rooms, Dean Telfer combined the library and an office into a beautiful combination kitchen and family room. Neither the original kitchen in the basement, nor the small kitchen later created in the butler's pantry, provided an opportunity to create a family hearth on the scale necessary to fit in with the rest of the house. While homes like these were built during a time when kitchens were the province only of the servants and tucked away, out of sight, today, of course, they serve as the center of family life.

The space created by Mr. Telfer for the new "old" kitchen is more than 600 square feet and has most definitely become the center of the Bradburys' lives at home. As you enter the kitchen from the Music room, your eyes are immediately drawn up to the pale Victorian green ceiling. Oddly off-center is a large ceiling medallion painted ghostly white, the only remnant of the library that once existed centered around the medallion. Just beyond, hang three delicate Victorian etched glass ceiling fixtures that light the massive 2¼" thick Brazilian granite counter that sits atop the kitchen island. The sixty square foot island is nearly twelve feet long and five feet wide. As you would expect for such a monumental structure such as this, columns had to be used to support it. Six columns positioned around the island are made of solid maple. Their shafts, veneered with birds-eye maple, their plinths and capitals are hand-carved to match the original marble columns that are a part of the fireplace surround at the end of the room.

This marble surround houses a modern gas fireplace that warms the kitchen in winter and provides a wonderful ambience for family gatherings. Once located in the center of the room where the island now sits, this surround framed a working fireplace that was part of a masonry wall that traveled all the way to the roof of the house. To eliminate this obstruction to Dean Telfer's great plan of creating a monumental kitchen, the Bradburys agreed to the removal of the masonry wall and to the support of the upper walls of the house on steel.

Through a small 16" hole in the outside wall of the house, a 30-ton crane threaded a 14 inch tall, twenty foot long, two ton, steel beam into the ceiling of the kitchen. Steel columns traveling down to the basement floor were installed to support the steel. The floor joists of the house, nearly 14" deep and 3" thick, were placed 13" apart by the original builder. Fortunately, the thickness of the house floors, more than 16 inches, was enough to hide this monstrous structural member so that no one would be aware of what had been done.

The large plaster crown molding that once adorned the ceiling of the library, now supplanted by the kitchen, was chosen to finish the new space. The smaller crown of what used to be a small corner room used as an office did not have the scale needed for this new space. A small section of crown molding was removed from the Library and a latex mold made to create new sections of molding. Seventy feet of the giant plaster crown molding, nearly 18" across, were hand made and fastened into place. A deep cove that is part of the crown's design can be seen clearly as it corners around the fireplace wall at the end of the room.

To the tutored eye, the massive moldings of olden days have long since disappeared from use because of the loss of the plaster trade. Dramatic shapes such as this cove molding cannot be created in wood. Plasterers worked at the project for nearly six months, insuring that no detail would be lost by using inferior modern materials.

In early evening, the dusk sun lights the kitchen romantically through the transoms over the top of the French doors. The shutters below can be closed to allow the sunlight to be enjoyed without the glare of the intense setting sun. The color of the new maple floors and the uniquely designed kitchen cabinets are another detail created by Dean Telfer to keep you immersed in the nineteenth century. Using molding designs found elsewhere in the house and details taken from the doors, the new cabinets seem as though they must have always been there.

Modern conveniences, such as a dishwasher and Sub-Zero's largest refrigerator, were decorated with panels that disguise their presence. Thermador's largest professional gas range, finished in stainless steel, hardly seems out of place, or time, where it sits against the wall under a 9-foot long handmade copper vent hood. Directly across from the range is the island with a deep cast iron porcelain sink, reminiscent of the heating registers found throughout the house. The faucet, finished in nickel silver is another touch chosen by Eliane Bradbury in keeping with the period look of the kitchen. Next to the sink sits a round maple cutting board that can be pushed aside to expose trash cans below allowing you to clean off your work surface conveniently and quickly.

Nine foot tall china cabinets, handmade with the rest of the kitchen cabinets sit on round bun feet made of solid maple 3" thick and 7" in diameter. The upper portion of the china cabinets are visually supported on brackets designed by Dean Telfer. Incorporated into the brackets' profile is the crown molding seen atop all of the cabinets in the kitchen. It is this crown molding that provides one clue that Calvert Vaux was indeed the original architect of the house. This crown molding is seen in a detail drawing of Vaux' design for the West Side Lodging House for Boys in New York City, circa 1878.

