

The Victorian era is generally regarded as being a time of stability, order and strict morality. Yet, Queen Victoria's 64-year reign was in reality a time of intellectual ferment and great change. Mass production of consumer goods and speedier communications introduced new commodities to the swelling city populations. It was a different society to the one before — coal-powered, steam-driven and factory-based.

New techniques in production and an increasing sophistication in printing and weaving fed the Victorian appetite for novelty. A preference developed for rich colour and lavishly detailed textures and patterns.

Styles became progressively more elaborate. During the 1870s, the rich and exuberant tripartite wall — comprising dado, filling and frieze, each with a different colour or pattern — became fashionable. Top decorative elements were heavy curtains, flock wallpapers, glittering gold decoration, stencilled wall borders and friezes, trompe l'oeils and faux paint finishes.



STYLED BY SUSANNAH GIBSON. PHOTOGRAPHED BY ANDREW PAYNE. STOCKISTS DETAILS ON PAGE 128.

Victorian

1830-1900

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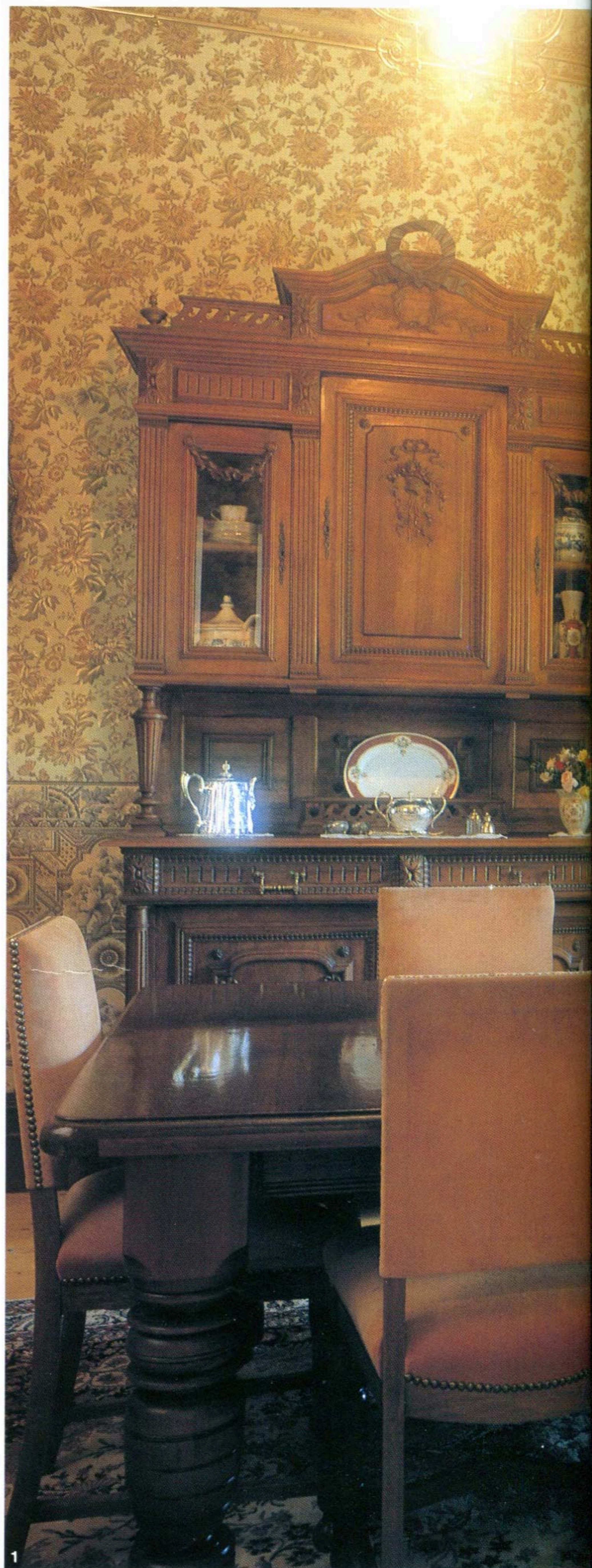
Painstaking attention to detail, plenty of time and lavish doses of tender loving care are all vital ingredients in the inspired restoration of this imposing Victorian house

