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Buying a historic home? 6 owners share the pros and cons

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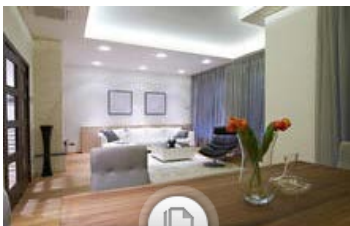
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PHOTO COURTESY OF AMY AND DOUG HEAVILIN

They just don't make homes like they used to.

From intricately carved moldings to turrets to hand-carved stone fireplaces, many older homes offer a unique charm you can't find in modern properties.



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Some historic homes in no-so-great states of repair can be great investments, if you're willing to put the additional time, sweat equity and money into them. However, because of their age, historic homes can be costlier to fix and renovate than newer ones. You may find that generations of homeowners have made repairs and additions with varying levels of expertise, and old walls can hide some big surprises.

If you're thinking about buying a historic home, you need to make sure you're up for the challenge -- financially and emotionally.

We tracked down six homeowners who have taken on these projects and asked

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them to share the lessons -- good and bad -- that they've learned along the way.

Meet the panel:

Ron Tanner, a professor at Loyola University-Maryland, bought an 1897 townhouse in Baltimore in 2000 with his wife (then-girlfriend), Jill. The house had most recently been occupied (and vandalized) by a fraternity. The couple spent 15 years restoring it, documenting the project [on a blog](#) and in a book, "From Animal House to Our House: A Love Story." They're now restoring an 1880 farmstead about 40 miles from Baltimore.

Amy and Doug Heavilin are currently restoring a 1902 Victorian-style house in Franklin, Indiana. They had already worked on homes from the 1920s and 1930s, and were living in one from 1875 when their current home -- their "dream house" -- came on the market after a foreclosure. You can follow the Heavilins' projects [on their website](#).

Ken Roginski's restoration of a 1910 late-Victorian-style home in Freehold, New Jersey, led him to a career change from finance to historic preservation. He has worked for the New Jersey Historic Trust and is now a consultant -- "[The Old House Guy](#)" -- helping other owners of historic properties with their projects.

Alex and Wendy Santantonio bought a 15-foot-wide 1885 row house in Old Town Alexandria, Virginia, in 2003 and are still finding projects that need doing. They've also purchased a 1908 beach house in Maryland and are continuing to document their restoration projects on [their website](#).

Click ahead to see [10 things these homeowners have learned](#) and for before-and-after photos of some of their projects.



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