

New additions were built on each end of the house and the roof replaced with dressed shingles.

Photos: W. Douglas Gilpin, Jr.

Fundamentally Sound

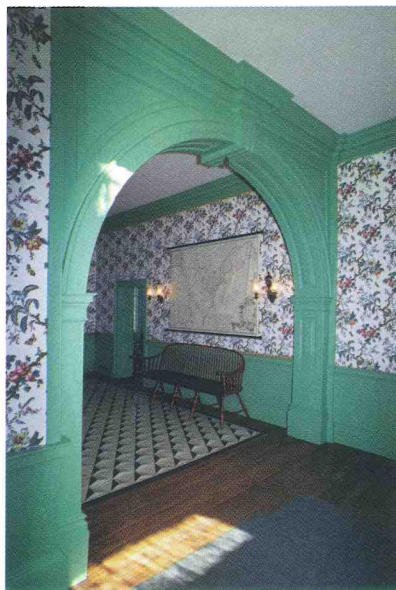
When architect W. Douglas Gilpin, Jr., FAIA, first learned of the house known as Brooke's Bank, he soon discovered its storied past. Built in 1751, the manor had been "Federalized" with interior trim sometime in the late 1700s or early 1800s. During the Civil War, it had been shelled by the Federal gunboat "Pawnee," which spread terror along the Rappahannock River. Then, in the 20th century, the house had received two sets of additions that yielded greater convenience, but at an aesthetic cost.

Gilpin, a principal of Dalgliesh, Eichman, Gilpin & Paxton, P.C. in Charlottesville, realized there was much to consider before taking any new steps. "It was a one-of-a-kind project that looked pretty good before the restoration, but had major problems below the surface," he says. He started by removing the inappropriate wings and heavy slate roof that was dam-

aging the structure. In its place he installed a dressed-wood shingle roof. Exterior woodwork was removed and conserved piece by piece in an adjacent barn converted to a workshop.

The demolished wings were replaced with new ones that allowed the owners to enjoy the modern conveniences added to the house in the 1920s. Gilpin detailed the new wings in a sympathetic Federal style – placing a large family room, bath, and powder room on the west end and a kitchen to the east, where it benefits from morning sun. Heavy timbers in the kitchen ceiling are made of reclaimed cypress, all constructed with pinned connections.

Gilpin performed a conscientious interior restoration of the historic rooms. To achieve those results, he closely examined the building along with architectural historian Edward A. Chappell of Colonial Williamsburg. "We determined that a lot of the paneling that is now there was part of the federal-era upgrading," Gilpin says. "They applied a lot of the moldings on top of what was originally there." The curved stairway in the center hall looked particularly suspicious, because its style was typical of later American houses. But later research revealed that the same detailing was already popular in England by the time Brooke's Bank was built, so the stairway in the Virginia house was simply setting the trend.



Historically correct colors were used in the old portions of the house (right). Exposed trusses give the updated kitchen an old feel (far right).