At the far end of the kitchen is another beautiful paneled door matching all of the other doors of the house. However, this door had to be faux-painted mahogany to hide the fact that it is made of pine. Once the door that led servants to their quarters in the basement and the third floor, this doorway leads to a wonderfully convenient back hallway that can be used to travel between the kitchen and the main dining room.

The servants, rumored to number between ten and twenty when the Weeds occupied the house, apparently didn't warrant having a door, the likes of which grace even the closets in the rest of the house. However, they did have their own staircase which spirals up three floors to provide access to all of the levels of the house. Nevertheless, as was typical of the day, this service hallway could be secured to prevent servants from having access to the main living quarters. The masters of the house could sleep well knowing they were protected from a poorly treated servant carrying out a vengeful conspiracy in the night. A few notable cases of such maliciousness, particularly in Vaux's home of England, was enough to spawn an architectural detail that became a standard in all houses commissioned by such wealth.

The service staircase, made entirely of mahogany, has nearly two hundred hand-carved balusters. The massive railing makes you realize how low our expectations have become when you see that a servant's railing of past eras dwarfs the scale of the stair details in today's "grand entrances." Beneath the first flight of this staircase is a doorway leading to the basement.

Possibly used for servants quarters, as well as the kitchen and mechanical rooms, the basement provides plenty of opportunities to create new finished spaces in the future. With eight foot ceilings and plastered walls, its rooms mirror the floor plan of the first floor above. Protected by drainage added by the Bradburys, pipes around the east and north sides of the basement now take water draining off the roof away from the house to the rear of the property. Used for storage today, the basement is also the center for the Security equipment, the sprinkler system, the electrical, plumbing and heating systems.

The electrical system, completely updated to meet modern codes, is currently fed by a 200-amp service and can be easily upgraded to 400 amps, although it probably isn't necessary. The security system, designed and installed by Westec Security, is monitored 24 hours per day and provides both security and fire protection. This system can also be easily upgraded to include an intercom system between the front and back entrance doors and each level of the house as well. The plumbing system, almost entirely new and divided into sections feeding different parts of the house, can be conveniently shut down to allow service to any bathroom and the kitchen. The gas piping also has easily accessed shut-offs so that any appliance can be shut down for service.

The heating needs of the house are met using oil-fired furnaces. The underground 1500 gallon oil storage tank next to the garage has been tested and is insured. The heating plant includes two new 150,000 btu furnaces that provide filtered forced hot-air through a single-zone duct distribution system throughout the house. The high efficient oil burners keep heating costs low. In the winter of '96/'97, during the height of construction when the house was open to scores of workers passing in and out, the new furnaces burned continuously. Nevertheless, fuel averaged less than \$500 per month for heat and hot water, a tribute to the house's fortress walls.

As you return from the basement and walk across the antique eastern pine floor installed by the Bradburys in the back hall, you pass through another mahogany door with an original Victorian etched-glass panel. One of two matching glass panels, the design is identical to one found in a dressing room in the Norwalk Lockwood-Mathews mansion built three years earlier in 1868. This feature may suggest that some materials used in the house were mass-produced, or possibly, that the Weeds and Lockwood's had more in common than just their wealth. The doorway returns you to the main hallway you were in when you entered the house, but from a secluded corner. The great stair case leading to the private quarters on the second floor is over your head where you can see the only surviving original button head silver-jacketed screws.

Nestled beneath the stair case is the powder room. A hidden architectural treasure in the house, Dean Telfer designed the powder room. Details that adorn the nine foot beveled glass mirror over the vanity and the gothic arched ceiling over the commode were borrowed from a very unusual place in the house. The design of the colonnettes that support the arch over the mirror was borrowed from the colonnettes embedded in the front doors of the house. Even more unusual is the arching trim over the mirror. Difficult to discern, this trim is a three-dimensional extrusion of a fleur-de-lys, also embedded in the front entrance doors. Discovered while the doors were set on a table to be stripped, the remarkable molding produces a

fleur-de-lys when diced like a carrot. Perhaps the hidden nature of these original details makes them more à propos in this unusual and private space.