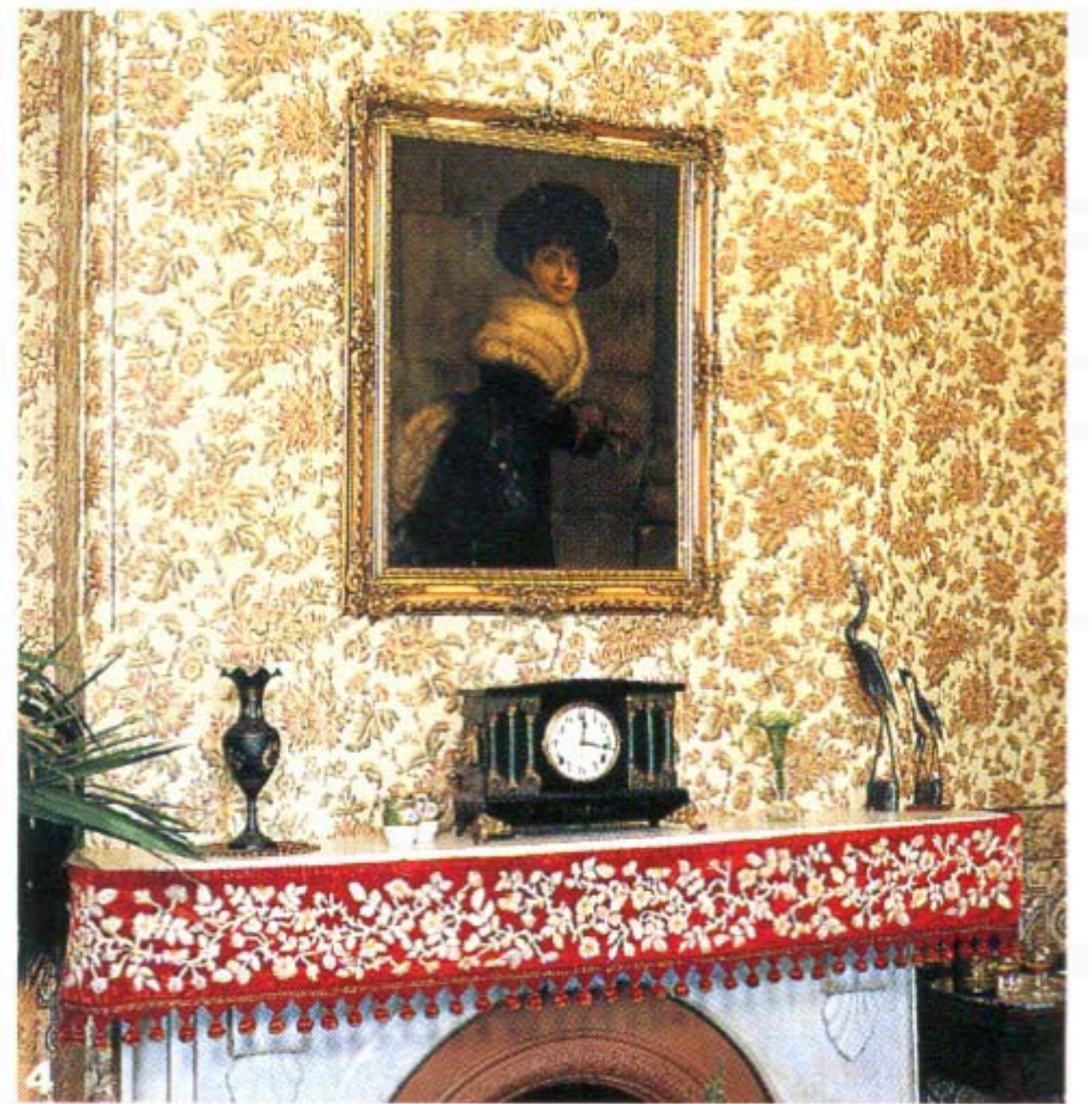
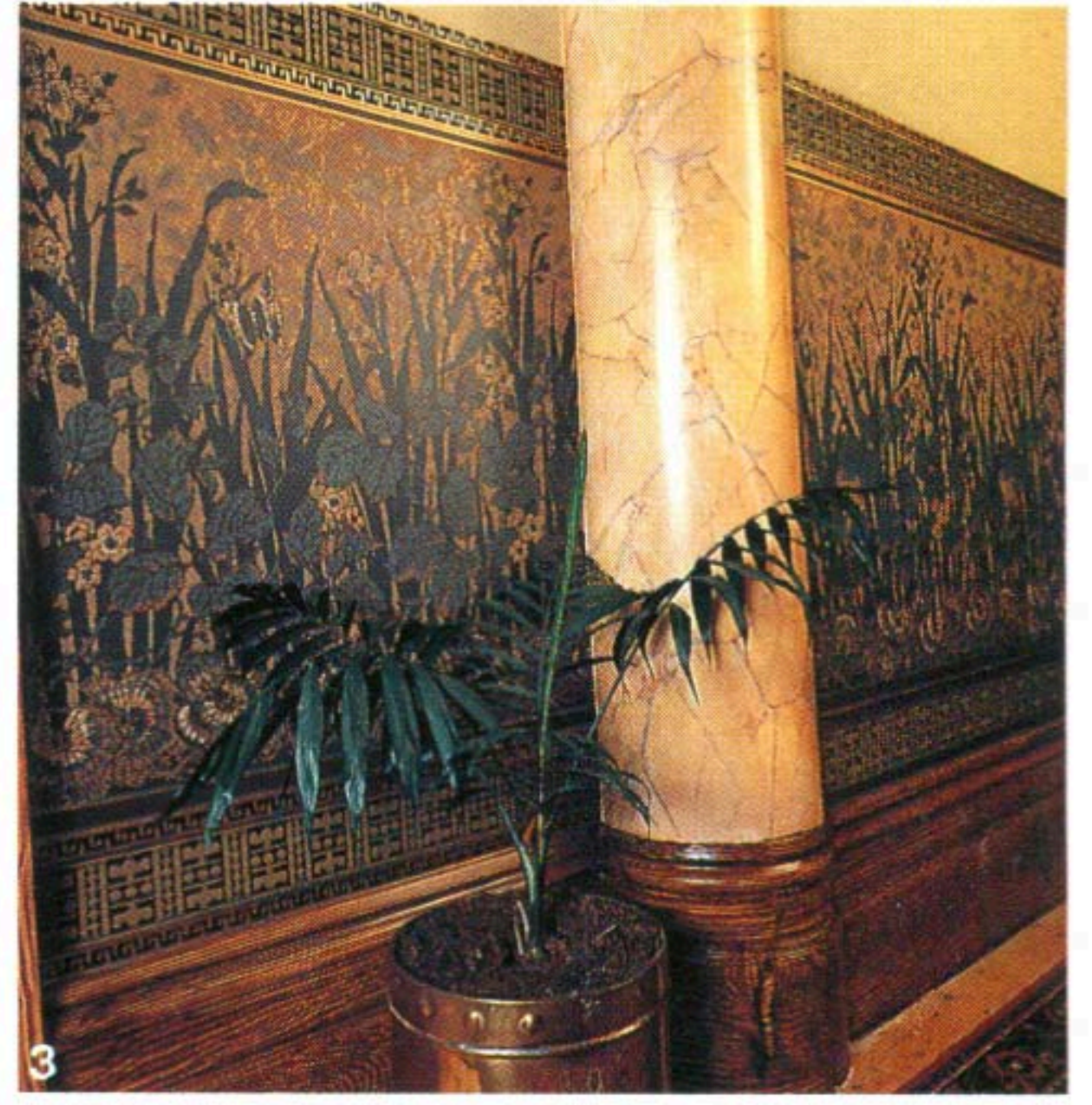
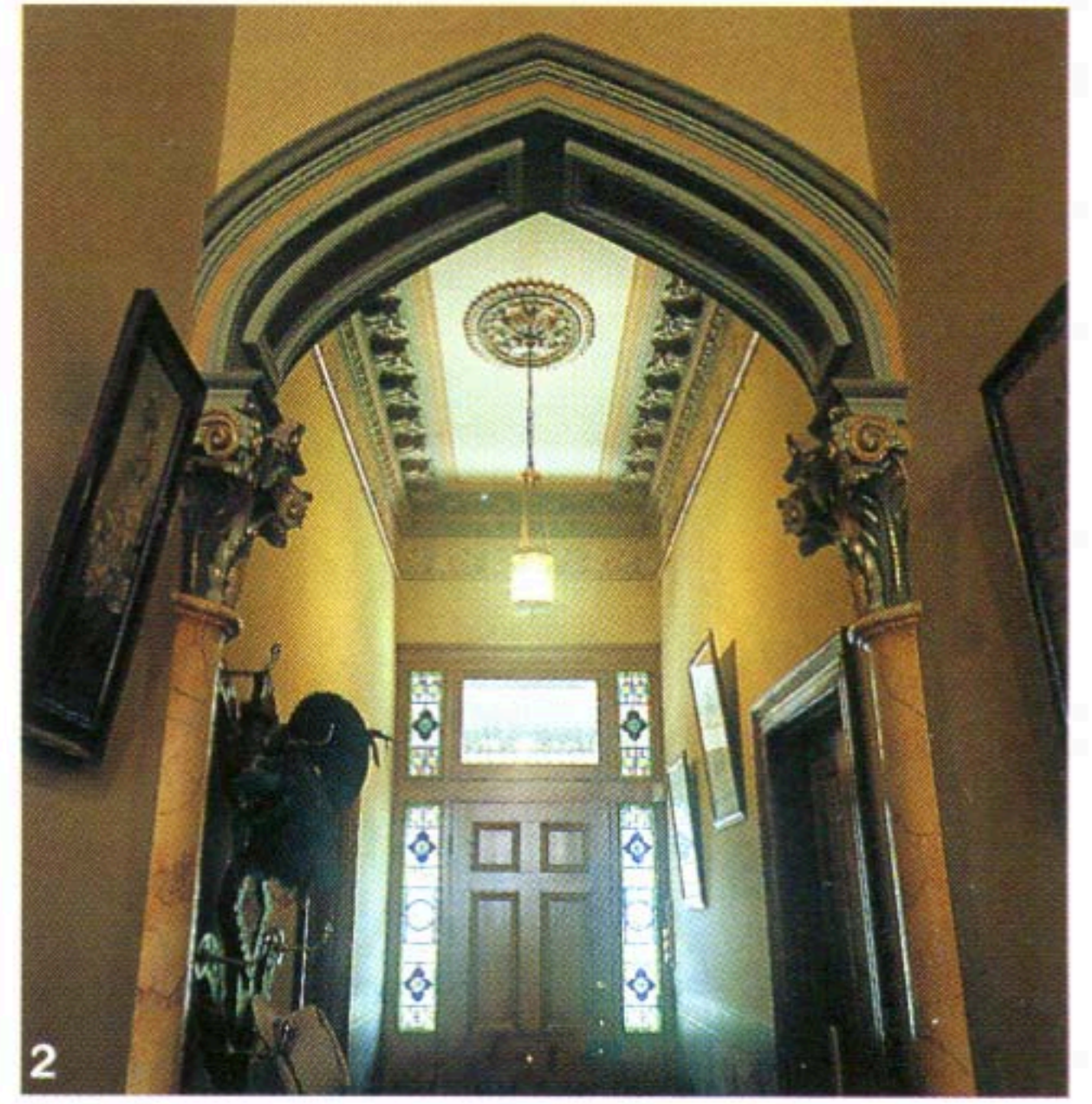
When this house was first viewed by its current owners, Jackie and Andrew Fedorowicz, it was dark, menacing, and in a state of total disrepair. However, through their combined talents they have been able to transform the place, built in 1895, into a lively and harmonious high Victorian environment.

