

Old houses getting fresh coats of paint

BY JACQUELINE BRILL
STAFF WRITER

Paint suffocated the walls after 40 years of retouches and color changes. Beautiful pine floors were hidden under layers of dust and dirt. Weeds crept up the faded white exterior.

Just last year, this was 1 Cobb Terrace, built in 1912, until current owner Jane Young looked to bring life back to her cozy bungalow and its history.

She turned to Adam Jones and his small company, Mill House Properties, for help.

After seeing a previous example of Jones's restoration work on Oakwood Drive in Chapel Hill, Young had no doubt she had found the right person to work on her home.

"I knew if anyone could restore it, it would be Adam," Young said.

French doors have been added, the floors have been refinished and new crown molding now adorns the living room.

Jones and his company succeeded once again in merging architectural history with the present day.

Mill House Properties was officially incorporated in 2001 and since has expanded only in the services it offers.

Jones and his assistant work within the confines of a single room with two desks crammed into either corner.

Back issues of This Old House magazine and framed photographs of the houses they have restored decorate the nook that serves as homebase.

"This is it," Jones said. "We're

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ADAM JONES, OWNER, MILL CREEK PROPERTIES

just four walls."

These four walls can accomplish quite a bit for their clients, though. In addition to restorations, Mill House Properties handles sales and manages several properties they rent out.

"I got into property management because I needed a consistent revenue source," Jones said. "The renovations are the gravy, the fun part."

Real estate is not quite where Jones expected to be when he graduated from UNC's School of Journalism and Mass Communication in 1991.

For 15 years he worked in New York and North Carolina in the advertising and marketing business.

He gained a background in real estate by working summers for his older brother, who was a contractor in Wake County.

While between advertising positions, Jones went back to working on houses for pleasure.

"The first eight houses I did were really just hobby houses," Jones said. He did all of the necessary jobs, such as carpentry, design and painting, without help from anyone.

As time passed, however, Jones realized he was ready for a career change and began buying and selling homes in addition to renovat-

ing them. He obtained his brokerage license in 2002 and eventually began managing rental properties.

He said he has been a much happier person working in real estate than in advertising, although the skills he acquired in the previous business still help him today.

Using technological and design savvy from his prior career, Jones designed Mill House Properties' logo and Web site.

What really sets the two careers apart, though, is the unexpected pleasures found within each of his new projects.

"The most fun thing about renovating old houses are the things you find," he said.

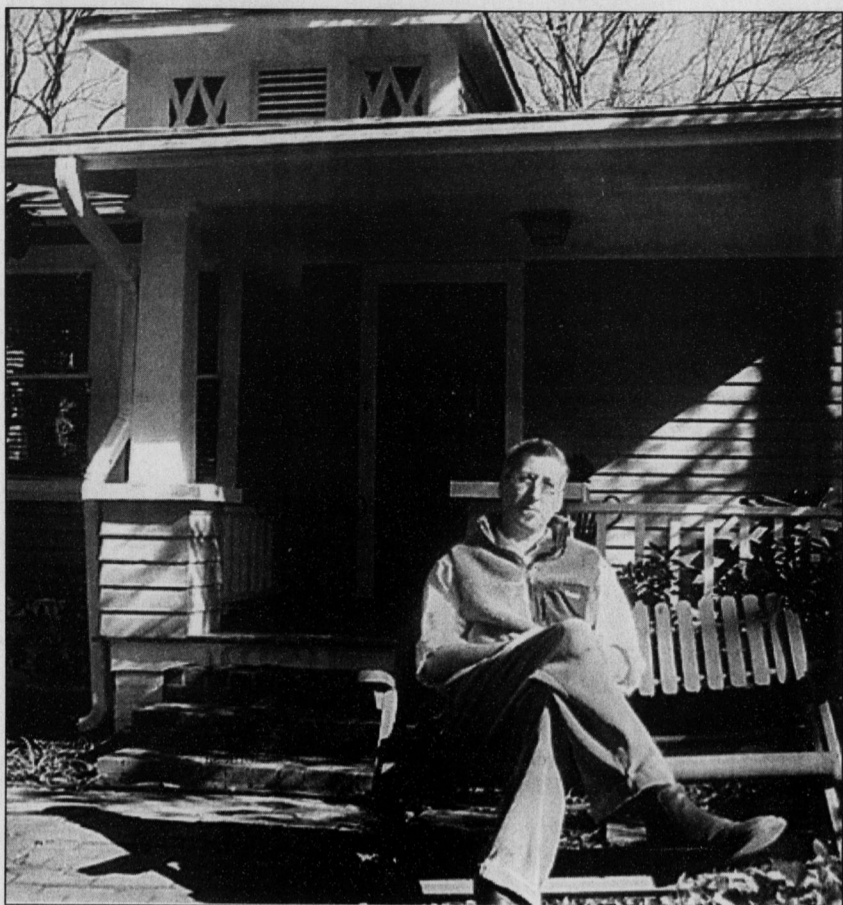
"I once found a bunch of antiques in a shed that the previous owner had left."

