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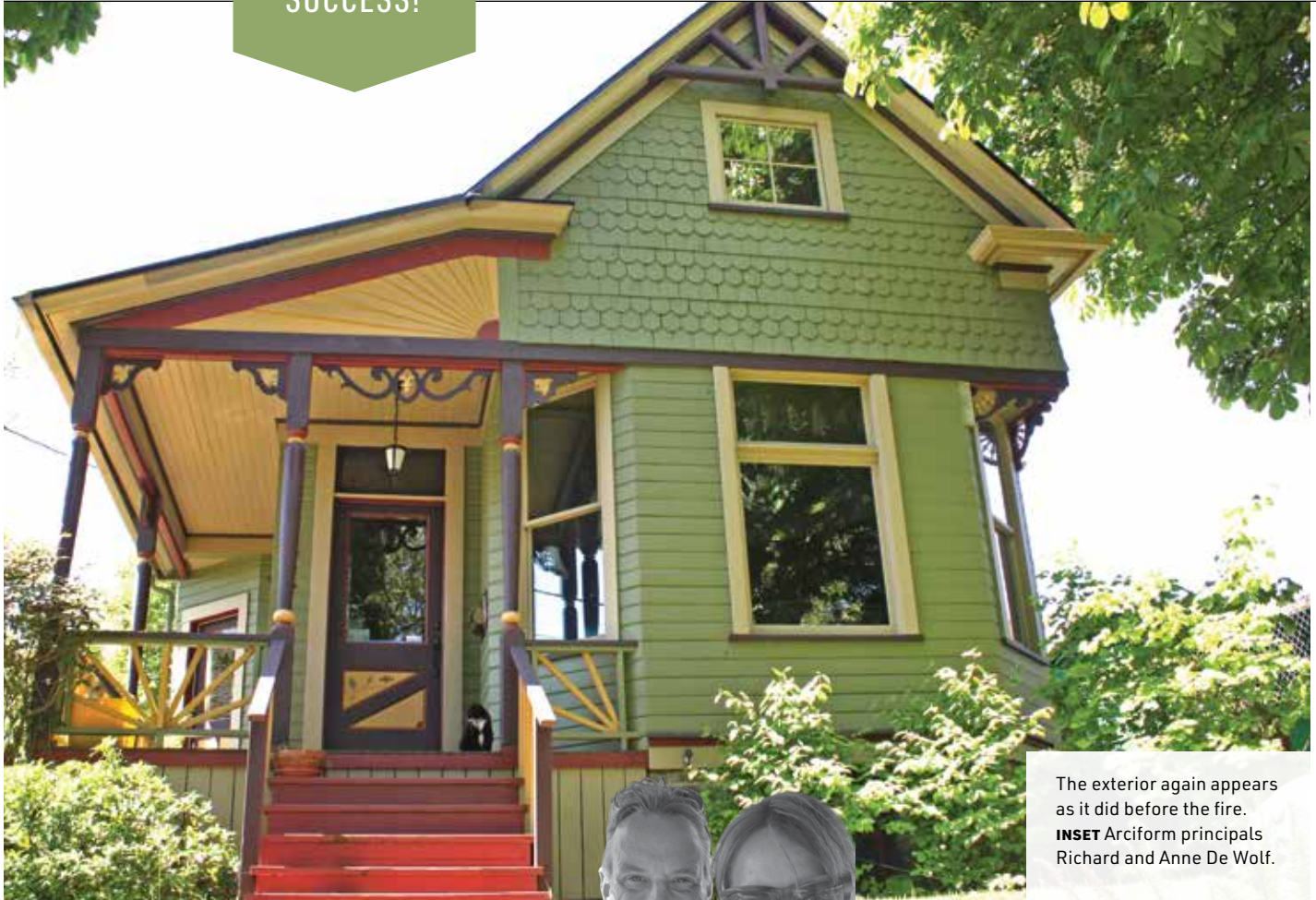
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SUCCESS!



The exterior again appears as it did before the fire.

INSET Arciform principals Richard and Anne De Wolf.