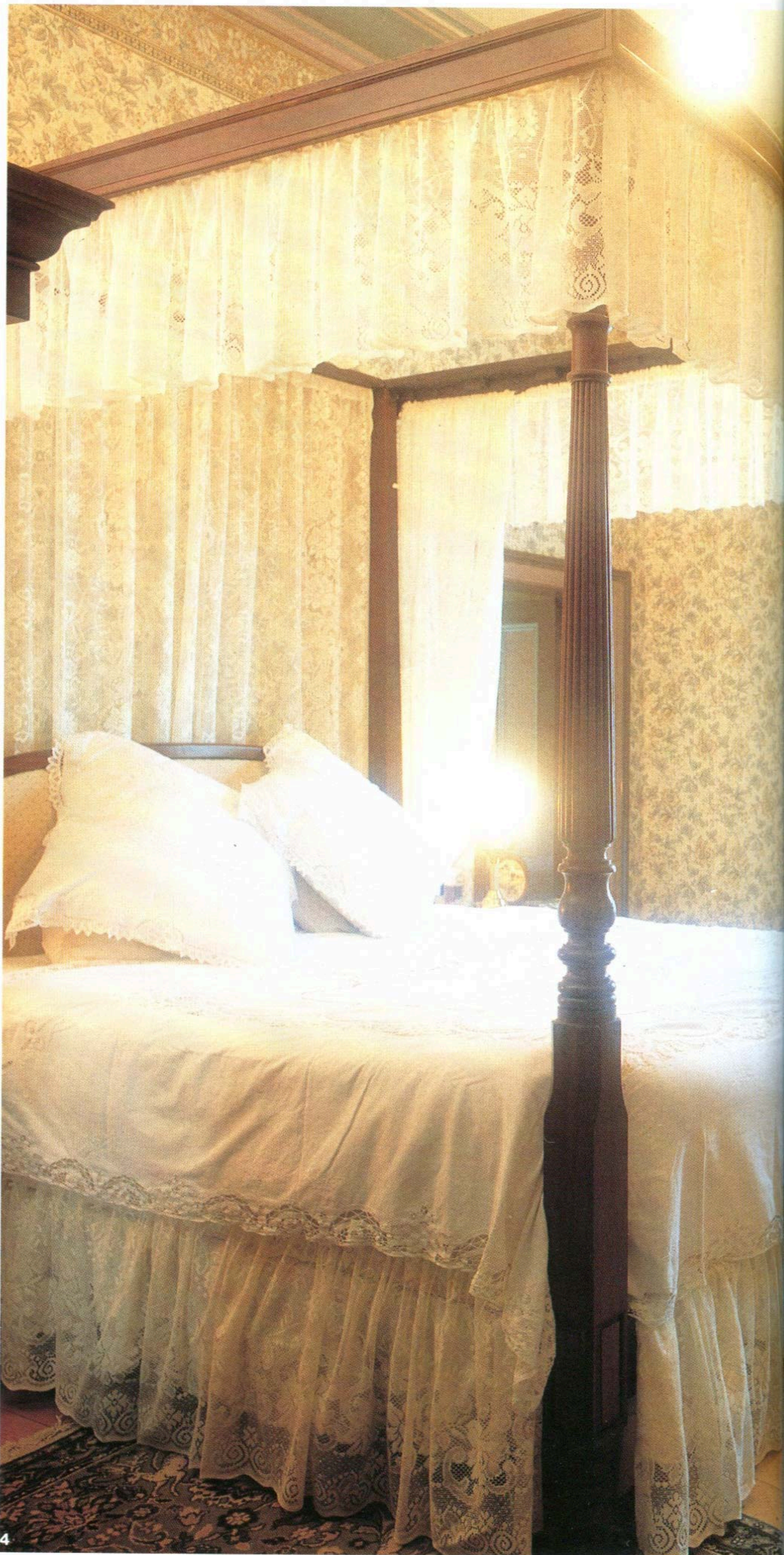
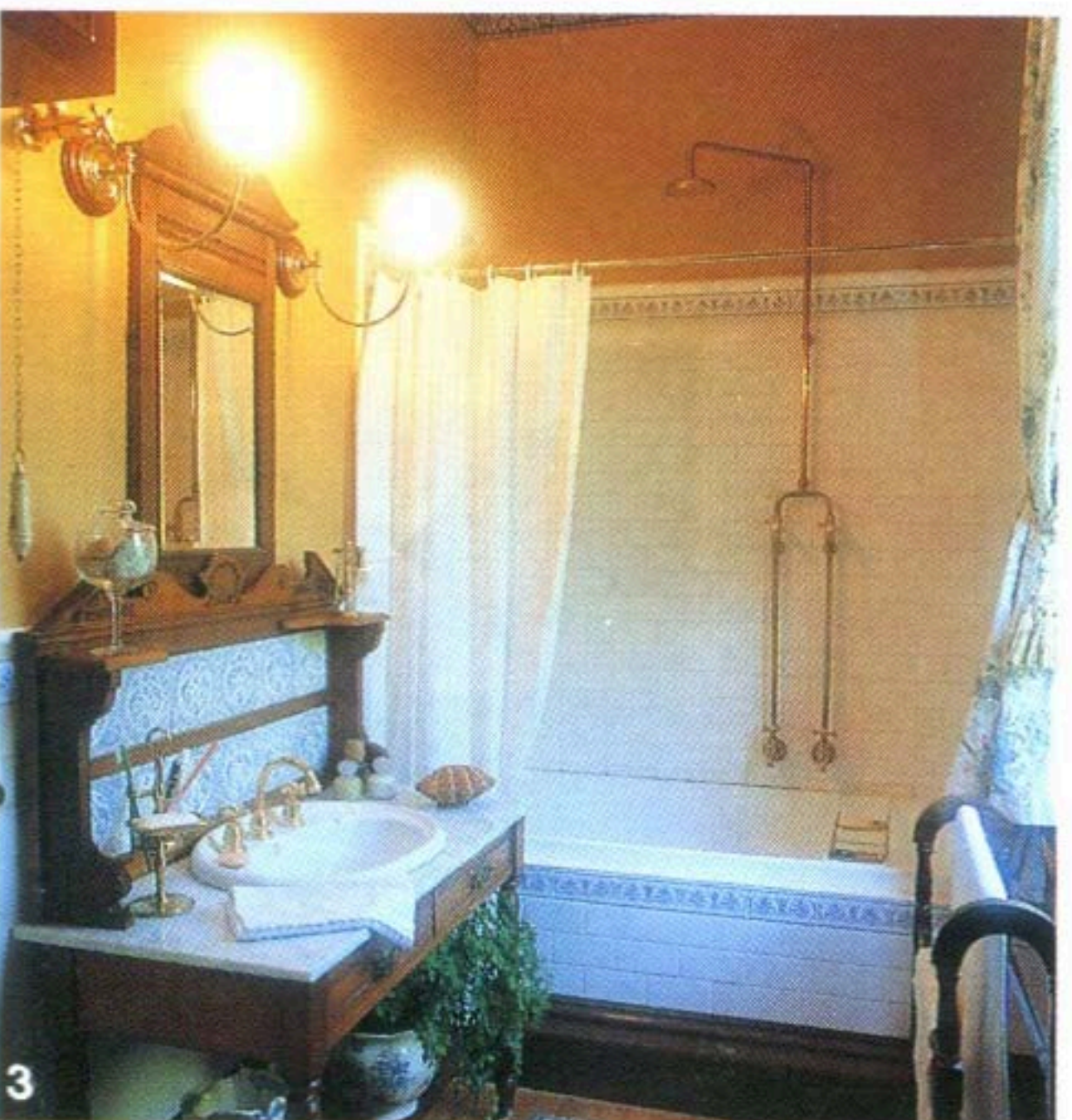
