Ulster Publishing's

Hudson Valley Living

Fall Home Improvement 2022

The best just got better.

Benjamin Moore set out to do the impossible—make AURA® Interior paint even more beautiful, more durable and longer-lasting. Benjamin Moore elevated this ultra-premium paint, which was already in a class by itself for deep, rich color that lasts.

Benjamin Moore®
AURA®

Herzog's
EST. 1909
HOME & PAINT CENTERS

Kingston Plaza • 151 Plaza Road
www.Herzogs.com • (845) 338-6300

PHOTOS PROVIDED

Mural by Kevin Paulsen.

Living inside the art of your dreams

Kevin Paulsen creates custom mural art

by Zac Shaw

The goal of home design is to create a living space that's a work of art. But what if you could literally live inside a work of art?

This is the fantastic reality Kingston artist Kevin Paulsen brings to homeowners all over the Hudson Valley, New England, and indeed the whole country.

For 30 years, Paulsen has installed his incredible hand-painted floor-to-ceiling murals for art lovers far and wide.

Most of us know what it's like to fall in love with an artist's work. Some of us have acquired pieces to hang in our homes. We're used to defining interior design around our favorite art.

Paulsen's murals take art in the home to the extreme. You don't just appreciate a mural in your dining room. You inhabit it while you eat.

"Something I've always enjoyed is there's context to a mural," Paulsen said "It's an environment versus, 'Oh, there's a painting hanging on the wall.'"

One of the most exciting parts about a permanent art installation in one's house is the rich and storied sense of history the work brings with it. While many of Paulsen's murals reside in high-end homes, the origins of his muraling tradition have a storied past in the residences of the less wealthy.

Two hundred years ago, a new school of art was being born on the walls of homes throughout New England.

The walls of history

The history of American itinerant artistry has an outsized influence on the world of mural painting. Paulsen's work is rooted in an appreciation of the timeless forms of Colonial-era painters, often self-taught, who did uncredited work in exchange for room, board, and traveling money to the next town.

"These were funky, worn-out, simplified formats of landscape and decoration," Paulsen said. "A lot of it was that they were emulating the wealthier class in the city, but they didn't have the resources."

The American Itinerant tradition is something Paulsen is very familiar with, though he says he's not as influenced by it as he used to be. "I took it as a lesson," he said. "My stuff looked 'period' early on, but then I just developed imagery to make something new."

Artist and polymath Rufus Porter is the figurehead of this tradition in 1800s New England. He literally wrote the book on the subject.

"It was more or less his theory about how you approach a wall," Paulsen said of the text's influence on him. "He didn't really talk about technique or naturalism or realism. He talked about balance and form. It was more like Abstract Expressionism."

The techniques Paulsen developed for mural painting had their origins in his work as a restoration artist, where he would bring vintage art and decor back to life. It wasn't long before he was turning his talents to creating wholly original works.

Hunted by Bears by Kevin Paulsen.

"I got into this idea of putting plaster on lightweight styrene, and I developed a technique," he said. "Plaster's one of the oldest and most permanent things you can paint on. I've always used unorthodox materials to figure out what I was trying to get at."

"I did 53 paintings on my floor, most of which are gone"

His more traditional paintings are even more unique, right down to the canvas. "With painting commissions, I'm getting away from the plaster surfaces," he said. "Old boards, 18th and 19th century, folksy urns .... I started painting on my floor literally by accident. I did 53 paintings on my floor, most of which are gone. Eventually I'll cut the floor up."

He also incorporates elements of graffiti into his original works, a more modern tradition of uncredited, itinerant American artists very similar to their Colonial counterparts. Both art forms exhibit the fly-by-night aspect of throwing art up on a wall and bouncing to the next spot.

The unifying artistic thread between both scenes is the spirit of painting intuitively and indelibly, honing technique while letting creativity run free.

Paulsen has shown at many esteemed galleries over the years, and many mural customers end up purchasing paintings to hang as well, carrying Paulsen's antique-meets-modern aesthetic throughout their entire home.

It's hard to quantify the number of Paulsen pieces that adorn walls throughout the country. There are certainly enough to feed a word-of-mouth cycle that drives homeowners and designers to discover his show-stopping work and hire him to turn rooms into art.

"The value increases with the reputation," he says.

Making of a mural

If you're a homeowner interested in exploring murals and hand-patterned walls, you'll be happy to know that artists such as Paulsen make the process easy. Your biggest challenge may be finding the artist that connects with the aesthetic you want to define your dream room. Once you find them, Paulsen recommends trusting them to achieve the best results.

"Usually people find me by word-of-mouth now, so they already know what I'm about," Paulsen said. "If they know what I do and they let me do it, they're usually much happier."

While he will consult with clients on color scheme, mood, and general aesthetic, Paulsen is an intuitive painter with a keen eye honed over many decades of his craft.

Mural by Kevin Paulsen.

"I rarely do mockups," Pauslon said. "You get better work out."

He likes to see the space. "You work with elevations," he explained. "Sometimes the measurements you get can be inaccurate. If I can, I go to the site and take measurements."

For such a massive art installation to

be produced on a client's timeline, it's imperative to start planning as far out as possible.

"The further ahead the better," Paulsen says. "Once we've met and had a meeting of the minds, it can take a few months. The actual time that it takes varies from job to job, and sometimes there's a level of detail or fine-tuning that takes further time."

Once the specifications are set, Paulsen enters his Kingston studio to begin the process of creating the custom mural art. "I stretch theatrical muslin, shrink it with water, then I apply a thin veneer of synthetic plaster," he said. "I don't always use it the way it's meant to be used. I get a dry, crusty color, and then I just work on top of it, stain and sand, and make sort of a mess."

Once complete, the mural is rolled up and transported to its final destination, with Paulsen present to do the installation and final touches.

"I'm usually the last one in and the last one out," he explained. "When I hang these murals, the painters are usually finished. I trim to fit. We glue it to the wall slightly oversized, and we trim it. And if there's any antiquing, we do it then. It's hard to put up a mural when you've got people moving around, working."

