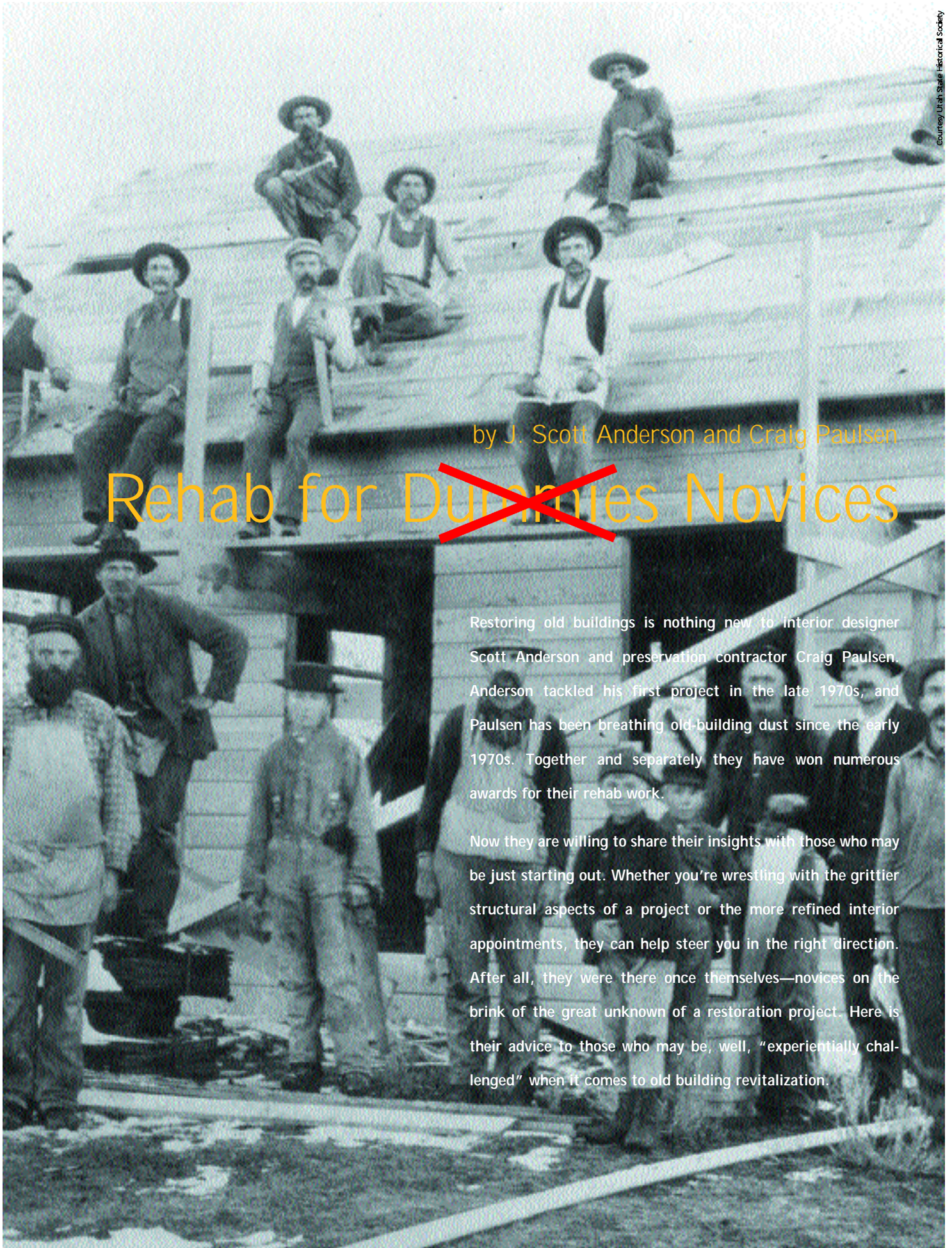


by J. Scott Anderson and Craig Paulsen

# Rehab for ~~Dummies~~ Novices

Restoring old buildings is nothing new to interior designer Scott Anderson and preservation contractor Craig Paulsen. Anderson tackled his first project in the late 1970s, and Paulsen has been breathing old-building dust since the early 1970s. Together and separately they have won numerous awards for their rehab work.

