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'History meets modern' in Bull Street restoration

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[Leroy Burnell /The Post and Courier](#) After a restoration that lasted more than a year, 220-year-old 48 Bull Street includes a bright yellow exterior with red copper roof. The house has been split into two homes, each worth \$1.9 million.

You can't accuse Mark Regalbuto of rushing his residential restoration at 48 Bull St.

He started the intensive work of renewing the main house close to two years ago. But there were reasons to proceed with care.

The nearly 7,000-square-foot house dates to 1787 with an 1860s vintage addition. This was his first major restoration of historic property. He spent untold hours researching the site's

background.



"It's a labor of love," Regalbuto says. "It's just not typical, a little different than the normal renovation: history meets modern."

In many ways, the restoration is not unlike the efforts that go on all the time in historic Charleston.

Before the restoration, the paint was fading, and the porches were partially blocked by hedges.

There's no doubt 48 Bull St. posed some heavy-duty problems: The three-story house had fallen into disrepair, and an extra-large yard stretching close to a block was a tangle of vines and limbs.



Hallways show the scope of the 48 Bull Street twin homes, which are each more than 3,000 square feet each.

But that isn't all that makes the development unusual. It's how Regalbuto melded old and new in resurrecting one of Charleston's timeless dwellings.

In April 2008, he opened the house for a glimpse of the work early in the process, when dust flew, studs showed through and aged plaster hung on centuries-old brick. The quick tour revealed just how many man-hours were ahead.



The kitchen was restored with modern features while keeping the old chimney. Wiring was installed behind the walls before the bricks went back up so a television could be installed.

Then he displayed the home last month, a year later almost to the day. The main house is complete, its muted yellow paint and pressed-tin roof providing a distinctive exterior appearance. The front yard is cleaned up, showcasing a mix of landscaped shrubs, oaks and a mini-avenue of crape myrtles.

Regalbuto separated the sprawling dwelling into twin homes that share a massive front porch and have separate entrances. The upscale duplexes, 3,100 and 3,400 square feet, are priced at \$1.9 million apiece.

The developer maintained the home's 18th-century design and style.

Among the highlights:

- Exposing beams and restoring 222-year-old floor boards.
- Using wood remnants as dowels and other attaching pieces.
- Designing a hallway in between the homes with stuccoed walls



Exposed beams highlight this bedroom at 48 Bull Street. The room also has a spotlight over the bed.

and a pathway of original bricks.

-- Repairing fireplaces so they all work.

-- Fixing up original shutters installed in 1813.

Regalbuto could have stopped there with a first-class period home. But he went further. Wherever he could, the developer installed modern-day conveniences and state-of-the art fixtures.

Faucets are copper. Kitchen appliances are stainless steel Wolf and Sub Zero — stoves, refrigerators and separate icemakers. Countertops are milled African soapstone.

Walk-in closets and vaulted ceilings highlight the bedrooms, three for each house. Bathrooms have showers with rain and body sprays, pennywood ceramic tile and televisions. Living rooms have 6-foot windows looking out to the front porch.

The house has energy-efficient and high-tech advancements.

Wiring was installed before the painstakingly repointed bricks were put back in place on chimneys, permitting flat-screen TVs to be installed above working fireplaces. There's also low-voltage, energy-saving lighting.

The homes differ. One is more rustic and traditional, the other more open and modern with an enormous kitchen island. "We've had 40 people stand around here," Regalbuto says.

The smaller house has two parking spaces, the large one has three.

Recently, the builder started the last phase of the neighborhood. It is The Courtyard on Bull, which will be six 1,500-square-foot traditional-style cottages priced at \$900,000 each and located where the main home's backyard is now. The first of the cottages should be completed by the end of the year.

"This is just a really cool historic infill," Regalbuto says. "You have the main house and cottages respectful of the neighborhood."