Mural by Kevin Paulsen.

Wallpaper is back

According to major home-design trade publications and market data, wallpaper is making a major comeback. The ability to print digital wallpaper has allowed unprecedented customization. Paulsen has a long history of hand-painted patterning, and more recently has gotten into the digital side.

"Patterning takes quite a while, especially if you do it by hand," he said. "It varies on the scale. It can be anywhere from a month to six months, it depends. I've also done some digital wallpapers, which are easier."

Patterning techniques can be mixed and matched. Some walls are done with hand-stamped wallpaper and finished with painting by hand. Whatever the technique, one must truly see hand-pattered wallpaper to believe its superior artistry over traditional printed wallpapers.

The latter is a mass-manufactured aggregation of ink, the former feels as if it has come from nature. Each handmade pattern element is ever-so-slightly unique, and in aggregate this creates the almost surreal effect of a perfectly repeating pattern in which no two parts are exact copies of each other.

Mural by Kevin Paulsen.

Pricing the priceless

Paulsen said price "is a big variable, and it's not based on their money, it's based on the scope of the job. It can be $15,000 to $150,000."

Besides the priceless experience of living within the art of your dreams, there are other benefits to investing in a one-of-a-kind piece by a renowned artist. "I've heard tell that sometimes my murals up the price of a home," Paulsen said humbly.

Homeowners are well aware that costs and wait times for home services are through the roof thanks to inflation and supply chain woes. It may surprise you that the same challenges exist where the art world intersects with home improvement around mural installation.

"I wanted for months to get a roll of jute," Paulsen said. "It used to be fairly cheap and easy to get. I waited for three months for it to arrive. It's hard to get shellac and spray fixative. I've heard

Hudson Valley Living
Fall Home Improvement

EDITOR & PUBLISHER: Geddy Sveikauskas
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR: Genia Wickwire
ADVERTISING: Lynn Coraza, Pam Courselle, Elizabeth Jackson, Angela Lattrell, Tobi Watson, Jenny Bella
PRODUCTION MANAGER: Joe Morgan
PRODUCTION: Diane Congello-Brandes
CIRCULATION: Dominic Labate

www.hudsonvalleyone.com

Ulster Publishing (est. 1972) is a Hudson Valley media company with its office at 322 Wall Street in Kingston. For more info on upcoming special sections, including how to place an ad, call (845) 334-8200, fax (845) 334-8202 or e-mail info@hudsonvalleyone.com.

from designers that they're having trouble getting material, and shipping has become prohibitively expensive."

For now, the paint is still flowing, and the homeowners are still lining up, especially locally. "I do murals here, there, and everywhere. But with all the money that's coming up to the Hudson Valley, I'm getting more work in the area," he said.

If you'd like to take your place in modern art history by dedicating a room to Paulsen's widely revered mural art, he can be reached at avoidflowers@gmail.com or 845-338-8046.

Her dream house

Minimal environmental impact as a moral imperative

PHOTOS BY DION OGUST

by Susan Farkas

In the 33 years since she lost the use of her legs, Deborah Mellen has learned how important design is to disabled people. Ever since she has been in a wheelchair, she has felt marginalized by design -- kept out of most stores and restaurants in Woodstock and out of her friends' homes that have stairs.

Mellen, who worked in her family's fine gems and jewelry business in New York City, moved to the Woodstock area in 2017. Her dream had been to renovate a barn. She loved large windows.

What she found was a ramshackle, asbestos-laden house in the hills above Woodstock with a magnificent Ashokan Reservoir view. She tore it down and built her dream home.

Mellen wasn't looking for a house like some of the accessible facilities she's seen, with obvious bars and ramps and an elevator built for one. "They throw ugly at you all the time," she said. Mellen is an art collector. Ugly would not do. She found a talented local architect, Barry Price, and they got to work.

Anticipating changes

They agreed to use universal design https://www.wbdg.org/design-objectives/accessible/beyond-accessibility-universal-designto create an environment friendly to "people of differing abilities." In other words, all of us. Price says universal design anticipates lifecycle changes. His aging clients are asking for homes on one level as they lose some of their mobility. "Every house has to accommodate change." As kids move out and their parents get older, features like stairs and hard-to-enter bathtubs may become impediments.

Mellen needed a house where her wheelchair-confined friends would be as comfortable as those without disabilities. All thresholds are flat. To get to the second floor, Price suggested a large open elevator which could easily fit two people in conversation. She has a chair to lower herself into her bathtub.

Other details to accommodate her disability are more subtle: a space under the sink for her to slide into a shower with a limestone seat. She has a raised

View of Ashokan Reservoir from Mellen's bedroom.

yoga platform upon which she can slide from her chair. Mellen's kitchen is easy to navigate since all drawers and cupboards are within easy reach for her … or anyone else. The accommodations are subtle.

Another invisible feature of Mellen's house is that it uses about 90 percent less energy than traditional homes. Her "passive house" is a super-insulated, airtight structure that requires little heating and cooling. It recovers heat and moisture and saves homeowners most of their energy costs. Acutely aware that buildings and their construction account for more than a third of global energy use, Price is committed to minimizing environmental impact. It is a moral imperative, he says, "… increasingly urgent, the longer I do what I do."

An outdoors carport makes the transition to the front door easier and more attractive than going through a garage. There's a tree-lined path where Mellen can exercise her frisky Portuguese water dog, Benno, and a gently sloping oil-and-chip path to Mellen's swimming pool.

There doesn't seem to be anything Mellen can't do in and around her home. Now 68, she's come a long way after the massive injuries she suffered in 1989 in Italy, when a truck driver fell asleep and rammed into the car her husband was driving. The driver was not badly hurt, but Mellen was. Many of her bones were broken, and she was comatose for three weeks. Years of surgeries and rehab followed, but her spine was broken and she never regained the use of her legs.

