

# The Record Home

MAY 21, 2011

## TRANSACTIONS



Find out how much this townhouse in Hawthorne recently sold for. See Real Estate Transactions, pages 20-21.

## APARTMENT SHOWCASE



Maybrook Plaza in Maywood is one of several rental properties listed inside. See Apartment Showcase, page 17.



## HEATIN' UP

Outdoor kitchens gain in popularity

PAGE 6

inside



**THE OLDER HOME**  
Preserving the porte-cochere.  
**4**



**SMART SHOPPER**  
Portable grills are hot!  
**9**

- Sod and seed **2**
- Ask the Builder **3**
- Calendar of Home Events **8**
- The Tile Orade: Choosing granite **10**

# Preserving a porte-cochere

Imagine living in the period when your house was first built. You return home, from visiting a friend, in your horse-drawn carriage. Maybe it's a rainy day, but your carriage has a roof. The driver pulls the carriage right underneath a porte-cochere — an extension of your porch roof — so you can disembark onto your porch, or possibly through a side door, without getting wet.

Flash forward a decade or two, and you might take advantage of the same convenience when you arrive home in your Model-T Ford or jazz-age roadster.

The porte-cochere tends to be a feature of larger homes built in the 1890s-1920s, also the Golden Age of the generous front porch. Both appear mainly on Queen Anne Victorian, Colonial Revival and Craftsman home styles. Unlike the porch, however, the porte-cochere has become an endangered species.

"If we do get called to work on one, it's usually to rip it down," admitted Mike Alleva of Alleva Construction, Hackensack (allevaconstruction.com). "Most people don't like them because they think they're impractical — you're maintaining a roof but it's not a garage. Once in a blue moon, in someplace like Ridgewood, I see one preserved."

## A Passage of Time

That usually happens when the house has some historical significance and an owner with an appreciation for such details.

Livia Deak, for example, grew up in a 100-year-old Victorian house in



PHOTO BY EUGENE PARCIASEPE JR.

Once a shelter where carriages could stop to let off passengers, the porte-cochere at the Deak home, in Wanaque, features stone steps that lead to the main porch. Today, this architectural feature has been preserved chiefly on historic homes.

Wanaque with a porte-cochere that connects to the wrap-around porch on one side.

"My friends used to ask why the first step on that side was so high," she recalled. "I told them because people would step onto it when they got out of a carriage."

Deak's house was built in 1912 by E. J. Ricker, the second mayor of Wanaque. Her mother Isabelle married E.J.'s son Bob, and their extended family all lived in the 15-room home. After Bob and most of the other Rickers passed, Isabelle inherited the house and married Livia's father, Sam Venezia.

"Mom was always very strong about preserving the integrity of the home," Deak said. "We are applying for historical status at the 100-year mark."

Now Deak finally has put the house on the market through Century 21 Crest,

Prompton Plains, where she also works as a sales associate.

"We love that the house has a personality of its own, and are hoping the next family will love and enjoy it as much as we do," Deak said.

She explained that they are sprucing up some exterior details to ready the house for sale, including the porte-cochere. "We've had a little sinkage there, an inch or two," she said. "Otherwise, it's just an extension of the house. The ceiling is the same as on the porch, the original wood."

## Preserving the Porte

"It's a beautiful architectural element," Peter Georgoutsos of Van-Go General Contracting, in Englewood Cliffs (van-gogc.com), said of the porte-cochere. "In the old days, you used to come through with a horse and buggy. Then it became drive-through (for cars). It can be a beauti-

ful entrance to a home, and also a great way to protect you from the elements. Most people still use it as a drive-through or a thruway to the back yard."

Georgoutsos noted that the main components of a porte-cochere are:

- masonry kneewalls that stand 3-5 feet high
- above them, a colonnade that supports...
- the roof structure.

"Even in the old days, they didn't want the horse and buggy smashing to their wooden posts," he explained, "so those usually sit on top of a masonry wall or pier."

Van-Go has done restoration work on porte-cocheres in several historical homes, including a Second-Empire Victorian in Englewood and the Elizabeth Cady Stanton house in Tenafly. Usually, the most serious issues occur with the roof. See next page

## From previous page

"There can be sagging in the structural beams, and the rafters may have to be changed," Georgoutsos said. "The perimeter girders — which hold up the rafters and are supported by the columns — can decompose. We go in and, depending on the span, would use either Douglas fir or LVL (laminated veneer lumber)."

He explains that the engineered lumber is ideal for supporting a wide span while maintaining a traditional look — "The detail is the same as before, but it holds up better for a large expanse."

An old porte-cochere may need rehabilitation for a number of reasons, Georgoutsos said. "Just because it was built long ago doesn't mean it was built right," he noted, with a laugh. "Also, now we have more advanced building techniques and codes, and what was acceptable 100 years ago wouldn't be today."

He admitted with regret that few original porte-cocheres remain standing and in use these days — "A lot get taken down."

"It was the epitome of affluence,"



PHOTO BY EILEEN WATKINS

Starting in the 1890s, visitors to Ringwood Manor who arrived by carriage disembarked beneath this classical porte cochere. The old cement hitching post has been added to keep cars from driving all the way through.

he said. "You had to have horses you were stabling, and property. It's the more stately homes that have them."

— EILEEN WATKINS

## ARRIVING IN STYLE AT THE MANOR

One porte-cochere that's open for public viewing can be found at Ringwood Manor, Sloatsburg Road, Ringwood. The older, Federalist parts of the house date from the early 19th century, but the porte-cochere was added around 1900, when owner Abram S. Hewitt adapted the Victorian house in a more neo-classical style. Architect Stanford White, of the noted firm McKim, Mean & White, created the porte-cochere with its graceful ionic columns.