

THE HISTORY CHANNEL PRESENTS



SAVE OUR HISTORY:

↳ A VICTORIAN REBORN ↳

Most of us know that history can be found in books and documents, but what about the histories that live in our buildings and even our homes? *Save Our History: Victorian Reborn* answers this question by traveling to Salisbury, North Carolina to follow the restoration of a historic Queen Anne Victorian home that has fallen into disrepair. Teaming up with Lowe's and the Historic Salisbury Foundation, a local preservation organization, The History Channel identified the McCubbins-McCanless House as the ideal home to use as an example of historic restoration in action. In this fascinating behind-the-scenes documentary, viewers see the amazing process through which this home, built in 1891 by noted architect George Barber, was returned to its former glory. Viewers look on as a talented team of craftsmen, preservationists, and dedicated local citizens get to work on all aspects of this fascinating undertaking.

This *Save Our History* one-hour documentary, hosted by Steve Thomas, documents the revival efforts covering every aspect of the home from its foundation, plumbing, electrical systems to its landscaping and masonry work on four chimneys. Interviews with local historians and preservation specialists reveal the historical changes which prompted the neglect of this and similar homes, and describe ways its restoration can help rejuvenate the once-bustling neighborhood in which it is located. Educators and their students will find this documentary to be a primary example of "hands-on history"—the journey to restore the McCubbins-McCanless house is a journey to recover the history and stories of this town. Students will see how history lives in the physical

structures we inhabit everyday, and can think about ways they might be able to help revive history in their own communities, neighborhoods, and schools along the way.

OBJECTIVES:

Students will explore concepts of historic preservation by following the hands-on restoration of a 19th century home. They will learn about meaning and significance of neighborhood development and revitalization, the tools of local history, the Victorian style of architectural design, and the methods craftsmen use to restore historic homes. This program will help build student interest in local history, community development, and active civic engagement.

CURRICULUM LINKS:

Save Our History: A Victorian Reborn would be useful for History, American Culture, Politics, Geography and Current Events Courses. It is appropriate for middle school and high school. This documentary fulfills several National Standards guidelines as outlined by the National Council for History Education including: Human Interaction with the Environment, and Civilization, Cultural Diffusion and Innovation.

VOCABULARY:

Catalyst
Façade
Ghost mark
Heritage
Landmark
Preservation
Rejuvenate
Relic
Restore
Template

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the name of the architectural style of the house being restored in this documentary? During which area of American history did this style flourish?
2. What are the primary reasons, in your opinion, for undergoing a restoration project on a historic home? Do you think all houses that have fallen in disrepair should be salvaged and restored? What criteria do you think should be used to judge which ones should and should not be preserved?
3. Why do you think the McCubbins-McCanless house fell into decay? What was the community of Salisbury like at the time it was built? How and why did this change?
4. Who are the different groups of people in this documentary who have taken up the task of restoring the McCubbins-McCanless home? Why do you think each of these groups has chosen to get involved? What other members of the community might have a stake in the restoration project, and why?
5. Who was the original architect of this house? How would you describe his style and its significance architecturally and historically?

6. One local commentator in this documentary talks about the “collective memory” which exists in local communities. How would you define this term? What are some of the “collective memories” of your community, town or school?
7. How did those restoring the home decide which parts should be kept the same and which should be modernized? Did you agree with their choices and approach? Discuss.
8. What do you think were the most interesting aspects of the restoration process depicted in this documentary? Which process or task do you think you would be most interested in participating in, and why?
9. How do you think the restoration of the McCubbins-McCanless home might affect the neighborhood overall? What do you think are the greatest risks, rewards, and challenges of such a project?
10. If you were the main architect put in charge of this restoration project, what do you think would be your approach? What do you think would be the most important aspects of the project? What would be your favorite part of restoring this house?

EXTENDED ACTIVITIES:

1. The Queen Anne style of Victorian architecture was extraordinarily influential during its time and continues to be popular through today. Online or at the library, research this style of architecture and the historical context in which it emerged. In small groups, prepare a visual presentation highlighting this architectural style, including short descriptions of the background in which it became prominent. These presentations could be in PowerPoint format, or as a series of drawings and short essays. Share these findings with the larger class or group if possible.
2. Imagine that you are an architect who has been hired to restore a historic home. Draw up a blueprint design which shows the original layout of the home, and then an additional blueprint which shows your intended changes. You can search the internet or work with a local librarian or historic organization to locate the blueprint of an actual home, or you can design your own based on your research. Share these blueprints with your larger class or group.
3. For many people, their home holds their most valued memories; our homes are often carriers of history which reflect our communities past, and present. Interview an older family member, neighbor, or friend about a home they grew up in and the neighborhood in which it was built. Incorporate these interviews into short historical biographies of those you interviewed. If possible, include additional historical background or context on the architectural style of the home described and the community in which your interviewee lived.
4. This documentary will hopefully inspire more people to get involved in historic preservation projects in their communities. Organizations like the Historic Salisbury Foundation are active in many cities and towns throughout the United States. Locate a home or building in your neighborhood that is in need of restoration. Consider volunteering to help with one of these projects, or offer to help rediscover the history of the home and its architectural style. Or, spearhead a restoration effort at your school or neighborhood to help preserve your own history for the future!

RESOURCES:

Books

Gonzalez, Robin Robson. *If Our House Could Talk*, (Tampa Preservation, Inc. 2003)

Page, Max. *Giving Preservation a History*, (Routledge, 2003).

Stipe, Robert E. *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century*, (The University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

Salvadori, Mario. *The Art of Construction: Projects and Principles for Beginning Engineers and Architects*, (Chicago Review Press, 2000).

Websites

The History Channel's Save Our History website:

www.saveourhistory.com

(Links to organizations throughout the country, with grant opportunities and lesson plans)

The National Trust for Historic Preservation:

<http://www.nationaltrust.org/>

(An excellent resource for learning more about historic buildings and sites)

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation:

<http://www.achp.gov/>

(Links and background information on important preservation initiatives and history.)