

The pedestal sink and toilet are original to the bath in this 1872 Italianate; Patrick and Joyce added new period-style flooring, lighting, and accessories.



# BATHS MADE *Simple*

*The husband-and-wife team behind Fine Artist Made shows us how focusing on the basics can lead to gorgeous, understated period bathrooms.*

BY CLARE MARTIN

In the 14 years they've spent restoring bathrooms in old houses, Patrick Mealey and Joyce Jackson have discovered one very important truth: A house will tell you what it needs, if you take the time to listen. "A lot of times, the house speaks for itself," Joyce says. "We just pick up on what's already there."

It's this principle that guides their Maine-based restoration firm, Fine Artist Made. Rather than gussy up baths with superfluous details, Patrick and Joyce let the simple beauty of this utilitarian space shine through. "There's often a tendency to overdo it," says Patrick—a tendency that he and Joyce counteract by focusing on well-crafted essentials.

Case in point: The 1872 Italianate

George Eaton House in Calais, Maine. When Patrick and Joyce arrived on the project to design a new master suite, what they found was a bathroom that had been swathed in 1970s-era updates, including metallic wallpaper, fluorescent lighting, and a shower with a sliding-glass door. The only items remaining from the original bath were a pull-chain toilet and a sturdy pedestal sink—but that was more than enough to inspire Patrick and Joyce's pared-down design.

They modified the layout of the room, removing a partition that had created a separate dressing room, which unobstructed a large window and flooded the room with light. Removing the wall also freed up space for a large linen cabinet, which the couple designed to mirror the room's wainscoting and cap molding details. They finished it off with faceted crystal knobs that match the room's original doorknobs.

**BELOW:** The metallic wallpaper (a relic from a '70s update) and baby-blue paint had to go; Patrick and Joyce repainted the original beadboard wainscoting a crisp white, complemented by soothing green walls.





JOYCE JACKSON PHOTOS

**ABOVE:** Removing a partition that divided the window flooded the room with natural light.

**LEFT:** Patrick and Joyce took out an awkward hallway door and put new wainscoting and a medicine cabinet in its place.

Closing off one of the room's three doors made room for more storage space: a medicine cabinet recessed into the wall adjacent to the shower. "We usually don't like to make that much of a change," says Patrick, "but in this case it made the bathroom flow much better."

They tied the new bathroom together by whitewashing the baby-blue original wainscoting and patching in areas where the door and wall were removed. To replicate the wainscoting's distinctive triple-bead detail, they laid ¼" mullions with screen molding over ½" plywood. Polished nickel towel bars uncovered in the attic were reinstalled, and they guided the aesthetic of new lighting and accessories.

Patrick and Joyce pride themselves on nailing little details like these, which typically come about after considerable discussion. "It really is a collaboration between Patrick and me," says Joyce. "We really listen to each other."

"It's about convincing each other," adds Patrick. "We'll work something out until one of us convinces the other that it's the right choice."





**ABOVE:** Located adjacent to the kitchen, the bathroom in Patrick and Joyce's 1893 farmhouse once served as a pantry.

**RIGHT:** With an acrylic wall surround encasing the clawfoot tub (at left), the room's previous incarnation was drab and cramped.

When it came to their own bathroom—in the 1893 Foursquare-style farmhouse they bought after their honeymoon trip inspired a move from the Hamptons to coastal Maine—they had plenty of time for deliberation: Work on the room progressed slowly, in between other projects. But the glacial pace ended up working in their favor. “We liked being able to live with it and think about it,” says Joyce. “If we’d had to decide everything in the first year, I don’t think we’d be as happy with it now.” They did make a few changes immediately—namely, freeing the 1930s clawfoot tub from an acrylic wall surround and moving the washing machine to the basement.

Over the years, their biggest challenge proved to be working within the confines of the unusual space, which once served as the house’s pantry. One wall was bisected by the backside of a chimney that serviced the parlor; Patrick and Joyce simply worked around it, steaming off the popcorn ceiling material that had covered it and giving it a fresh coat of plaster. On one side of the chimney, an original pantry cabinet remained, so the couple replicated this detail, building a matching cabinet on the other side.



SANDY AGRAPLOTIS PHOTO (TOP)

## Patrick & Joyce's Do's and Don'ts

◆ **DO stay true to the house.** The bathroom doesn't have to be an exact copy of what was there before, but it should be in the same spirit to ensure that the room blends seamlessly with the rest of the house.

◆ **DON'T buy tons of new stuff.** As tempting as it is to splurge on a big project, start by saving original material and buying salvage. "It adds to the authenticity, and it's usually less expensive and far more green," says Joyce.

◆ **DO take some time to research the history of your house, or other houses like it.** Especially if you have few original materials to guide you, this knowledge can be invaluable for nailing the details.

◆ **DON'T be afraid to move things around.** Patrick and Joyce had originally wanted to put a recessed medicine cabinet above the sink in the Eaton House, but this proved impossible due to the placement of a pipe. Instead, they recessed a cabinet into the wall where they removed a door.

◆ **DO plan ahead.** Having a final vision of the room in mind will make pulling all of the details together much easier. "You really have to think 20 steps ahead so that you end up where you want to end up," Patrick says.

**LEFT:** The sink and sconces in Patrick and Joyce's bath were salvage finds; the toilet was rescued from a friend's house and restored. **BELOW:** The chimney had been covered in popcorn ceiling material by previous owners.



JOYCE JACKSON PHOTOS (THIS PAGE); SANDY AGRA PHOTOS (OPPOSITE)



The 1930s strip flooring was pock-marked with plumbing holes that hinted at the various configurations the room had seen over the years, so Patrick and Joyce replaced it with wide-plank wood floor-

ing, painted an earthy beige, that matches the floors in the adjacent kitchen. They also did some reconfiguring of their own, moving the clawfoot tub next to the window to take in views of the fields surrounding their house.

With the bones of the room in place, Patrick and Joyce began filling it with items they'd collected over the years: a two-part toilet salvaged from a friend in Sag Harbor and moved with them to Maine ("The movers thought we were crazy," says Joyce), a pair of porcelain sconces Joyce scored for \$5, an antique table that once graced Patrick's first San Francisco apart-

ment. Salvaged pieces often take center stage in their projects. "There's a certain magic involved," says Patrick, "but we always seem to find the things we're looking for."

Of course, part of that magic comes from having well-trained eyes and an abiding love of old houses. "When people come into rooms we've done, they're hard-pressed to realize that it's all new," says Joyce. And, adds Patrick, "That's the best compliment we can get." 🏠

Tour the rest of Patrick Mealey and Joyce Jackson's restored farmhouse.

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An original pantry cabinet provides storage space for linens; the clawfoot tub was relocated to take in the pastoral views outside Patrick and Joyce's house.