

STORIES TO TELL



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Old things that have been loved and lost, carried and dropped, cared for and abused carry the rich stories of their histories infused in their very being

Walking into this Hobart home is like stepping back in time. This Georgian beauty owned by antique lovers Leslie Lauder and Mark Howard was built for the colony's assistant commissariat general Affleck Moodie in 1828.

Hobart's colonial architect John Lee Archer designed the heritage-listed house that has been slowly and lovingly restored.

When the pair come back from travelling, Leslie says they walk in the door and exclaim: "Here's our dear friend, our beautiful home." They have been told it is one of the two finest, privately owned regency villas in Australia.

It was almost knocked down in the 1940s but the post-war housing shortage saved it. Leslie and Mark picked it up 20 years ago and on their regular trips to Hobart from Fremantle used to jokingly refer to it as their sandstone shack. They officially moved in just over a year ago.

"When we saw inside the house we thought it looked like an awful lot of work but we knew we just had to have it," says Leslie, who has a passion for preserving heritage buildings. "The house was saying 'save me and make me beautiful again'."

He says houses and buildings are works of art. "I think if you are attracted to beautiful things, then when you see a house like this, you feel a responsibility to undo the damage that's been done and preserve it for future generations."

They have done a lot of the repair work themselves, by peeling away things that have been done to the building and reinstating the original detail where possible. "There has been a lot of careful interpretation," he says. "It was very much on the brink of extinction."

More difficult jobs needed professional expertise so they have at times hired in help



Clockwise from top left: Mark Howard and Leslie Lauder in their much-loved drawing room; well-trodden stairs down to the cellar; a well-stocked library; bottles of wine in the cellar; and a wide view of the charming and ornately decorated drawing room.

TIPS FOR BUYING ANTIQUES

- Buy something that has had a life and a history.
- Buy the best piece you can afford. Cheaper is not best in antiques.
- Buy from the heart. You will always be able to find a space for a loved piece.
- Don't be afraid of antiques. They are made with love and have a story. A house is a box. It's what you put into it that matters.
- Buy from reputable dealers who know what they are doing.
- There has never been a better time to buy antiques. If you are starting out, consider an Australian colonial cedar furniture piece.
- Antiques go as well in a modern home. You just need to choose the right piece.
- Some of the best oil paintings you find are black and filthy but that means they haven't been destroyed by over-cleaning.
- Restoring antiques can be expensive so before you buy a broken piece, find out how much the repair is going to cost.
- Antiques don't need to match. A desire to only buy matching pieces can be limiting. You can put complementary pieces side-by-side and it can look incredible.

like the local stonemason who chipped away the ugly concrete rendering that was suffocating the sandstone exterior. He also got rid of the thick layer of concrete that had been laid over the top of the original flagstone paving on the veranda.

Mark has been told by architectural historians that the Huon pine floor downstairs was the first tongue and groove floor laid in Tasmania. There are still ink stains on the floor in the dining room. Leslie says they were possibly made by the notorious banker John Dunn who lived in the house for many years. "He was reputed to issue small promissory notes on wretched paper which quickly wore

out which he then refused to honour," he says.

The pair run Lauder and Howard in Campbell St, and have furnished their 191-year-old home with an impressive, eclectic and colourful antique collection they've been amassing for more than four decades. These days they go on one antique buying trip a year. Luckily, they both like the same pieces.

"Antiques open you up to the culture of the world," Mark says. "When you research the pieces you buy, they open doors to the history of these different countries and periods in time. We like the things we buy to have a story."

Stories abound in the refurbishment, too, such as the key they found behind the

architraves in the kitchen that unlocks the front door; the length of chimney cornice that they dug up in the backyard that has been restored and refitted; or the mantelpiece they brought home from Edinburgh that was built two years before the house.

"Finding beautiful things the way we do is life-enhancing," Leslie says. "One of our good customers in her 90s encourages us to keep collecting. She says 'never stop buying, because as soon as you stop buying, then you'll die'."

Lauder and Howard will be at the Tasmanian Antiques Fair at the Albert Hall in Launceston from June 7-10.