Now they are willing to share their insights with those who may be just starting out. Whether you're wrestling with the grittier structural aspects of a project or the more refined interior appointments, they can help steer you in the right direction. After all, they were there once themselves—novices on the brink of the great unknown of a restoration project. Here is their advice to those who may be, well, "experientially challenged" when it comes to old building revitalization.





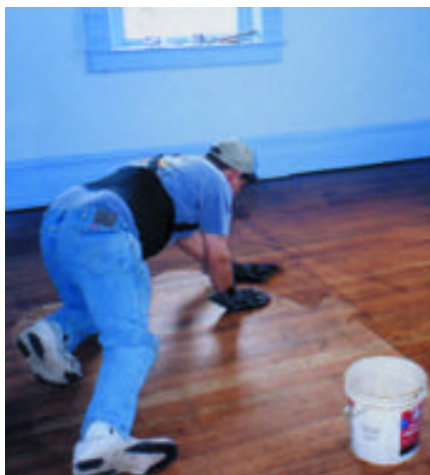
## Scott Anderson:

I have been interested in old houses and old buildings since I was a child. My grandmother would supervise my visits to empty pioneer houses in Manti. Most are now torn down. My parents would drop me off at 13th East and South Temple [in Salt Lake City] while they shopped downtown. I absorbed each structure as I wandered westbound. ■ Two structures during that youthful period had the most impact. The first was Brigham Young's Beehive House. My mother took me there probably the first year it opened to the public. She had lived there as a young woman while working in Salt Lake. My father courted her there. Some kids went to see movies over and over—I went to the Beehive House. ■ The second structure was the Cosgriff Mansion in Salt Lake City. While my mother was attending some meetings, my father drove me up South Temple street (he knew the routine). It was dusk. I counted the structures and related what I knew about each one. Then I saw, standing alone on the north side, the disheartening sight of the tall elegant columns of the Cosgriff House. They stood alone. The house had been demolished. Even my father, whose interest was at the other end of the spectrum from mine, mourned. We drove past several times in disbelief. That evening a thirteen-year-old made a vow.

Be familiar with the architectural style of your house and respect it when you make alterations and additions. The architecture provides a direction for your approach.

If your project is sizeable, consult professionals (contractor, architect, designer) to help narrow down or open up the possibilities and establish a realistic budget (count your feed before you buy your livestock). Generate accurate and complete blueprints or drawings so you can live your decision on paper first.

Original wood floors, even if slightly marred (think of them as marks of character), are worth the effort to restore them. Avoid glossy finishes.



If refinishing floors, avoid a high gloss finish. They look like gymnasiums. I prefer a satin finish that gives a waxed appearance. Use flooring types and scale appropriate to your architecture. Parquet flooring seems out of place in a pioneer house.

Interior millwork is often the thing we notice first in even the most modest old house. Millwork should be duplicated or similarly styled. We have great local mills with thousands of knives. You don't usually have to go to the expense of inventing the wheel. While some woodwork is stained it may be difficult to duplicate the patina and grain of the wood species. Don't be afraid to paint new wood in other areas.



Courtesy Utah State Historical Society

Paint colors: Good preparation of surfaces and proper paint colors can make all the difference in appearance and effect. The exterior of your house is a gift to the street. The interior is more personal. There are thousands of compatible combinations. White isn't always the best.

Windows are such an important part of the personality of a house. If you replace windows, use the same or compatible style. If you are dealing with an addition, don't let the personality trail off because it is the back of the house—stay consistent. No one ever regretted good windows.



Original moldings and woodwork should be kept whenever possible. Accurate replicas are the next best option. Avoid the urge to turn the interior into something much grander than what it was originally.



Upgrading kitchens and bathrooms is a common rehab project. The turn-of-the-century Kearns Mansion bathroom and kitchen (bottom) feature some high-end elements that may be excessive for average homes, though they provide a valuable insight into what might be appropriate.

Courtesy Utah State Historical Society



Bathrooms are usually a major focus of renovation and can be costly. I try to keep them classic and well appointed. However, approaches to revamping bathrooms are often too sentimental. Pedestal sinks are great for powder rooms but do not have adequate surfaces. Footed bathtubs are difficult to clean around unless the bathroom is large enough for the tub to float away from the wall. I like the look of an old tub but always suggest a separate shower if there is room.

I have always admired the tile bath from the turn of the century and often specify the white or off-white brick-shaped ceramic tiles for wainscots and showers trimmed with matching molding tiles. My favorite bathroom floor for old houses

is the square or octagonal mosaic tiles with Greek key type borders in contrasting colors. They never wear out!