As you leave the powder room to ascend the carved mahogany Victorian Gothic staircase, you find an unusual light fixture at the base of the stairs. Photographs of the house, before the Bradburys purchased it, show that this fixture was nowhere to be found. The newel post, with its hand-carved corners and gold-leafed crests, was capped with a small plaster finial. This corner of the hallway was hidden from the public’s eye and it was dark and difficult to see. The secluded position of the main stairs leading to the family’s private quarters is a detail often used by Vaux. Knowing how wisely sunlight was used to light all of the rooms of the house, it seemed unlikely that Vaux would forget the grand staircase in darkness.

It became a pet project to learn whether there was ever a newel post fixture at the base of the stairs, a common detail of the period. However, the plaster finial would not budge from its perch as every attempt was made to twist it off the newel post without damaging it. Not until the finial was turned counterclockwise did it come loose exposing the original gas nipple that once surely held a beautiful fixture. Now, what to do with this vacancy? Newel post fixtures are rare, and of what design would be appropriate? Weeks later, while searching the basement for lost pieces of the Music Room mirror, a mahogany trim piece was found, but it was dropped by accident where it rolled under a shelf in the basement work shop. Kneeling down to retrieve it, Tim Bradbury came up with the newel post fixture that, by all accounts, had not been seen at least since before the Edmundsons of Darien bought the house in 1950.

A bizarre little fixture, the entire piece was painted green, its purpose not immediately evident until it was determined which way was right side up. Its design not only reflects the tastes of the times, but some of its inconveniences as well. Fitted with a gas lamp **and** an electrical lamp, one is reminded that the sources of the day for electricity were actually less reliable than they are in modern times. The combination insured that one would always have light, but it leaves us wondering what might have been there when the construction of the house was completed in 1871. Neither electricity, nor the light bulb, existed commercially before the 1880's.

As you look up the stair aided by the lamp held in a gargoyle’s mouth on the newel post, you hold on to a spectacular five-inch thick mahogany railing. The railing balustrade required more than two hundred pieces be carved by E.M. Rose’ craftsmen to replace missing ones. Today, completely refinished, the railing is like a permanent piece of furniture on display. At the top of the stairs is a lighted niche, known in the vernacular as a “coffin corner.” These niches remained as an architectural detail long after custom had moved away from having funerals in the home when these niches were used to maneuver a long coffin up and down the stairs. Over your head is a large interior skylight that brings light into the central hallway from the roof. Removed because of decay that left these roof skylights beyond repair, the roof openings await new skylights to bring back the natural light that brightens the only unnaturally lighted space in the house.

This skylight also plays a pivotal role in keeping the house cool in summer and comfortable in winter. Inside the skylight opening you can see layers of cascading plaster moldings. This cornice forms a deep funnel leading air from the lower floors up into the third floor and attic above. Incorporated into this elaborate cornice is a vent that allows air to travel to the third floor through porcelain registers built into a platform in the third floor hallway. These vents bring additional warm air into the third floor in winter,

preventing a build up of hot air in the floor below. In summer, open windows around the house let in cool air. Traveling through a maze of louvered doors and shutters, a cool summer breeze is created inside the house that air conditioning could never duplicate. One long lost element of this elegant and efficient cooling system are the gas jets that used to operate in the attic above the third floor. Creating a fourth floor in the house by adding a space of nearly three thousand square feet with eight foot ceilings, the attic is vented and well lit when the skylights are in place.

Similar to the platform seen at the third floor hallway, there are vents in the attic above where there remains a gas nipple that once had gas jets attached. These gas ports would be lit to create a broad flame above the skylight causing a chimney effect that would draw the summer air into the house through open windows on the lower floors, pulling the air up into the attic. The resulting breeze, which can still be created today unaided by gas jets, has the sweet smell of the trees and flowers outside. In place of these gas jets, the Bradburys installed a spring mounted, removable, attic fan that quietly re-creates the draft once created by the long lost open flames.

At the top of the main staircase you are presented with the second of the pair of Victorian crystal chandeliers which is controlled by a switch at the top and bottom of the stairs. What makes this chandelier unique is that by turning the crystal pendant at the bottom of the chandelier, each of the six bulbs can be turned on, one at a time, in succession. With one final turn, the chandelier can be turned off. Operated in a similar fashion to the one on the first floor, its presence makes you realize that even the second floor was well appointed with rich details. Around the perimeter of the almost 275 square foot center hall, are the four main bedrooms, each having its own bathroom. The laundry room is across from the top of the stairs and serves as a guest bathroom as well. Restored tile and Victorian pattern wallpaper give this bath a charm that helps you overcome your dread of the work to be done there.