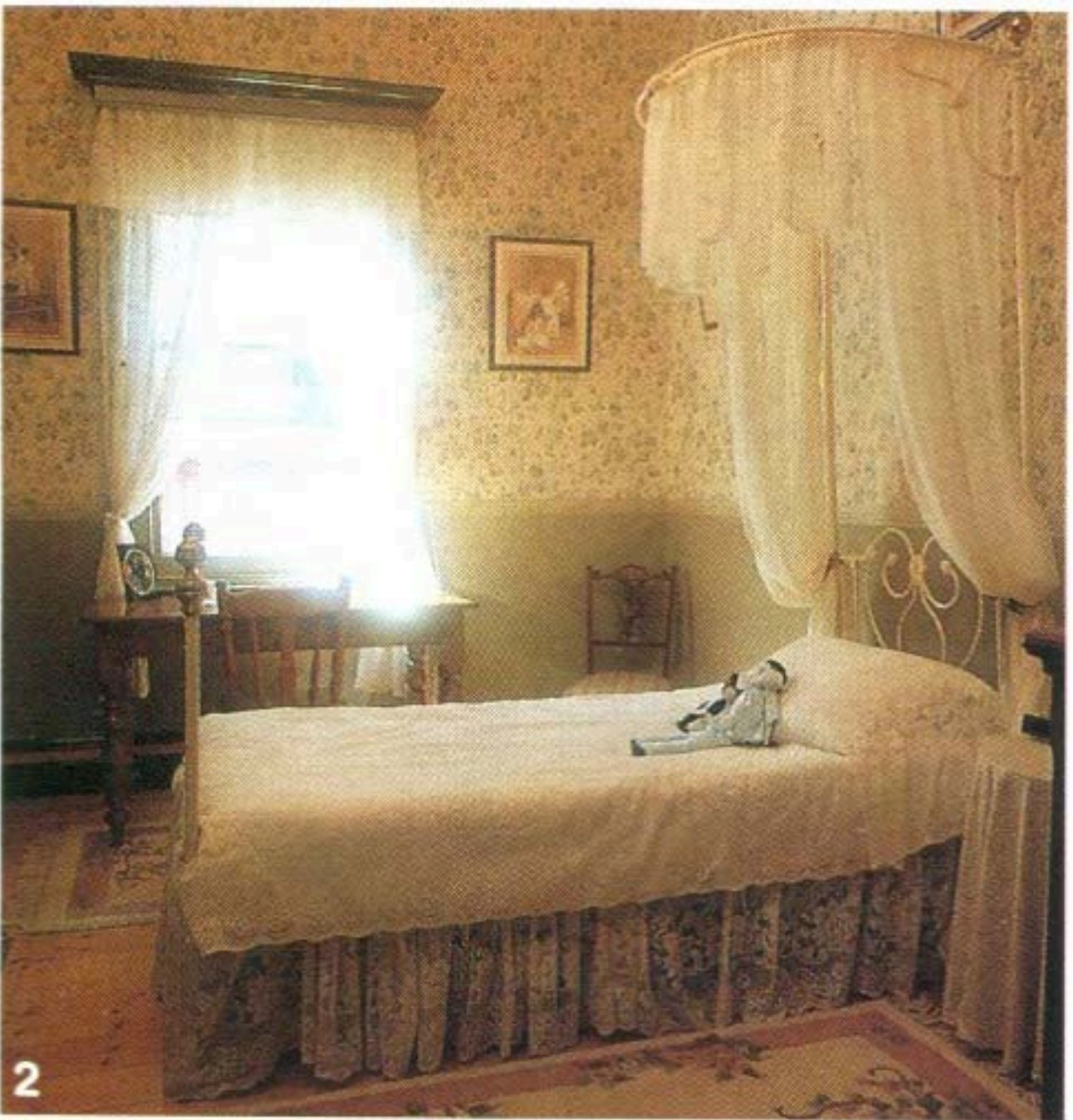
Jackie is an interior designer who specialises in houses built between 1860 to 1920 while Andrew is an architect who has worked on a broad range of classic and contemporary projects.

