



BEFORE



AFTER

RESTORATION

Sibley House Shines

The home of Detroit's first mayor gets a beautiful makeover

IN A ONE-BLOCK stretch of Detroit's East Jefferson Avenue (near Rivard), two rare and unique jewels are mounted side by side: Christ Church, Detroit, with its breathtaking Gothic architecture and intricately designed stained glass windows (two of them by Tiffany); and the Sibley House, which was built for Detroit's first appointed mayor, Solomon Sibley. The house was completed in 1848, and has been newly renovated with much love, care, and coordination between the administrators of the two adjacent landmarks.

"The Sibley House is elegantly gracing Jefferson Avenue again," announced Christ Church, Detroit, and Sibley House committee member (and direct Solomon Sibley descendant) Deborah Gillespie, left, at a recent renovation celebration.

Shingle and siding work, shutter refurbishing, lighting improvements, and landscaping have renewed the Greek Revival-style state historic site to its original luster.

The biggest challenge during the restoration? "Working with the window frames," Gillespie and the project's contractors, Huges and Lynn Building and Renovations, agree. "My favorite renovation," she adds, "is the little, narrow, urban native species garden on the east side of the house. There's something wonderful about having milkweed out there and seeing all the monarch butterflies (that are attracted to the plant)."

Inside, the hanging, switchback staircase (built from the top down, instead of from the bottom up) is said to be the only such staircase that's still intact in Detroit, and the piano is the first to have been transported across the Allegheny Mountains. Many of the windows still have their original, wavy-quality, pleated glass.

The house (which, at this time, does not offer tours) now contains offices for Christ Church. Repaired to its former polished status, the Sibley House is a wonderful symbol of the history of Detroit's birth and growth — and of the hopes for its ongoing renewal. sibleyhousetdetroit.com — *Horty Murray*

Q & A

Pillow Talk: Storied Designs for Accessories



WHEN IT COMES to fabrics, designer Anna Versaci, left, knows her stuff. For instance, she'll tell you that the Dogon tribe of Mali believes that weaving thread is a symbol for human reproduction, while the indigos that are

prominent in her collection represent protection and security. Such history, she says, is poetic and vast, and it's at the core of her work. "Take the mod cloths," she says. "They've been washed in rivers, hung to dry; there's a working life there." Having collected fabrics for years, Versaci, who lives in Beverly Hills and works as a yoga instructor and interior designer, developed a signature look that's a mix of bohemian prints, textures, and color with a decidedly luxurious vibe. Handmade in Royal Oak, each pillow she creates is crafted from a mix of Chinese batiks, Japanese Shibori, African mud cloths and indigos, and Moroccan textiles. "These fabrics have a presence that few fabrics have," she says. "You're effectively bringing something into your house that has an energy to it that you just can't buy." Here, she discusses her passions, processes, and favorite local haunts.

Q: Can we assume your indigo pillows are as fabulous as our favorite pair of jeans?

A: I love the 1970s indigos, the really washed-out denim looks. The pillows do look like a real worn pair of denim jeans. This is where denim (got its inspiration) from, this process of indigo dye.

Q: How does yoga affect your life and work?

A: I teach and practice yoga and meditation, and that guides my lifestyle — everything from how I manage my family and household to how I approach clients and my pillow business.

Q: You're both mindful and visual. Explain that dynamic.

A: Creativity is essential to my being, and meditation allows me to quiet the reactivity and noise to make space for creative ideas to be born. It also teaches me to trust my intuition and believe my inner voice.

Q: Then it's safe to say that you find meaning in the layers?

A: Definitely. Everything in my home tells a story. Nothing is too precious. I like older things with a lived-in feel; they have a better weight and texture.

Q: Let's talk local. Where will you visit this week?

A: I love Scout, in Royal Oak, because it reminds me of a cool boutique in my old neighborhood in New York. And they carry my pillows. annaversacidesign.com — *Taryn Bickley*

IT'S A TOSS-UP

From top to bottom: Chinese batik, \$200; indigo tie-dye, \$185; and mud cloth lounger, \$210 (all vintage).



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