It is believed that the bathrooms were added when the Nickersons bought the house in 1929. Walls that created some of the bathrooms clearly were not original. In the southeast bedroom, the bathroom wall separates the fireplace from its symmetrical position between two windows. The Bradburys expanded the master bathroom by removing a wall of a small closet once accessed from the back hallway. It is also believed that the Nickersons created separate bedrooms by separating the master suite that included the two southern bedrooms and the east facing dressing room which is now a part of the current master suite.

The space for the new master dressing room was conceived by the Bradburys and created by eliminating a doorway from the southeast bedroom and creating a new one from the master bedroom to the east. Dean Telfer designed a magnificent cherry dressing room, again using details from existing elements in the house. The completed space, reminiscent of McKim, Mead and White architectural details of the turn-of-the-century, redefines the Ralph Lauren look of the 80's and 90's.

The room is neatly arranged with areas for his and her clothing, including, a built-in chest of drawers, a make-up desk and a blanket chest built into the window seat, all of which are made from solid cherry. Inlaid in one set of closet doors are a pair of 7-foot tall beveled glass mirrors that match another mirror hanging over the make-up desk. Two-inch thick Gothic designed doors and massive cherry crown moldings glow beneath the recessed ceiling lighting that make for a warm and elegant place to prepare for the day.

The master bathroom is an achievement by itself. Eleven true gothic arches, each of a different size, were created, their intersections hand-carved to meet atop thinly proportioned columns, faux-painted with exceptional skill to match the red marble counters. Beneath the arches are the significant elements of the bath; the vanity, the shower and tub, the commode, the bidet, and the windows and doors. The shower, seemingly undefined by its almost invisible enclosure, has a massive and elaborate solid brass English valve and shower head, fully exposed and mounted on the tumbled marble walls. Likewise, the tub is adorned on its edge by a matching exposed tub set with a hand shower on the top and porcelain plaques that identify the hot and cold taps. Creating an open feeling, reminiscent of a Roman bath, are three matching six-foot tall beveled-edge gothic-arch mirrors above the vanity. Around the room supporting each of the arch intersections, is a replica of a carved gothic capital borrowed by Dean Telfer from a Gothic Victorian cathedral and modeled to complete the authenticity of this High Victorian bathroom created only just this year.

The master suite is a refuge to enjoy, one that stands out in a house full of intimate refuges. The bedroom itself has a beautiful working fireplace, completely rebuilt along with the dining room fireplace below it. The chimney was rebuilt from the inside out. Workers, sent down the chimney from the roof, removed the interior flues and installed concrete forms to create new flues. This new chimney will insure that the oil-fired furnaces and hot water heater continue to burn safely for another century and a half.

Diametrically opposed in the corners flanking the fireplace is the technology of today set off against the simple beauty of a corner cabinet displaying curios' of the past. The security panel next to the bedroom door controls the entire security system of the house, matching the panels found at the front and back doors on the first floor. These panels can be easily upgraded to provide intercom capabilities between these locations and the third floor. The corner cabinet was actually a door to a small triangular closet. Eliane Bradbury had the idea to create this beautiful corner cabinet, but it was Dean Telfer's pen that showed how simple creating something from nothing is. Asking only that we cut the existing closet door in half and add a round back to the closet, the resulting display cabinet is indistinguishable from the historic fabric of the room surrounding it.

The marble fireplace surround matches another on the second floor in the northwest bedroom (the blue room). Together, these two surrounds define the lesser bedrooms, most certainly occupied by the heirs of the Weed fortune, Henry Weed's two sons. The other two fireplaces on the second floor, being different, support the belief that the remaining rooms on the second floor defined the original master suite. Likewise, the chandelier over head is original Victorian leaded crystal and matches the blue room's as well.

The blue room is directly across the hall from the master suite. Matching it in many respects, the blue room has its own unique ambience, particularly at dusk when the evening sun sets and light pours through the windows, just as it does in the kitchen and music room below. The Mantle which is original, stands alone, its sibling fireplace sacrificed to create the spectacular kitchen on the first floor. During construction of the kitchen, the fireplace surround in the blue room and all of the moldings on the wall and in the bathrooms beyond were removed. Holes were opened through the bedroom wall into the bathroom and laundry room to allow massive steel beams to be inserted through the holes. These beams were supported with timber posts running to the basement floor. All this effort was necessary, however temporary, to allow removal of the fireplace and masonry wall in the kitchen below. Once removed, these steel beams

supported the house above the kitchen until the new steel girder could be installed in the kitchen ceiling. Once the new beam was complete, the blue room and its bathroom, and the laundry, were restored to their original condition.