(Two years later, her husband died of unrelated causes.)

Mellen was sent to the Miami Project to Cure Paralysis. She always loved the ocean but was convinced that she would no longer be able to enjoy it. There she discovered Shake-a-Leg Miami, a sports center for the disabled that takes people in wheelchairs out onto the water. "Water is healing, water is freeing," says Mellen.

The beauty of giving

She would find her life's purpose in sharing her love of the ocean with disabled men, women and children. About ten years ago, Mellen heard about the only sailboat in the world manufactured to universal design standards. Called *The Impossible Dream*, it's a 60-foot catamaran that can accommodate twelve people in wheelchairs, with twelve companions and a small crew that includes the disabled. It was designed so that people in wheelchairs can easily board and move around. Two elevators take them below to the toilets and sleeping quarters. Mellen bought the vessel.

Mellen founded The Impossible Dream, a non-profit for the "thousands of people who are marginalized by their non-accessible environment." For five months each year, the catamaran cruises from Miami to Maine and back again, stopping along the way to offer disabled people in hospitals, rehabs or community groups the opportunity to sail on the only sailboat designed with them in mind. Mellen says she's learned "the beauty of giving."

The elevator

Deborah Mellen

The Impossible Dream will dock at the Hudson River Maritime Museum in Kingston from September 9 until the 18th.

Mellen and Price believe everyone who is lucky enough to live into their senior years would benefit from inclusive universal design and passive home construction. Designing for all opens possibilities for everyone, those who are currently disabled and those who may someday be.

COURTESY OF HALTER REALTY

Vacationing year-round

City buyers seek a variety of amenities

by Theo Sassano

New York City can become overwhelming at times, especially if one spends each waking hour within it. Fortunately, a far more serene location lies to its north. New York's Hudson Valley is the perfect spot for a much-needed retreat. While having a place to stay from time to time to unwind is a luxury in itself, deciding on an ideal home is the first step toward building a livable future in the area. What do Hudson Valley home buyers look for?

Work-Life Balance

For many weekenders, working from home is a crucial requirement. A home that accommodates fast and stable Internet is a necessity.

Megan Kinealy-Hill, a salesperson from Country House Realty, emphasized the added importance of this factor during and after the pandemic. "I have found that people seem to be most interested in high-speed Internet connectivity," she said. "[It] is really important now since so many people [are] working remotely."

Monica Schwerberg, a senior buyer specialist of the Upstate Curious Team at Keller Williams Hudson Valley North, noted that working accommodations include more than reliable Internet: "Since the pandemic hit, priorities have definitely shifted a bit towards having multiple workspaces." In the current state of work-life, other working amenities must be possible.

Generators, a more anticipatory upgrade, have become more common as well. Buyers want to ensure that the power is always running. "For the homes that are [closer to] the country, we've been having a lot more power outages," Lisa Halter, principal broker from Halter Associates Realty, said. "In [terms of] changing weather patterns, we do have storms, and the power [often] goes out, so a generator is a big priority."

Back-to-nature amenities

Schwerberg has noticed an increased desire among city people for back-to-nature amenities. "Fireplaces and wood-burning stoves are top of prospective buyers' lists," she said. "People also love good light and good views, so nice windows are one of the first [requests] I hear from buyers. They want to be able to ap-

COURTESY OF COUNTRY HOUSE REALTY

COURTESY OF HOULIHAN LAWRENCE

preciate the nature that's around them."

Many hotspots are currently centered near recreational activities. "Locations near hiking trails, biking, skiing, [and] other activities [are] typically popular." Halter said.

Decisions regarding the exterior are equally important. "I think that an investment into making the exterior look its best is a smart decision. The exterior is the first thing people will see, and it leaves a lasting impression," Janet Myer, a salesperson from Houlihan Lawrence, explained. "Frankly, flowering trees and hydrangeas in the spring and summer are lovely, and a freshly painted front door with pots or urns is always welcoming."

Lisa Halter noted a significant alteration in demand in or following a hot summer. "Pools are [in high demand] right now just because it's so much hotter," she stated. "[Many] are on a two-year waiting list to be installed."

"A high percentage of my buyers in the past few years have planned to build in-ground pools, greenhouses, and barns," Myer added. "As people continue to work and spend more time at home, they want

COURTESY OF KELLAR WILLIAMS HUDSON VALLEY NORTH

COURTESY OF HOULIHAN LAWRENCE

their homes to feel like they're on vacation year-round."

Location, location

Kinealy-Hill emphasized the importance of active outdoor space around the house to city weekenders: "I think that the desire to have some access to outdoor space is going to remain important to buyers," she said. "This particularly [applies to those] who are coming from a large metropolitan area where you don't have a lot of outdoor space."

The location of the house is another factor. "Proximity to a town with amenities like grocery stores, restaurants, outdoor recreation, and things like that," Kinealy-Hill explained.

Perfecting the interior of a home can prove quite challenging. Certain commonalities are expected. Myer has been

COURTESY OF COUNTRY HOUSE REALTY

observing trends closely. "Since Covid, there has been a shift in what people are looking for," she said. "[Many] want bright, open floor plans, modern, updated kitchens, and large primary bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms."

There are always improvements to be made post-purchase, ranging from minor quality-of-life changes to long-term projects. "Updating a kitchen and bathrooms are always high on buyers' lists of home improvements," Myer noted.

PHOTOS BY DION OGUST

Gimme shelter

The squeeze is on renters everywhere

by Geddy Sveikauskas

The market for Ulster County residential real estate has slowed, and in the late summer of 2022 it appears both robust and wobbly. Its future direction depends a lot on the fluctuation of mortgage interest rates.

The steep rise in housing costs nationwide in the last two and a half years, intensified by expanded investor ownership and on-line lodging marketplaces, has caused widespread economic distress. It's been particularly hard on renters, greatly exacerbating the growing gulf between the well-to-do and the disadvantaged.