I prefer nickel and chrome faucets and fixtures for ease of maintenance. Sconces combined with recessed lighting works well for the vanities. I often use an open-sided new tub skirted with the tile, wood panels or bead board with a marble or wood deck, depending on the elegance of the bathroom. There is a bathroom for every budget. I usually avoid exotic marble or granite in modest houses; white-veined or Carrera marble is just right and affordable. Marble thresholds come pre-made and are an inexpensive transition to other flooring.



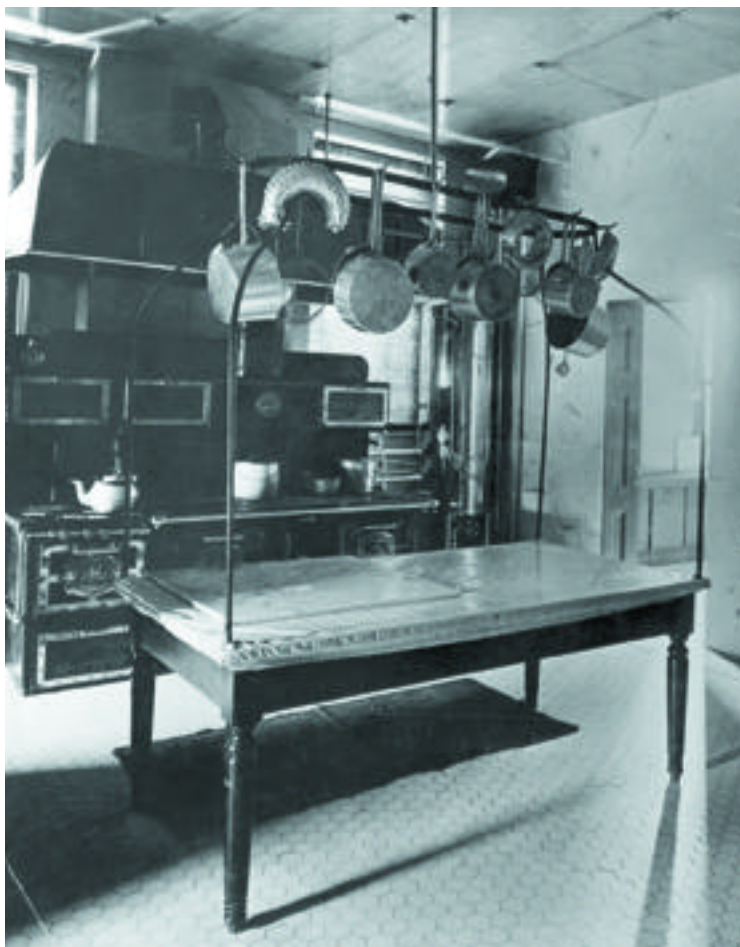
Courtesy Utah SHPO



Utah SHPO

(above) County assessor tax photos from the 1930s and '40s are often your best restoration guide. While many older buildings get painted white over time, their original appearance is usually more expressive. The tax photo of this house shows not only porch details that could be recreated, but also the original wall treatment, which consists of scored stucco to resemble stone and "granite-splash" faux quoins at the corners.

(opposite) The Tudor styling imposed on this house in the late 20th century is inconsistent with its 19th-century Victorian Eclectic roots. The Eastlake-style porch, arched windows, and circular gable-end insets have been disguised under superficial English Tudor embellishments. Most cosmetic make-overs don't last very long. Shakespeare offered the best advice for old houses: "To thine own self be true."



Courtesy Utah State Historical Society

Kitchens can be over-romanticized, just like bathrooms. I prefer to keep kitchens simple and functional while borrowing details from the architecture, such as door details and moldings. Even stock cabinets can be enhanced with different types of glass in doors, hardware, etc. My inspirations come from some of the servant kitchens and pantries of America's great houses: tall cabinets, glass, nickel, tile, and white or gray marble. When kitchens are combined with living spaces they take on a warmer feel even when kept simple. Reserve the gingerbread for the oven!

Fireplaces are always a focal point in any room, and they should be. They are well worth keeping in good repair. If fireplaces are part of new construction, choose fireboxes of traditional proportions. Pre-built fireboxes can be clad with an appropriate surround. Avoid the ones with blowers, vents, brass trim and glass doors. These look just like microwaves with logs in them. Check out "Rumford" fireplaces. They come as kits and draw like a dream!

