

Fountain Prairie

Inn & Farms



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What's New

Restoration Brings Back Victorian Feel



That is the appeal that has led the owners to open the Fountain Prairie Inn and Farms to the public; sharing what has become their passion just west of Fall River on Highway 16.

The grand house on the property was built in 1899 by Fayette and Kate (Miller) Foster. Five families have lived in the home since then. If given a second chance, Dorothy and John Priske might have looked more closely before buying their 5,400-square-foot, three-story Victorian home. The house, together with some farm buildings, stands on a 290-acre farmland. The Priskes' enthusiasm for the home's original

cabinets, grand wooden staircase and built-in bench in the front foyer distracted them from

looking at other structural details. "We were so enamored with the woodwork that we didn't look at other things," said Dorothy Priske, a senior registered sales assistant. Two years after moving in, the Priskes stripped off the asphalt siding to blow in 10,000 pounds of insulation. Much to their delight, the original wooden detailing around windows, and elaborate patterns of decorative cedar "fish-scale" siding in the roof peaks remained intact. But, once they started, the Priskes found that one job leads to another.



Using old photographs, the Priskes were able to re-create many of the home's exterior details and restore it to its former glory, like the latticework and footings below the porch as well as the trim pieces and railings on top of the dormers. Ill fitting windows in the home were replaced on by one, said Dorothy, as also glass windows were reframed and exterior storms were added to cut down on drafts.



With only black-and-white photographs available, choosing exterior colors was difficult, said Dorothy. In the end, Twain blue was chosen for the main color with "chutney" red and soft gold for the trim. With the exterior work complete, the Priskes will venture inside this year, stripping off fiber wall board,

removing false ceilings, ripping up glued-down carpeting from the wooden floors, and restoring a Victorian feel to the house.



While much work remains, the Priskes have taken time to celebrate their progress, including celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary in June 1997 with a remarriage ceremony in the gazebo on their front lawn. They don't have any regrets about the efforts they put into the project.

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