Good for owners, bad for renters.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, 46 percent of renters nationwide are paying more than 30 percent of their incomes on housing.

The home ownership rate in the United States in the fourth quarter of 2021 was 65.5 percent. Partially because apartment rentals in New York City are so widespread, home ownership in New York State is only 53.6 percent.

The typical American home being purchased these days is 1900 square feet in size and has three bedrooms and two bathrooms. As of December 2020, according to a study of the mid-Hudson counties by Pattern for Progress, the average size of all homes built in Ulster County since 2015 was 2245 square feet. Except for a paltry few government-assisted units, the small amount of new housing being built has been for the upper end of the market.

Home prices still rising

The 2022 market for residential real estate in Ulster County is less strong than it was in the pandemic-intensified boom year of 2021. Prices have continued to rise this year, however, at better than the rate of inflation. According to Ulster County Multiple Listing Service records, 1195 transactions took place in the county from January 1 through August 16 of 2021 at a median sold price of $335,000. From January 1 through August 16 of this year, there were 921 transactions at a median sold price of $380,000.

Last year, the median length of time a house was on the market before it sold was 34 days. This year, the corresponding number has been 30 days.

The total of all residential real-estate sales at this time last year was $495.6

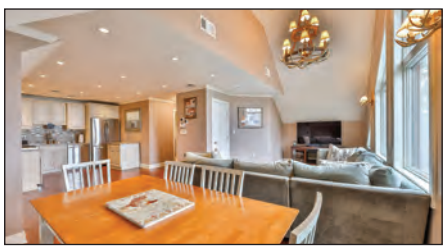
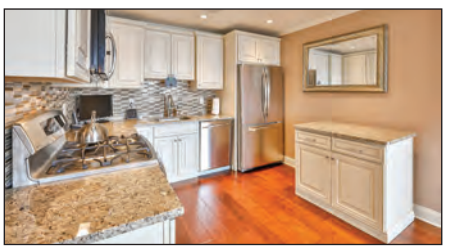
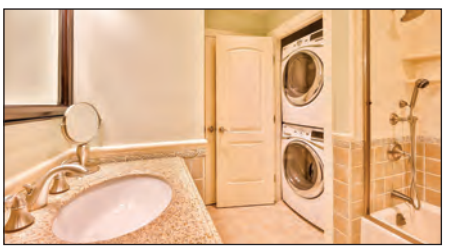
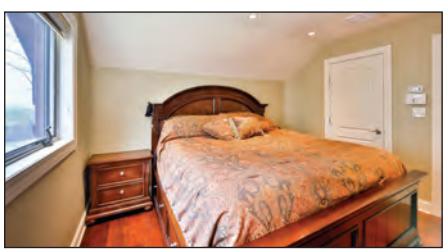
GORDON HUNTER MOUNTAIN REALTY

518-589-9000

6528 Route 23A, Hunter, NY 12442

info@gordonrealty.com • www.gordonrealty.com



Luxury Catskill Mountain Oasis

Immersed in a truly unique setting is this fabulous 3000sf cedar log home. This stunning property is surrounded by breathtaking panoramic views of the Catskill Mountains reaching all the way to Hunter Mountain and the North Dome. New construction set on 20+ acres offers peaceful seclusion yet a short drive to all amenities and local attractions. Home features a private 1500ft driveway with a gated entryway & intercom system. First floor has 25ft cathedral ceilings, a 17ft roll up gate, two automatic garages and a large theater room! The luxurious second floor living space brings the mountains into your home with large casement windows, plenty of southern sun and a different scenic view from every room! The open floor plan living space comes move-in ready including high-end stainless steel GE Profile appliances. This special home has it all: an impressive 25-camera surveillance & alarm system, central A/C, radiant heat, nest thermostats, whole-house generator, lightening protection, an in-ground 1000gal propane tank, playground, and much more! There's room to expand (inquire about drawings for a new 10,000 sf home) and more land available for purchase. 85 New Rd, Lexington.

Contact: Bridget M. Leach, salesperson
Cell (518) 947-8022
Office (518) 589-9000 x226
Email bridgetmleach@aol.com

MLS #141840 | $1,950,000

million. Because of reduced sales activity, this year it's $417.8 million.

Last year at this time, 51 homes had sold for a million dollars or more (4.2 percent of total sales). So far this year, there have been 45 such sales (4.9 percent).

As usual, the Woodstock area leads the pack in terms of higher-priced properties. New Paltz-Gardiner, Saugerties, Stone Ridge-High Falls, and Accord-Kerhonkson follow.

Wallkill had only three million-dollar property sales recorded this year. Each was on the market for at least 90 days, and they eventually sold for $1.8 million, $1.92 million and a cool $3 million respectively.

Influx of immigrants

The median national residential property sale in July of this year was priced at $403,800, up 13.4 percent over last July, according to the National Association of Realtors. National sales were down 20.2 percent in number compared to 2021 July, however. They were down 23.8 percent in Ulster County through August 16.

The half-million-dollar property is becoming increasingly commonplace in Ulster County, with 35.7 percent of all listed sales reaching that mark at this time of year in 2021 and 39.4 percent this year; that's now almost two of every five transactions.

Whether because of superstition or clever marketing, the $499,000 sale has become popular, with eight Ulster

County properties selling for that sum last year and four in 2022. The prizewinner this year in the under half-million competition was a home in Saugerties recorded as changing hands for a price of $499,900.

Ulster County has been receiving an influx of migrants from the greater New York metropolitan area for decades. The first two and a half years of the pandemic have seen an acceleration of this phenomenon.

Local brokers are full of tales of potential purchasers from Gotham annoyed by the financial paperwork required for a closing deciding to pay all-cash instead. It's disheartening for people who don't know where their next month's rent is going to come from to hear stories like that.

Systematic real-estate speculation and an increase in the number of units set aside for on-line lodging have only made the housing squeeze worse. On the other hand, the movement to allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs) of some sort has been gaining strength in New York State.