Our climate often dictates a gas log. The convenience isn't bad either. However, direct-vent gas fireplaces in old houses seem dishonest. Fireplaces just shouldn't be placed around like furniture.

Renovation done sensitively and with care will serve many people many years. The house has stood the test of time and so should the renovation.

## Craig Paulsen:

I am a third-generation building contractor in a company started by my grandfather, who immigrated to Utah from Norway. I grew up spending summers on construction sites throughout the Salt Lake Valley. I have always had an interest in the past and particularly in the architecture of early Utah. ■ In the late 1960s I became aware that there was an interest in Utah in old buildings. This was largely due to the efforts of Stephanie Churchill, former executive director of the Utah Heritage Foundation, which has been active in promoting the preservation of Utah's historic buildings since 1966. ■ In 1974 my wife, M'lisa, and I moved our young family to Spring City in Sanpete County. This is a wonderful town that has since become a National Register-listed historic district [1980]. Over the ensuing quarter-century-plus I have worked on more than 45 buildings in Spring City alone, plus numerous others throughout the county. I've also been involved with many projects in the Salt Lake area, where my company is headquartered. ■ I've always maintained the attitude that the historic integrity of every building, whether great or small, must be maintained. This has given me something of a reputation with the building officials in Sanpete County, who always joke about my projects when I go in for a building permit because they have condemned many of them. But once the project is complete, everyone—including the building officials—thinks it is wonderful. Probably the best examples of this are the Devereaux Mansion in Salt Lake City, which we completed in 1984, and the Ephraim Co-op.



Be sensitive to the original design of your structure. Be careful not to destroy the integrity of the building. Try to use similar materials to the original in your renovation if possible and salvage as much original material as is reasonable.

Familiarize yourself with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* at the planning stage. The *Standards with Guidelines* are especially useful because they provide dos and don'ts. [Contact the Utah State Historic Preservation Office at 801 533-3500 for information about the Standards.]

The old suggestion about living in a place for six months before making radical changes is still good advice. You'd be surprised at how much the building can teach you in a few months.

Check with your local building authority and obtain any permits it requires. Nothing is worse than getting red-flagged in the middle of your project.

Interview and hire a good contractor unless you are willing to do all the work yourself (in which case triple your original estimate of time). Remember that there have been many divorces over remodeling projects that have not gone well. Get references on your contractor and check them out.

Be very leery of contractors that you must pay in advance. This may be a sign that the company is not reputable and is not financially sound. If you must pay in advance, obtain lien waivers and get some kind of security for your payment. Also, you may want to ask for the title to his truck until you are satisfied that the work is complete (just joking—sort of).

Approach the budget in a logical and detailed manner. Don't assume that there will be enough money to pay for everything you want if your project estimates come in well over budget. Your expectations may exceed the reality of what the cost of the work really is. Remember that your contractor needs to make a profit in order to stay in business.

Establish a completion date and stick to it unless you make changes that make it impossible to meet that date. Talk with your contractor about how you plan to deal with changes in the scope of work. You should be willing to pay extra money for extra work. Written change orders are the safest way to protect everyone's interest in the project. Your contractor should also be willing to give you credit for work that does not have to be performed that was in the budget.

Remember that some materials for your project require long lead times once they are ordered. You need to decide upfront what materials you want and be willing to pay for them.

Don't change your mind once you have picked items such as doors, windows, plumbing and light fixtures, and marble, because these all tend to have long lead times.

Be willing to do a lot of legwork to select your materials and furnishings so you don't have pay your contractor to spend valuable time doing that for you. This needs to be done before you start work.

Have weekly meetings with everyone involved with the project so that surprises are kept to a minimum.

Try to keep in mind that your project will go better if you are able to keep a team approach throughout the process. Maintain an atmosphere of congeniality and professionalism without becoming too friendly. The building process—especially rehab work—is not an exact science. There needs to be “give and take” on both sides.

If your house has stood for 100 years, you at least have the test of time on your side. Remember, though, that all old houses have a potential for problems in an earthquake. This is a risk that every lover of old buildings must face, but the value that I find in historic structures outweighs such risks. Old buildings require constant upkeep, just like any good relationship requires. •