

# This old house has had a lot of loving care

By MEIRA ZUCKER  
Post Correspondent

**TRUCKSVILLE** - It is 1916. The Brown family builds a house for newlyweds Isabelle and Lowther Brown.

Construction is in Trucksville on a hillside along Pioneer Avenue, the main thoroughfare of the Back Mountain. Maybe some newfangled automobiles chug up the road to Dallas, but mostly horse-drawn buggies run the route.

The area was country then. Houses clustered along the road,

offering security and comfort through the winter and neighborly visits during the summer. Behind the homes, farmland and forests supplied food and firewood. Deer ran through back yards, and trips to downtown Wilkes-Barre provided excitement.

The house reflected the aspirations of the family for the newlyweds. Generously-sized rooms and closets were planned for fu-

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Carol Sopko  
Home owner

adapted to country living in Trucksville.

"It was always a dream of mine to take an old-fashioned house and restore it," says Sopko. The

Brown's house, although well-maintained, had not been adapted to current lifestyles and needs. Sopko renovated and expanded the kitchen by tearing out the powder room that had replaced the original pantry. The 1916 coal stove finally was removed (although the coal furnace in the basement remains).

"We ate pizza and Chinese food for six months," recounts Sopko with a laugh. "The first Thanksgiving, [the contractor] put a pot under my kitchen sink — there were no pipes."

Over time, the family renovated and refinished other areas of the house. Wood floors were sanded, and painted doors were stripped to the original hardwoods.

In the walk-up attic, they added a full bath and two rooms. Sopko cleverly designed numerous built-in shelves and closets to take advantage of awkward spaces on



French doors separate the dining room from the entrance foyer. The house has three sets of French doors in all.

PHOTOS BY CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

the third floor. A skylight brightens the attic bath, and new windows, in addition to the custom quarter-rounds on either side of the chimney, add light.

Sopko's decorating highlights the turn-of-the-century heritage of the house. Refinished woods complement her Victorian furniture and window dressings. An original built-in china cabinet in the dining room displays a collection of antique china, and warm paint accents the room's wainscoting.

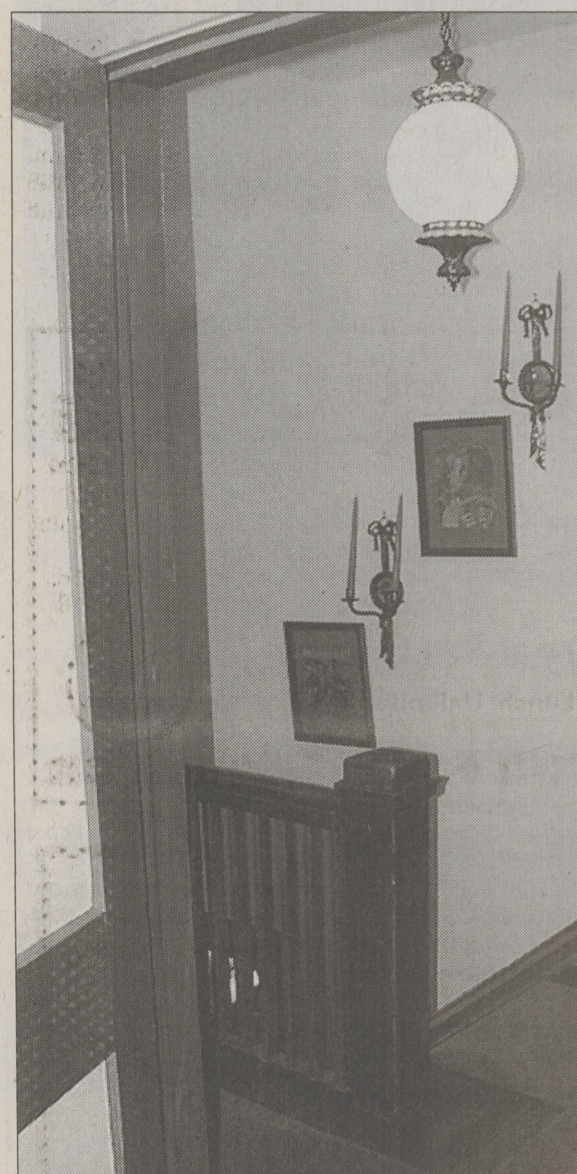
Fixtures throughout reflect history, from the push-button light switches to reproduction ceiling lights. Two deacon's benches still flank the front door.

A remembrance of history permeates the grounds.

"It felt like we were on vacation every day," says Sopko. The entire family grew to love the Back Mountain. They loved the woods around their home and the nearby farms and fields. The children adopted lost kittens and built a small home for an infant raccoon that they nursed back to health. They sat in the now-enclosed front porch and watched the morning sun pass over the valley.

And they grew up, and went to school, and moved into homes of their own. Now that Sopko's children are grown, it is time for her to leave this house to

the next generation. "I really enjoyed living here. I'll miss it," she said.



An original light fixture, above, hangs in a stairway. At right, deacon's benches straddle the front porch. 1/4 round windows give light to the finished attic.



ture acquisitions and the kitchen featured a large butler's pantry. The builders chose beautiful woods for the floors, doors, trim, and stairs. A front parlor with a wide brick fireplace faced the street, and on either side of the mantle, French doors opened to the wide front porch.

The Browns lived in the house nearly their entire adult lives. In time, the pines grew tall and shielded the home, turning the sound of traffic to a hum. The rhododendrons next to the porch created a jungle all summer long, and dark green ivy wrapped up one side of the garage that was added sometime in the 1950s.

"They were wonderful people," says Carol Williamson. As neighbors, she and her husband Robert knew the Brown family through their generosity. They were the kind of people to lend a hand. At the time of the flood, Robert Williamson was out of town, and the Browns helped Carol Williamson with her three children.

After Lowther Brown's death, Isabelle Brown remained in her home until she was 92 years old. At that time, she moved to be near her daughter, Lois. "She was a very independent woman," says Carol Williamson. "We were sad to see her leave."

New residents took her place. Carol Sopko and her family moved into the house on Warden Avenue in 1989. After spending their lives in congested areas of New Jersey, she and her children eagerly



**Just the facts**

The house is listed by Four Star McCabe Realty, at \$159,900. It has 5 bedrooms, 2 baths, gas heat and low taxes. To find out more, call Sandy at 674-9950.

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