The 2021 Ulster County Housing Action Plan made clear that the housing market was in crisis even before the pandemic. "A combination of rising inequality and a failure to build the housing we need has produced an untenable situation for all but our highest-earning households," said the report. "Nearly one-third of homeowners and more than half of renters in Ulster County are currently living in unaffordable homes."

A study in contrasts

Just how unequal is income in Ulster County? It's somewhere in the upper middle, ranking as the 1157th most

unequal of the 3006 counties in the national rankings. The average income of the top one percent of all earners in Ulster County is $467,944, 14.5 times the average of the other 99 percent.

With a year's income, the average one-percenter can buy the median Ulster County house for cash and still have $88,000 to scrape by on.

By contrast, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development found in 2020 that as many as 44 percent of adult homeless people were employed in full- or part-time work.

Even steady work was no longer enough to stay securely housed, said an article in *The Nation*. "HUD classifies half of all renters as "housing cost-burdened," paying more than 30 percent of their pretax income for housing — and a quarter of all workers pay more than 50 percent, qualifying as severely cost-burdened. With rental costs so high, wages so low, and savings virtually nonexistent (about 40 percent of households would find it difficult to cover a $400 emergency expense), it's little surprise even for working Americans when income divided by rent equals homelessness."

PHOTOS BY DOUGLAS MILFORD

Milford House exterior.

If These Walls Could Talk

The History of the Milford House in Saugerties

by Violet Snow

"I LOVE UNCOVERING EVIDENCE OF the people who lived here before me," says Academy Award-nominated actor Penelope Milford. We're standing in the basement of her home in the Old South Side Historic District of Saugerties.

She points to the staircase leading up from the basement kitchen to the main floor. In the center of each wooden step is a smoothly sculpted depression, worn by the frequent passage of feet. "Can you imagine how many times the servants climbed these stairs to shape them like this? In comparison, the stairs to the bedroom floor were hardly worn down."

In 2003, Penelope bought the two-story Italianate brick house, which was built in the 1860s. For almost 20 years, she has been undoing renovations from the 1940s and nudging the rooms back in the direction of the 19th century.

She takes a plaid dress with a pleated skirt and white yoke out of her closet in the former servants' quarters, now her bedroom. "I found this dress stuffed into a space in the wall. I washed and ironed it, and it actually fits me." She cherishes this link to the family that were previous tenants.

Research at the library and on the Internet revealed the story of the house's builder, James Irving Crump, who emigrated from England to labor alongside

his two brothers at the Ulster Iron Works. They owned land and two houses on a hillside, a short walk to their jobs in the factory at the bottom of the hill. The wealthy factory owners lived at the top of the hill, near the Episcopal church where Thomas Cole's son was the pastor.

A few years after Crump's arrival, Ulster Iron Works sent him back to England, where his brothers who stayed behind also worked in iron mills. With their help, he obtained a formula for manufacturing extra-strength iron, to be used in cannon and armored ships. When he returned with the recipe, the resultant government contracts earned him a promotion and the funds to build a stately brick house on the slope of the hill, nestled between the home of his brothers and the cottage where he had been living. James Crump's wife bore 11 children, only four of whom survived to adulthood. James and his son Benjamin became prominent community members and contributed to the flourishing of Saugerties in its industrial period.

"They feel like my family," says Penelope, who has been in touch by email with James's descendant, Jon Crump.

Among the changes made around the 1940s were stair coverings, slats of wood over plaster or concrete to fill in the depressions. She removed the modifications to appreciate the movement of past feet. In the kitchen, she took down the plaster of one wall to reveal the irregular field stones of the foundation. Only a handful of the original six-paneled doors remained, two of them with teardrop-shaped porcelain keyhole covers that swung on a nail. By scouring salvage shops and resale stores, she conjured up a complete set of six-paneled doors and 11 porcelain keyhole covers.

Some of the floors were covered with industrial linoleum on top of Congoleum, a turn-of-the-century American version of linoleum, printed with a pattern of tropical Acanthus leaves. When Penelope pulled up both layers, she found tongue-and-groove hemlock underneath. The

dining and living rooms once had rugs on the floors, and the areas between the carpets and walls were painted Indian Red, according to the custom of the time. The dark red color comes from clay containing ferric oxide, produced in India. She sanded and waxed all the floors, so she could enjoy the original hemlock boards.

When Penelope moved in, the windows were painted shut, some panes were broken, and the sash cords were missing. She called in a contractor, but he just wanted to install new windows, so she went online for guidance. During many meditative evenings, she worked with a single-edged razor blade, paring away

Staricase

The kitchen

paint and threading rope through the sash cord pulleys. "I learned how to do a lot of the work from books and from Youtube," she says. "You get a feeling of intimacy with your house when you work on it yourself."

Help also came from from knowledgeable friends with similar homes. She worked on their places in exchange and discovered a whole community of people who love old houses.

Furnishing the house was, Penelope says, "like a treasure hunt. I collect things that I love." Thrift shops, yard sales, auctions, and her own family yielded up furniture and art that give the house an elegantly historical feel. Off the front hallway is a former reception room, where callers waited upon arrival. It had previously been converted into a large bathroom, which Penelope enhanced with a clawfoot tub she found in a plumber's front yard and bought for $50. Her grandmother's standing towel rack, made of slender wooden dowels and posts, rests beneath the window.

She installed a pocket door to connect the bathroom with the servery, now a guest room. Along one wall, a dark wood cabinet hides a mini butler's pantry, constructed by artist friend Stephan Brophy to match a tall 1920's bookcase mounted above. Her parents bought the glass-fronted bookcase from the church she attended as a child, and she has filled it with vintage glassware, rows of hanging teacups, and stacks of china plates. Dark draperies with a Moorish pattern cover the bed, and next to it, an engraved brass tray serves as a low tabletop.

