



Before

After a few remuddles, the front of the mansion was a nondescript mess.



Curb Appeal

Thoughtful planning and planting help transform a neglected home into the town gem.

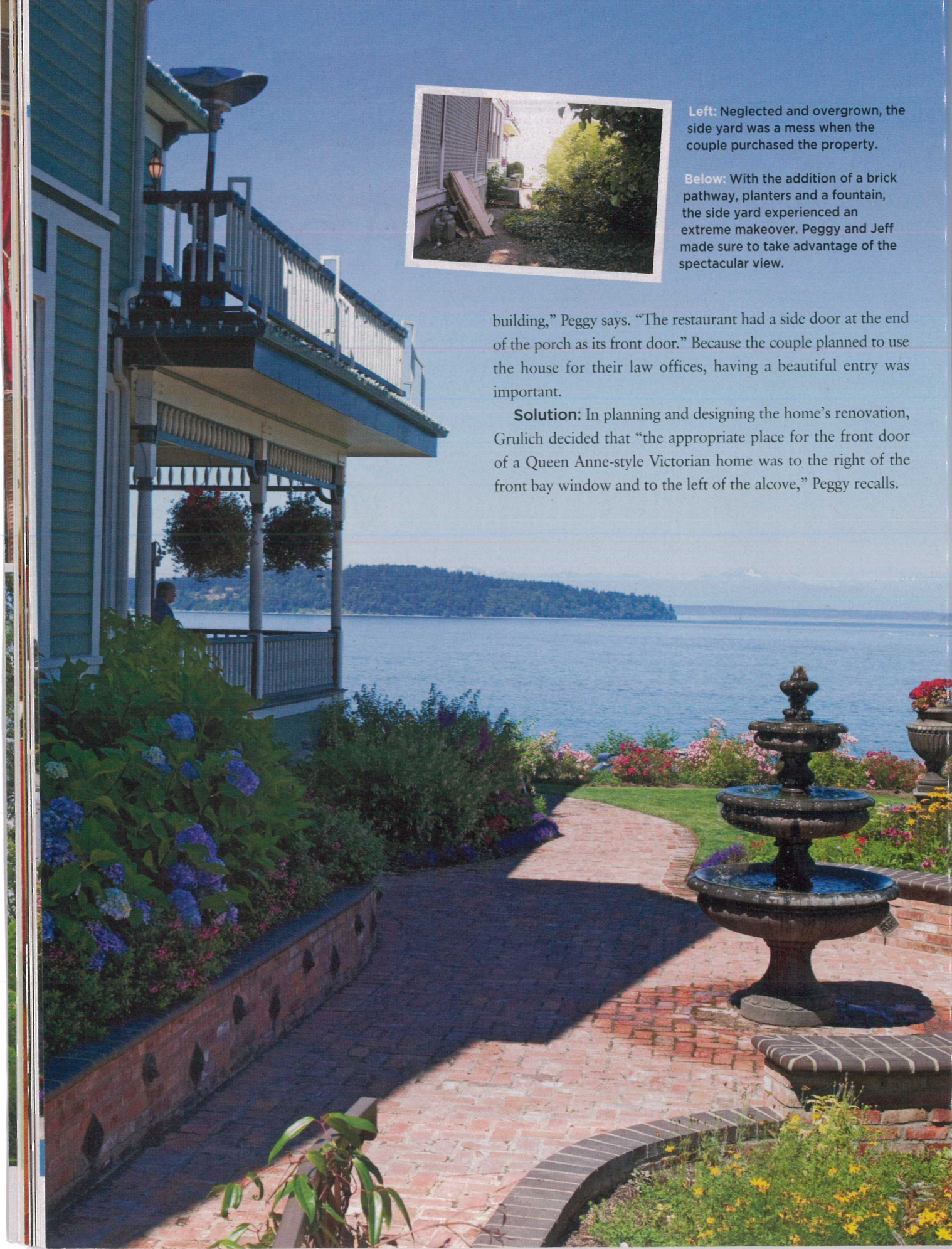
By changing the placement of the front door from the side to the front of the porch, and adding a dramatic brick entryway and lush gardens, the once-forgettable building is now the town gem. In keeping with the home's ancestry, an antique door with stained glass panels and transom was chosen for the new entry.

PRIOR TO ITS TRANSFORMATION, the E.R. Rogers Mansion in Steilacoom, Washington, was truly a diamond in the rough. From private residence to boarding house and even a restaurant, the property had been used, abused and neglected. When Peggy Fraychineaud Gross and her husband, Jeff Gross, purchased it, the home and its surrounding property were in sorry shape. Its three-year makeover has returned the structure—at least outwardly—closer to its original appearance. From restoring the porches and relocating the front door to adding hardscaping and installing new gardens, we hope Peggy and Jeff's restoration journey will inspire you. This month, we focus on the home's exterior and landscaping.

MAKE AN ENTRANCE

Problem: Though the house had good bones, it lacked an impressive entry. To solve this and the many other issues they faced, Peggy and Jeff hired Gene Grulich, an architect who specializes in historic elements, to consult on the project. "Gene determined that there did not appear to be a front door anywhere in the

BY REBECCA ITTNER • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF WOLFF



Left: Neglected and overgrown, the side yard was a mess when the couple purchased the property.

Below: With the addition of a brick pathway, planters and a fountain, the side yard experienced an extreme makeover. Peggy and Jeff made sure to take advantage of the spectacular view.

building,” Peggy says. “The restaurant had a side door at the end of the porch as its front door.” Because the couple planned to use the house for their law offices, having a beautiful entry was important.

Solution: In planning and designing the home’s renovation, Grulich decided that “the appropriate place for the front door of a Queen Anne-style Victorian home was to the right of the front bay window and to the left of the alcove,” Peggy recalls.



Below: When the house served as a restaurant, siding covered the period home.



Before



BRING UP THE REAR

Problem: Sloping and suffering a crack in the foundation, the back of the home required some serious work to get it into shape.

Solution: A new foundation solved the worst of the problems, while custom-milled siding and skirting, and faux brick create a historically accurate rear view of the home.

ENHANCE THE VIEW

Problem: When the couple bought the property, siding covered the home’s architecture. Also, after years of neglect, the gardens were thoroughly over-



BRING UP THE REAR

grown, with plants and bushes hiding the breathtaking views beyond.

Solution: Once the home’s renovation was complete, Peggy and Jeff made over the grounds by adding hardscaping, including the brick stairway, pathway and planters, and a fountain. Next came the landscaping, which was no easy feat, according to Peggy. “I had the landscapers go down more than two feet to help prevent drainage issues.” Lush greenery and flowers finished the project.

“One of my favorite things about the property is the great view,” Peggy says. “We wanted to make sure that no matter where you stood you could



ABOVE FAR LEFT

Changing the placement of the front door required the complete renovation of the front porch.

ABOVE MIDDLE: When the mansion was a restaurant, this little side door was used for the front entry.

ABOVE: Lush plants spilling over planter edges help create a statement-making front entryway.

see beauty.” By honoring the historic architecture and taking advantage of the expansive grounds, Peggy and Jeff’s house is now the gem in the town’s 40-block Historic District. 🌿

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