HOPE AFTER THE FIRE



The preservation-minded owners of this 1899 Queen Anne house were determined to restore it. **By Anne De Wolf, Arciform**

We got a phone call from the distraught owner of this Victorian house in Portland, Oregon, telling us that their renter had accidentally set fire to their beloved home. They'd been living and working in Ireland at the time and needed a trustworthy firm to restore the house while they were abroad. (The first contractor they'd talked to had recommended a tear-down!)

Owners Jennifer and Eric had restored the house with their own hands over a period of eight years. They left it in the care of good friends during their temporary absence, but those friends bought their own house during the interim. A property manager found new renters who, a month in, ignoring the no-smoking policy, failed to extinguish

a cigarette that smoldered overnight. A dawn breeze ignited the back of the house. The occupants escaped down the narrow stairwell as the fire grew to cause damage even to nearby residences.

Perhaps due to the quality and craftsmanship found in old houses, this one remained structurally sound and was not entirely destroyed. The interior, however, was severely damaged.

The fire had affected mainly the back of the house. The kitchen and the rest of the rear interior were destroyed and had to be taken to the studs. Even with water and smoke damage, the front rooms retained the original woodwork, tile, and hardware that distinguishes the rather modest house.

Arciform is a design/build firm that

takes pride in giving old houses new life. We fit well with the owners' desire to salvage or replicate as much as possible. At the same time, they felt that the fire offered an opportunity to upgrade the efficiency of the house.

We went from the outside in, beginning with a new roof and replacing burnt framing and siding. We updated the systems while the walls were open, repaired or replaced charred interior millwork, and repaired doors and windows. Anything unsalvageable was reproduced following original samples. The fir floors were sanded and refinished; they are not perfect but they are original and attractive.

The kitchen was severely damaged so we used reclaimed fir for the floor, finished in a dark stain and topped with an OSMO oil finish. We recessed the refrigerator and designed cabinets to look like furniture, then added a farmhouse sink and soapstone counters.

The downstairs bedroom was the only space in the house that escaped the fire.



TOP LEFT At the rear, the footprint and window placements remain as they were originally. **ABOVE** The previous kitchen was destroyed in the fire. Its replacement is appropriately detailed with cabinets that appear unfitted, a wood floor, a center table, and early electric lighting. **RIGHT & BELOW** The front of the house sustained smoke damage but was salvageable after the fire. **LEFT** The "before" pictures show the fire-damaged back of the house. A new bath dormer is visible in the the side view "after" photo.





ALL BETTER

Restoration was the guiding principle, but rebuilding much of the house allowed for improvements, efficiency upgrades—and whimsy.

LEFT For the new shower floor, a mosaic-artist friend created a storybook octopus using marble hexagon tiles. **BELOW** A new corner toilet saves space in the downstairs bathroom near the primary bedroom. During restoration, the larger, original size of the window was discovered.





The owner chose a reproduction clawfoot tub and a console sink for the upstairs bathroom in a new dormer. Designer Anne De Wolf specified beadboard wainscoting befitting the modest Victorian house.



Picture rails (for hanging art without damaging walls) were added in many rooms, appropriate for the era of the house.

Here we added a picture-rail moulding and upgraded the small bathroom. A corner toilet freed up space to comply with current building code.

Homeowner Jennifer chose historical paint colors from Oregon's own Miller Paints: late-fall tones for downstairs rooms, lighter tones for upstairs. Period-appropriate lighting and vintage furnishings from North Portland complement the house.

Rebuilding allowed some improvements not considered during earlier restoration. The first floor now has radiant heat. Solar panels supplement on-demand hot water and the house is insulated throughout. The original staircase was too damaged to repair—but it had been narrow and steep

so code would not allow replication. We found a new placement in a seldom-used bedroom, which opened up the kitchen and allowed us to add a pantry where the old stairs had been.

Working on the downstairs bath, we discovered that room's window had been larger, as the owners had suspected, and we restored it to its original size.

During the project, the house was opened to the public to provide education about preservation, Victorian architecture, and rebuilding after a fire. After the family returned to Portland and moved back in, they told us they love the house even more than they did before the fire.

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