Some of these items included tables and chairs he personally refinished, a Seth Thomas clock and a stack of News & Observers dating back to 1940. He also found a shoebox filled with an old man's childhood toys.

But Jones enjoys all aspects of working with older homes.

"I just love bringing old houses back to their original grandeur."

Contact the Features Editor at features@unc.edu.



DTH FILE PHOTO/ALEX FINE

Adam Jones, owner of Mill House Properties, sits in front of 1 Cobb Terrace, a home built in 1912 that his company has restored recently. Jones, a UNC alumnus, works to restore local houses to their original state.

Tenant rights affect students

Read, discuss lease at signing

BY MEREDITH MILLER
STAFF WRITER

For most students, the idea of moving away from a cramped dorm room to a private apartment sounds like a step toward independence, but officials say students must be aware of the risks involved in renting an apartment.

In January 2003, the Chapel Hill Town Council and UNC student government collaborated on the Good Neighbor Initiative, a set of rules that outline the responsibilities students who live off campus have with their neighbors and landlords.

Attorney Dorothy Bernholz, director of Carolina Student Legal Services at UNC, said students should understand the rights they have as tenants, along with the commitment of signing lease documents.

Most problems between tenants and landlords arise when there is misunderstanding about the contents of the lease, she said.

"A lease is your promise to stay (at the apartment)," she said, and students must understand that they are obligated for the terms designated in the lease.

Bernholz said students should bring confusing lease papers to the Legal Services offices to understand fully the contract that they are entering into with their landlords.

"If you don't understand the lease, do not sign it," she said.

She said these documents are usually "very pro-landlord," and students should watch out for any violations of their rights as tenants.

Bernholz added that right now there is a "good tenant market," which makes it easier for students to negotiate with owners and make additions to the lease.

But, she said, students must be sure to have landlords initial any additions to the contract, because "if it is not in writing," landlords are not responsible for performing a task that they had "promised" when a student was signing the lease.

Adam Jones, a UNC alumnus and owner of Mill House Properties, said he understands the process students go through when renting properties and working with owners to ensure a satisfactory living environment.

"We are very student-friendly," Jones said. "We walk them through (the leasing process)."

He added that the most important thing students must do when looking for a place to live is to find the environment that best suits them.

Sheryl Davis, relocation specialist at The Villages in Carrboro,

said she has not encountered any problems with student tenants abiding by their contracts.

She said agents work closely with student renters to explain important features they need to know when renting a property. "What gets students in trouble, we explain."

She advised that students ask questions and talk to their landlords about important living issues, such as maintenance, early termination and parking.

Bernholz said owners are responsible for complying with the Chapel Hill Housing Codes, which list rights of tenants and the minimum standards of living in an apartment or house.


One part of the code specifically addresses discrimination in the housing process. People looking to rent in Chapel Hill can expect not to be discriminated based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

In addition, people placing classified ads looking for a roommate are not allowed to specify a gender preference in their ad, as it violates the nondiscrimination clause required when allotting housing.

For more information about landlord compliance, students may contact the town of Chapel Hill Inspections Department.

A full list of tenant rights and responsibilities can be found by visiting the town's Web site, located at <http://www.townofchapel-hill.org>.

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.



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