"Years ago, I owned an art gallery in Venice, California," Penelope says. "I loved to sit surrounded by an artist's work. By providing the proper setting for their art, I felt a sense of collaboration with the artist." Choosing and arranging beautiful objects in her house brings a similar satisfaction.

Even now, with one living room wall still undergoing restoration, Penelope doesn't mind that she's been working on her home for so many years. "I feel this house as a living object. It has sheltered and comforted families for so many generations, it deserves the loving care I can give it."

Real sweet corn

It's easy to grow in your backyard garden

by Lee Reich

THE GOOD OLD DAYS SEEMED to have had snowier winters, greener grass, and more toothsome apples. One thing those good old days definitely did not have was sweeter sweet corn.

Can we consider 5000 years ago to be the good old days? That's the earliest find of domesticated corn, if you can call an ear with a cob the size of a pencil eraser domesticated. That ear, unearthed by an archeologist in the Tehuacan Valley of Mexico, was not only small, but probably was also not sweet.

Earliest corns were popped or ground into meal. Such was the beginning of centuries and centuries of corn breeding by native Americans. By the time Columbus set foot in the New World, hundreds of varieties of corn had been developed in all today's classes of corn: pop, dent, flint, flour, and sweet.

In modern times, the Hudson Valley has for many decades been a major sweet corn producer. The hot, sunny days and cool nights help the plants accumulate sugars.

At one time there were nearly 6000 acres in the Rondout Valley planted in sweet corn, and ten large sweet corn operations shipping their products countrywide. Production here has been cut back over the years, but there's still plenty of local farms at which to buy fresh sweet corn.

Sweet corn is also not at all difficult to grow in a backyard garden. To be able to sink my teeth into fresh, sweet corn nearly every day from early August until the first frost, I make four plantings each growing season. The first planting goes in right about the average time of the last spring frost (May 15th in my garden), with subsequent plantings every couple of weeks.

The main reason I choose to grow my own is because I'm partial to a particular variety — Golden Bantam, which was the standard of excellence in sweet corn a hundred years ago. I like its rich, corny flavor and texture that lets you know you're really biting into something.

It's not to everyone's liking. But that's a reason to grow your own. You grow what you find most toothsome.

Breeding sweetness

The gene responsible for making sweet

corn sweet, the so-called "sugary" gene, is a common mutation that undoubtedly appeared even in prehistoric plantings in Mexico. This gene brings the sugar level of corn up to ten percent (in the dried kernel). Breeders estimate that one plant in every 17 acres of non-sweet corn will have this gene.

The first written record of sweet corn dates back to 1779. That record is of an ear of sweet, papoon corn nabbed by a white settler, Richard Bagnal, from an Indian cornfield along the Susquehanna River in western New York.

The sugars in traditional sweet corns start changing to bland starch as soon as the ear is picked. For best eating, the recommendation has been to get a pot of water boiling on the stove before you went out to pick the corn. Mark Twain went so far as to recommend bringing the pot of boiling water out to the garden.

A few decades ago, plant breeders found new genes that shot the sugar content of sweet corn sky-high. Two genes are responsible for these changes. The first gene, called the «shrunken-2» gene because of the way the dried kernels shrivel up, pushes the sugar level in corn up to a whopping thirty-seven percent. Not only that, but even two days after picking that corn still has 29 percent sugar.

The variety Illini Xtra Sweet was the first of the appropriately named supersweet sweet corns. Other varieties with this gene are Early Xtra Sweet, Starstruck, and How Sweet It Is.

The second gene responsible for sweeter sweet corn is the sugar- enhanced gene, which is effective only in combination with the sugary gene

of regular sweet corn varieties. The combination of the two genes results in varying degrees of sweetness.

There's little need to scurry to the kitchen with sugar-enhanced varieties, because they retain their sweetness for a long time. Kandy Korn EH, Pearls 'n' Gold EH, Silverado, and Snow Queen EH are varieties with the sugar-enhanced gene.

Sweet corn from 1895

Sweet corn, whether plain sweet or supersweet, is abundant this time of year -- perhaps more than you can eat boiled, roasted in its husk, or raw (try it, it's good). If you need some more uses for sweet corn, why not transport yourself back in time and try one of these recipes, both quoted directly from the 1895 edition of Dr. A.W. Chase's Receipt [sic] Book and Household Physician?:

Sweet corn is also not at all difficult to grow in a backyard garden.

"Corn Vinegar. -- Cut off the cob a pint of corn, then take one pint of brown sugar or molasses to onr gallon of rain water; add the corn, put into a jar, cover with a cloth, set in the sun, and in three weeks you will have good vinegar."

"Green Corn Soup. -- Cut the corn from a dozen good-sized ears (real sweet corn is the best in all cases), lay the cobs closely in a kettle and cover with water -- not less than three pints, or two quarts if needed -- and boil half an hour; then take out the cobs and cook the corn in the same water till tender. Now add a pint of rich, sweet milk, if you have it, and boil a few minutes longer; season with salt and pepper, and if no milk beat two eggs and stir in, and continue to stir two or three minutes just as ready to serve. It will be found delicious, if nicely done."

For the second recipe, I recommend using an old-fashioned variety of corn, or else the soup will taste like a dessert.

Dr. Chase could not have realized just how sweet sweet corn could be when he called for "real sweet corn"!

New Paltz writer Lee Reich, PhD, (www.leereich.com) is a garden consultant specializing in fruit, vegetable, and nut growing, including using these plants as ornamentals. He also does consulting and hosts workshops at his New Paltz farmden, and webinars. Visit his farmden at http://www.leereich.com/blog

PHOTOS BY DION OGUST

Kevin soldering.

A love of handicraft

Kevin Post makes things one at a time

by Violet Snow

A ROUND CHERRYWOOD TABLE with a bouquet of steel roses rising from the center. A door knocker topped by a wolf's head. A black walnut Shaker candle box with a sliding lid. These meticulously crafted items are just a few of the metal and wood creations of Kevin Post, who has worked out of Rosendale as a farrier, shoeing local horses, for 53 years.

