THE GARDEN WALL

WILLEY HOUSE RESTORATION JOURNAL VOLUME 1 ■ ISSUE 2 ■ FALL 2002 ■ ■ ■

THE STATE OF THE HOUSE
FALL 2002

An improved cantilever, a working drainage system, the first brick repair and at last, a home security system.

An extraordinarily wet summer slowed progress on some of the exterior work, but proved to be a boone for tracing leaks. Don't worry, there are plenty more where they came from. Fortunately, fall brought drier weather and catch-up time. Yet much needed to be done before snow began to fly.

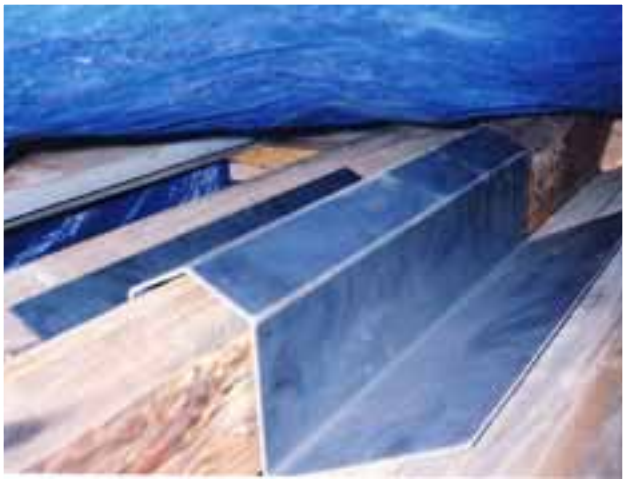
The skylights and trellis, the most complicated area of the house, required the combined efforts of carpentry, steel fabrication, and sheet metal work in an intricate interrelationship. The trellis cantilever was shored up with the help of an engineer and ten foot long steel support saddles. Once in place the trellis sag was cured. After removal of the buried fuel oil tank, an open ditch on the north side of the house was transformed into a much needed drainage system funneling rain water away from the retaining wall and out to the street. Planter boxes, both hand dug last summer, were rebuilt with original bricks and skim coated inside, ready for metal liners as originally specified. Water-soaked plaster that had fallen down in the entryway and living room exposed clear passage for running security wires, sound system and additional phone lines throughout the house. In restoration, even the darkest cloud has a silver lining.

Following is a photo essay on fall accomplishments.

Planter box wall deterioration.

TRELLIS STEEL SUPPORTS

The trellis has an eight foot cantilever. It was constructed entirely of wood and over time naturally sagged as the wood fibers stretched. Looking at the open structure it appears that the trellis was built with a projection somewhat above level with the anticipation that gravity and the natural flexibility of the wood might settle the whole at a point near level. After 68 years it was visually apparent that the trellis was slumping badly. Measurements proved it to be sagging by 3-1/2".





SUPPORT PROTOTYPES

On the left is a sample section of steel saddle as proposed by an engineer. The weight of his design proved excessive. The fabricators who made up the sample chuckled when told it was for a trellis. We opted for a scaled down version made of lighter gauge steel without the triangular box sections. This design minimized weight and has proven sufficient for the degree of support we required. When the steel was bolted in place and the jacks removed there was only minor deflection and most of that was due to compression of the soft wood.

DRAINAGE SYSTEM

After removal of the fuel tank (see The Garden Wall, Volume 1, Issue 1) a drainage system was laid to funnel some of the water shed from the roof away from the north side retaining wall.

PLANTER BOX REPAIR

The planter bricks were cracked and missing, the interior bricks were even worse. Both planters leaked through the common walls into the living room radiator wells after a rainfall. They had never been waterproofed. French drains were dug below the planter box and house footings to encourage percolation. Heavy rains often left a foot or more of water standing in the planters.



RUNNING WIRES

The water-damaged plaster that fell down in the living room in front of the french doors was turned to advantage by opening up access to a soffit that runs most of the length of the house. It became an ideal chase for security, sound system, phone and category 5 wiring. Thanks to the open soffit and floors it was relatively easy to fish wiring for the new security system which is completely invisible and now fully operational. Most enclosed spaces in the ceiling and decks revealed caches of acorns and other evidence of past rodent habitation.

WOOD DRYING OUT

The first dry heat in years has caused the interior cypress to shrink and crack. Doors that had been swollen to the point that they seemed like the wrong door for the jamb now swing shut with ease. Thin cabinet doors shown here, positioned directly above a gallery radiator were flat and now have warped.

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