

- This year's ASID Showcase project preserves and gilds a period treasure box, a St. Paul home designed by Minnesota great Cass Gilbert.



ARTFUL LIBRARY

The design team took its cues from the home's rich architecture in the space considered the heart of the home. Beading motif on the hand-carved fireplace surround is also found in some of the Victorian-style upholstered furnishings (reading comfort was a must) and the turquoise, blue and gold color scheme is true to the period. • **Wow factor:** Every nook and cranny is artfully filled with travel mementos, artwork and conversational pieces. Try to see it all. • **Decorating tip:** Use strategically placed accent lighting to illuminate a dark space.

SUMMIT AVENUE JEWEL

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“What would Cass Gilbert have done?”

That question was posed many times as a team of interior designers, homeowners Nancy and Dick Nicholson and architect Tom Blanck contemplated the restoration and restyling of a mansion on St. Paul's Summit Avenue.

The 1893 Richardsonian Romanesque-style home, this year's ASID showcase, was designed by visionary architect Cass Gilbert, whose résumé includes the Minnesota State Capitol. The Nicholsons' am-

bitious plan was to restore the three-story apartment building to a grand single-family dwelling. After five months of construction (five kitchens were torn out), scores of color swatches (only period-appropriate hues) and endless rolls of wallpaper (patterns true to the time) the Gilbert treasure is open for tours through June 17.

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Jewel continues: 16-room renovation retains many Cass Gilbert touches; details for touring the ASID house. **H10** ▶



CARVED MASTER

Imagine Cass Gilbert pouring a glass of sherry at this ornately hand-carved Cuban mahogany buffet he designed for the regal dining room. The wave motif is found throughout the home.



ROYAL DINING ROOM
Dark Cuban mahogany woodwork and a handsome marble fireplace (one of seven in the home) set the stage for the opulent dining room. Furnishings and wall coverings blend French, English and a hint of Asian styles. **Wow factor:** French crystal chandelier reflected in the 19th-century reproduction hand-carved wood mirror. **Decorating tip:** Warm-hued grasscloth covers the ceiling to make a large room cozier.

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MODERN VICTORIAN
The new kitchen, once used for billiards, boasts state-of-the-art appliances, but retains turn-of-the-century charm; the backsplash echoes the classical Victorian red tile and Greek key design of the existing fireplace. **Wow factor:** Glass cabinet doors inspired by Gilbert's signature leaded glass patterns. **Decorating tip:** Blend different shades of one color, such as red, for impact.

◀ JEWEL FROM HI

Thirty-seven ASID designers have dressed up 16 spaces, including a new kitchen and master bath (with 21st-century amenities), three-season porch with a spectacular view of the High Bridge, an opulent dining room, an old-fashioned music room, a state-of-the-art media room and a German-style pub in the basement.



Exterior

Despite its renovation, the 8,600-square-foot home still boasts signature Gilbert flourishes — 1890s leaded glass windows, ornately carved custom moldings and metallic-finish ceilings.

"He mined architectural detail from Europe, brought it back here and recycled it in his own creative manner," said Blanck, a Gilbert connoisseur.

"We'll never know how Gilbert would have restored one of the premier examples of his architecture, but Blanck believes "he would have been pleased with the results and would have been the life of the party at the ASID opening night gala."

ASID SHOWCASE HOME

What: Members of the Minnesota Chapter of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) have lavishly decorated an 1893 Summit Avenue mansion for the 11th annual Showcase Home.

When: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wed.-Sun. through June 17.

Where: 318 Summit Av., St. Paul.
Tickets: \$25 at the door; \$23 online at www.msipmag.com and \$20 at ticket outlets. Ages 12 and under are admitted free (no strollers). Call 612-336-9296. The event is a benefit for the Junior League of St. Paul, Second Harvest Heartland and other organizations.

Special events (at additional cost): Designer-led tours, culinary programs, afternoon teas and a presentation by architecture expert Larry Millett. For a complete schedule of events and tickets, go to www.msipmag.com



COLONIAL REVIVAL MUSIC ROOM
Soothing celadon green envelops the soft, feminine space where women adjourned after dinner. Some of the furnishings are the homeowner's antiques, including the baby grand piano, with a chorus of music-themed accessories. **Wow factor:** Handmade plaster relief molding and ceiling medallion add character and depth. **Decorating tip:** Dress luxe silk curtains with tassels and trim, or add a row of beading on plain Roman shades.



NEW OLD WORLD
The new master bath seamlessly meshes an Old World flavor (curved archways, period marble mosaic tile and, yes, the original toilet) with a heated floor and spa-style shower. **Wow factor:** Half-moon art glass window (not pictured) repeats the leaded glass in the rest of the home.

Home history

1893: Prominent lawyer William H. Lightner and his wife, Carrie, built the lavish home for \$27,000 and lived there until 1944.

Post-World War II: The home was converted to a roominghouse sometime after the Lightners sold it. Ted Tupa, a handlayer, bought the home and the one next door, linking them by tunnel.

1976: The William H. Lightner mansion is part of the Historic Hill District, which was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

2006: Dick and Nancy Nicholson bought the

house for historical and personal reasons. "The home is a treasure," said Nancy Nicholson. "And it's exciting to be the caretakers."

Today: The Nicholsons, who live down the block from the Lightner home, don't plan to move into the renovated house. "We will share it with the community through nonprofit events," Nancy said. She wouldn't reveal the cost of the renovation, which included adding two garage pavilions and new electrical and mechanical systems, but said: "We've prepared the house to exist for another hundred years."

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