In 1969, he began an eight-year apprenticeship with his grandfather, Charles Kinkade, an expert blacksmith and farrier. Since then, Post has been working on the feet of draft horses, racehorses, and riding horses, while spending much of his spare time exercising the other skills his grandfather taught him, woodworking and the forging of metal tools and furnishings that he designs himself.

At his present stage of life, Post is ready to shift the balance towards spending more time in the workshop and less time standing under horses. Although he plans to keep most of his current customers, he's already dropped caring for the 70 horses he shoes every eight weeks at the Meadowlands Racetrack in New Jersey.

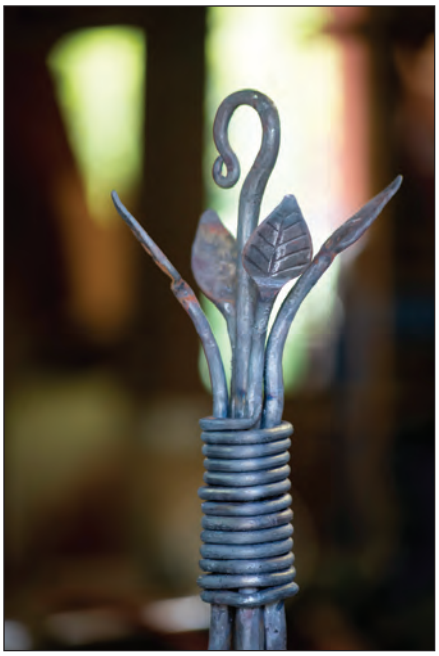
From 1969 to 1984, Post and Kinkade made horseshoes and sold them to other farriers, but eventually they turned to buying shoes from a manufacturer. For horses with injuries or foals born with deformed feet, Post still makes orthopedic shoes that can correct problems. "I remember almost every animal I do and what size their feet are. Sometimes I pre-shape the shoe here before I go to the barn."

The equipment hasn't changed much

In the workshop he inherited from his grandfather, Post is working on a customized chandelier commissioned by a customer. At the top, four steel uprights must be bound together, and he is finishing off the last few turns of the rod that coils around the uprights. With the blue flame of an oxyacetylene torch, he heats the rod till it turns red and softens enough to respond to a small hammer that bends it tightly around the column. The work is slow and precise.

The uprights end in leaf shapes, and Post expects to make another 50 leaves, most of which will sprout from steel vines twining around the arms of the chandelier. He turns on the propane-fueled tabletop forge and opens a glass window to insert the ends of two steel rods. When they are red-hot, he removes one and places it on the flat platform of a pneumatic hammer.

A ringing thud from the upper piece of the 110-pound hammer, and the end of the rod becomes a pointed oval. With a



Kevin Post creation out of iron.

Kevin with heated iron ready to mold.

series of lighter taps from the hammer, Post tapers the next section of the rod while rotating it, forming the stem of the leaf. Then he places the leaf on an old-fashioned anvil, the most frequently used tool in the shop. He brandishes a veiner, a chisel-like tool he made himself, and taps it with a regular hammer to punch out the veins of the leaf.

"A lot of the equipment hasn't changed that much," he observes, "except for the high-end welding equipment and the pneumatic hammer."

He still has a hand-cranked wagon wheel turner that dates from the mid-1800s. Although his wheelwright skills, also learned from Kinkade, are not much in use these days, he uses the turner for making circular tables.

"Do you get burned a lot?" I ask, observing the fierce glow within the little forge.

"Yes. It goes with the job."

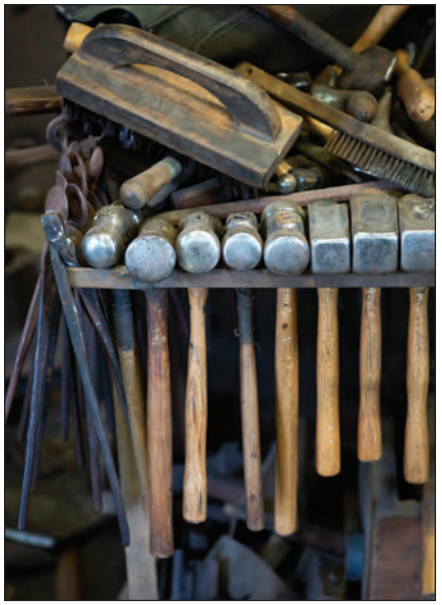
Having previously watched him grip a horse's hoof between his knees, while the 1000-pound horse balanced on three legs, I remark, "You like doing things that are a little dangerous."

Post sighs. "Other people have said that."

Instagram is coming

Woodworking is perhaps less perilous, electric saws notwithstanding. In the back of the shop, I examine three wooden boxes with sliding lids. "These are Shaker candle boxes," Post says. "I dovetail the joints by hand," meaning each corner is held together with tiny trapezoidal extensions, embraced by corresponding shapes cut out of the wood on the perpendicular side. "I make the boxes from scraps left over from doing cabinets or tables. It's beautiful wood, and I don't like to waste it."

In his nearby home, we view a dining room table of polished black walnut, a baker's rack Post designed for his wife, a fireplace screen decorated with steel oak leaves and acorns, kitchen chairs



Tools organized for his next project.

Kevin Post work of art with ironwork.

with a pattern of woven steel strips. In one corner is a sculpture, consisting of cattails, a frog, and a duck, all made of steel, on a cherrywood base representing the surface of a pond. Other creations include mirror frames, fireplace tools, andirons, lamps, candle holders. Post shows me an elegant knife he made out of a rasp for trimming horse hooves.

He sells his creations to friends and horse-owning customers, but when his daughters finish making him a website and Instagram page, his work will be more widely accessible to buyers. He charges $400 for a door knocker with the head of a wolf, a horse, or an owl. The Shaker boxes sell for $350 apiece. A decorated fireplace screen goes for $1500, a chandelier for $1100. Dining tables start at $4000.