The bathroom, restored and redecorated, retains every bit of its antique origin. The cracked tile, many of which were replaced using tiles removed from other bathrooms that were replaced entirely, creates a wainscot around the room capped by blue antique Portuguese tiles imported by the Bradburys. A glass enclosed shower stands in the corner opposite the original built-in cast-iron bathtub. At the core of the room’s ambience stands a cherry vanity, reminiscent of the Edwardian style. Constantly challenged to keep up with Eliane Bradbury’s vision for the house, the vanity was created by a cabinetmaker to match a piece of dollhouse furniture brought home by Eliane with instructions to make something simple “like that”. With a few hand sketches of details from Dean Telfer, the vanity was created to improve on a bathroom that had never been given quite so much thought before.

Next door to the blue room, the southwest bedroom (the yellow room) has a view of the pool to the west and the rising morning sun to the east. It is understandable why this location was chosen in the original design for the master suite’s sitting room. Enjoying the light of the sun throughout the day, the French casement windows all open to bring in nature’s sweet sounds, as well. The largest bedroom on the second floor, another bedroom matches it in size directly above on the third floor. Through doors in adjacent corners of the rooms are two ample walk-in closets with built-in shoe racks and chest of drawers and twenty five feet of closet pole.

Through a side door of the bedroom you enter the common bathroom shared by the southeast bedroom. This bathroom was originally created by the Nickerson’s with the construction of a wall in the southwest bedroom that separated the bedroom from its matching window. The size and scale of the bathroom’s features, such as the giant double hung window in the corner and the arching ceiling create a spacious comfortable feeling.

The floor is tiled with a simple square tile having a uniformly streaked paint finish in an iridescent blue that matches the wallpaper by Laura Ashley. The wallpaper border at the top of the wall was custom made to fit precisely in the space created by the arches of the bathroom and shower ceilings. Mounted to the surface of the delicately designed shower tile having colors that match the wallpapers, is another solid brass shower valve and shower head like that in the master bathroom. Designed to be shared, the bathroom has matching painted vanities with gothic arched panels in the doors and beveled edge triptych mirrors above. The vanity tops, simple white Thasos marble from Greece, match the simplicity of the fixtures including a commode, bidet and a whirlpool bathtub.

Through the bathroom you enter the southeast bedroom. The windows look to the east and the south. With matching closets flanking the east-facing windows, who could tell that the closet on the right with its twelve inch plaster moldings and seven-foot tall, two inch thick door, didn’t exist a year ago. The fireplace mantle, once painted white has been stripped and cleaned, as has the chimney flu. The room’s eleven foot high ceilings disguise the fact that this is the smallest bedroom on the floor, but the beautiful morning sunlight peering over the tops of the window shutter’s make it one of the most pleasant to stay in.

As you leave the southeast bedroom and return to the hallway, you see the louvered doors at each entrance to the other bedrooms. It is unlikely, of course, that the southeast bedroom ever had a louvered door like the others, since it was the original master bedroom. These louvered doors are a part of the building's cooling system. During the summer, the cool night air flows quietly through the bedroom windows and then the louvered doors on up to the upper floors through the main hall skylight aided by the attic fan. Laid back against the wall during the winter when they are not in use, they are reminders of what there is to look forward to come spring. Just to the right of the stairwell across from the southwest bedroom is one of two walk-in cedar closets. The other, in the back hall, combines to provide substantial amounts of seasonal and everyday storage.

You leave the second floor hallway through a door at the top of the stairs that has an etched glass panel matching the one in the first floor hallway. The back stair hall, with its winding mahogany rail and hand-carved balusters, leads you to the third floor where remarkably, another finished three thousand eight-hundred square feet exists. Each room echoes the floor plan of the second floor below. Once the domain of servants in a bygone era, the third floor was home to the entire Bradbury family throughout most of the construction. Each room, carpeted and decorated, serves as a guest bedroom to the Bradbury's visiting family members from Brazil and England.