Kevin Post can be reached at 658-8412 (home), 845-389-5556 (cell) or KevinC-Post@gmail.com.

PHOTOS BY ERIN QUINN

Carol Johnson points to an historic photo of New Paltz.

This old house

Tracing my home's history

by Erin Quinn

When we live inside a home for any period of time, it begins to collect physical and emotional residue for us. People can go to strip off old wallpaper and find seven more layers of wallpaper underneath it. Carpets can hide beautiful floorboards, Drywall can cover up part of an old brick chimney, a crawl space, or even a secrete staircase.

We're constantly touching, living in, breathing, and adding more life inside our homes. We begin to experience this feeling that our home is in and of itself an entity, something permanent that has always existed. It provides comfort, shelter, heat and water. We can throw ourselves inside it after a rough day. We can gather our loved ones for a hearty meal.

Space holds memory. Memory will persist even after the four walls come down. A house is not a natural feature. It's impermanent architecture — added to over time, torn down and rebuilt, upgraded with a new roof and coat of paint, or neglected and deteriorating — following the dictates of those inside it.

We want to find out more about our homes, particularly our older homes. Who built it? How old is it? Who lived in it? How did it change over time? People sometimes want to track down the history of their home. A house is a brick-and-mortar family tree.

Beginning the search

How does one begin to trace the history of their home? I live in New Paltz, so I tracked down Carol Johnson, coordinator of the Haviland-Heidgerd Historical Collection at the Elting Memorial Library. I knew only that I owned a relatively old small cottage in the village.

Johnson said that the deed was the first place to look. "Go to your lock box or wherever you keep your deed, and look through it, because it holds a lot of information," advised Johnson. She had already made a copy of my deed. "It will tell you when you bought it, who you bought it from, what your property lines are, its building style, the improvements that were made." The deed also tells the assessed value of the home, a property description, its overall condition, how many bedrooms and bathrooms it has, and what year it was built.

If you don't have your deed, you can

find a copy of it online by going to the Ulster County clerk's website and search under 'Parcel Viewer.' "Type in your name or the address and the deed will come up," Johnson said. "Often it will give you detailed information about previous owners."

My deed listed the two most previous owners and said my home was built in 1890. Johnson, a seasoned local historian, disagreed with the dating. "Sometimes that date is a guess or just something someone said a long time ago," she said, "but it's not always accurate."

Her suggestion was to start with my own deed and work backwards. If it only lists the previous owner, she said, look up that deed and then move backwards again.

While the online tool was an enormous help, Johnson was quick to point out that there was a gap between 1900 and 1950. "The Mormons have everything digitized on their site, which is free, 'Family Search.' In Ulster County, we have everything digitized from 1950 on, but those five decades in between require a visit to Kingston."

I'm the ninth owner

The deeds themselves are housed at the county clerk's office on the second floor above the DMV, where you go to get your driver's license, explained Johnson. "When there, you look for the liber [book] and page and find your deed. You start with your own deed and work back."

Since 1965, the HHHS has been saving newspaper clippings, photos, letters, and any other type of archival material they can get their hands on. They put everything in a plastic sleeve inside hundreds of blue binders that hold the history of each residential and commercial building in New Paltz.

"Newspapers are a great source of information, and luckily New Paltz had very gossipy papers," said Johnson with a laugh. The old New Paltz newspapers would have articles or little tidbits about someone building a new porch, putting on a roof, or selling a piece of property to whom. "We cut all of these out and then match them to the property," she said, pointing to the sleeve that held whatever information they have collected on my property.

I'm the ninth owner of my parcel.

A newspaper clipping discusses Jared Smith building a home in 1911 on his property, which was purchased from D.C. Storr, who purchased it from Cornelia Deyo Broadhead, who was related to one of the twelve original New Paltz paten-

tees. According to the *History of New Paltz*, written by Johnson and Marion Ryan, New Paltz was "founded in 1677 by 12 French Huguenot Settlers" who "bargained for land extending from the Shawangunk Mountains to the Hudson River" with indigenous people. Referred to as an "Indian Deed," it traded the land for various material goods including 40 kettles, 100 knives and 40 oars.

The indigenous people had no concept of ownership in the sense that Europeans had. Referred to as the Esopus Sachems, their names were drawn on the deed, which gave the dozen colonial families access to 400,000 acres of land, later split among them by pulling lots out of a hat.

The Deyo family and hence Cornelia Deyo Brodhead, seventh-generation Huguenot, inherited Lot 4, Tier One, which included the three-tenths of an acre that my house sits on.

Further sleuthing tools

Through this walk back in history I was able to see the way that the landscape had changed from rural to residential to commercial. I had learned the names of all the people who had owned my property before me. I could envision the fertile soil of the Wallkill River and the Munsee Esopus and Lenape tribes moving from the flood plains to the mountains and back to the valley.

The land was further divided into rectangular pieces over time. The houses in the Village of New Paltz are now a stone's throw away from each other as in a Fischer Price toy residential neighborhood.

With Johnson's flytrap memory, ability to navigate records and websites, and knowledge of how to cross-reference newspaper articles to deeds and photos, we were able to reasonably assume that my house was built around 1911. A trip to Kingston and some further poking around in the newspaper archives could pin that date down.

Cornelia Deyo

Johnson pointed to various maps on the wall and explained how the land was originally held collectively by the patentees and then divided up among their children and then others. "Not many towns have an historical collection of this size," conceded Johnson. "Many just have one shelf in a library."

Fortunately, there are other ways that you can go about learning who built your home, what type of people lived in it, and what their lives were like. "Newspapers and maps are a good resource, also

census records, family lore, obituaries, etc.," said Johnson. "Letters and diaries, and receipts that are found in attics are very helpful. These also help you to know about the people who lived in the houses. We probably get one to two queries a week, from Robert DeNiro to you."

Thanks to Carol Johnson for all of her help in researching this article and to the HHHC for all its resources.