In the southeast corner of the third floor is the "Bradbury family room." Measuring twenty by twenty-seven feet, without columns or obstructions, the family room provides a wonderful quarter for the children to get away from the rest of the house. In the center of the ceiling is a skylight that can bring the sunlight in from the roof when the roof skylights are installed. The family room also has been wired for a home entertainment center. Each room on the floor has at least one large walk-in closet and a dormer window peeking out through the slate roof high above the grounds. Two of the rooms have separate wiring to support computers and exercise machines. In the corner of the hallway directly over the second floor master bath is a private bath serving the third floor. Across the hallway is a door leading up to an unfinished attic having more than two thousand five hundred square feet and nearly eight-foot ceilings. There is also a convenient stairway leading to the flat roof.

The third floor, together with the floors below, provides a total living area of nearly 11,000 square feet. The third floor accessed only through the back hallway can become a wonderful private space, separate and apart from the rest of the house. As a children's floor, as the Bradburys have used it, it provides areas for entertainment, homework, or just having friends over.

The Exterior

The massive exterior of the building and the grounds are as interesting and delightful as the interior. Around the house are three porches and an open deck across the back of the house. The porches, decked with one inch thick fir flooring and surrounded by original iron rails, each provide a different example of the stick frame style of Victorian architecture. Even their relative positions around the house; facing the pool, on the north side, and under the Magnolia tree to the south, creates a different purpose and feel. The formal, columned porch off the parlor adds a beautiful outdoor evening setting to any party. The veranda off the music room overlooking the pool, with its open awnings, provides a quiet shady place to enjoy a book in the afternoon while watching the children in the pool. The two-level porch to the north provides cover for your trip in from the garage.

The brick exterior of the house, accented with brownstones, has weathered time undaunted. Purported to have been brought over as ballast on British ships-of-commerce, the bricks are a wonderful combination of reds and oranges. The skill of the original masons is so subtle as not to notice that when you stand back from the house, the joints between the bricks become invisible. The mortar, probably a lime mortar used before the advent of Portland cement, was mixed with coal fines and dust. The resulting dark grey lines disappear from the facades.

Ice and rot had destroyed the eaves of the roof over the years. More than two thousand feet of trim were manufactured to copy original parts exactly. The cornices of the house were completely rebuilt. Incorporated into the original design of these overhangs were tin-lined gutters which were also entirely replaced using soldered lead coated copper.

The roof surfaces are covered in Pennsylvania Ribbon Slate that has not been quarried in nearly one hundred years. Given the steep slope of the roof, the original slates have survived remarkably well. Flashings, however, were mostly tin that had been patched and tarred repeatedly over the decades and no longer functioned. All of the roof flashings were removed and new lead coated copper was used to replace them. A search was conducted for a matching slate which was ultimately located in a part of a Vermont quarry rarely operated. Matching slates were obtained and used to re-roof all of the areas stripped during the replacement of flashings.

The flat roofs of the bay windows, the main house and the porches were stripped of asbestos, tin and hot tar surfaces and replaced with new, modern and lighter membrane roofs. Atop each bay window roof were cast-iron crests that could not be saved. However, its design has been preserved and it can be easily reproduced and installed again. These crests are unique and have been reviewed by experts who have never seen similar designs. A stylized version of the bay window crests is carved into the brackets found supporting plaster beams in the Dining and Music Rooms and over the main stairs. The repeated use of this unidentified motif leaves one to wonder about its significance. Could it represent a name once given to the house by its original owners?

The main flat roof of the house also had cast-iron cresting which has been preserved largely in good condition and is stored in the attic. It is believed that Charles Locke Eastlake (1833-1906) designed the crests, a hugely popular English interior designer of the period, famed for his ornamentation of Victorian Gothic buildings through railings, crests and balustrades.

Aside from the work done to the roof, little work on the exterior was performed other than painting. The brick, sandblasted in the 80's by a prior owner, received some repointing where it was badly needed. The main granite steps at the front entrance had to be rebuilt to repair damage done by frost over the decades. Structurally the brownstone embellishment on the house's exterior is in good condition. Repairs to the surface of some of the brownstone can easily be done in the future.

A remarkable edifice, the Brick House was built to last and indeed it has. Rejuvenated by the Bradburys, the fabulous details that make this house unique have been brought back for everyone's enjoyment.