The challenge of restoring the house to its previous glory ▷

1: The dining room's wallpaper is 'Chrysanthemum' – a reproduction of an authentic 1890s pattern – from St. James Furnishings of Hawthorn, Victoria. The drapes, designed by Jackie Fedorowicz, are Gainsborough damask. The room also features a 1870s buffet and 1890s table. 2: The hallway was painted light beige and decorated with a 'Chrysanthemum' frieze and a 'Juniper Hall' dado from St. James Furnishings. 3: A view of the 'Juniper Hall' dado in the hallway. Master craftsman Derek Marvally regained the woodwork in the hall and marbled the column. 4: The 1880 portrait over the fireplace was purchased in a damaged state for \$12 at an auction and then restored to its present grandeur.









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has become a labour of love which to date has taken 18 months. They are still to complete the front of the house and plan to add a conservatory to the back.

Jackie confesses to having a passion for Victorian interiors. 'I take pleasure in working on Victorian environments. Every single colour is conceived to have an effect on other colours to achieve a total harmony. I have to work hard to achieve the desired result and that appeals to me,' she explains.

'The lovely thing about doing your own house is that you take the hard options. For example, in the main bedroom I'd have difficulty talking clients into having brown curtains — I have to temper some projects according to the client's likes and dislikes.'

At the back of the house, Jackie and Andrew have created a delightful family room where they, their two teenagers and their 70-kilogram dog relax in the evenings. The room is furnished simply and has a stylish 'Hawthorn' dado from St. James Furnishings of Hawthorn, Victoria, while exotic Asian masks and a Balinese painting, mementos of various overseas trips, blend harmoniously within the Victorian decor.

The original Baltic pine ceiling in this room had been painted over, so Andrew painstakingly removed each board, stripped and restored it. He suggests anyone contemplating such a task should push the nails back through the boards, because if you pull the nails out the boards tend to crack. Tinted putty may then be used to fill the nail holes.

The exterior of the house, still untouched, is an excellent example of the last flowering of Victorian architecture before federation. On the veranda, the iron lacework is very intricate and there is a rendered frieze above the roof.

Within the house is an elegant hallway with a Gothic arch and Gothic cornices, painstakingly painted by Andrew. Woodwork in the hallway was regained by master craftsman Derek Marvely, who also marbled the columns.

Essentially, Jackie's approach to restoring the house has been to follow the basic principles used by the Victorians themselves.

'A Victorian house had a hierarchy of rooms and each room was decorated according to its function. For example, the dining room was a masculine room decorated to a set number of ▶

1: The mirror was purchased from a junk shop and revamped with new paintwork. 2: The bedroom has a 'Rosebud' filler wallpaper and a 'Chrysanthemum' frieze, from St. James Furnishings. The bed is an antique half-tester. 3: The bathroom has a traditional look with a luxurious spa bath adding a touch of modern opulence. 4: The main bedroom has 'Pomegranate' filler wallpaper and matching frieze. The bed is an 1860s four poster made from mahogany and dressed in lace. The drapes are a G.P. & J. Baker fabric, 'Vine', which is part of the English National Trust Collection. The donkey-brown colour complements the Victorian-style brown used on the joinery.

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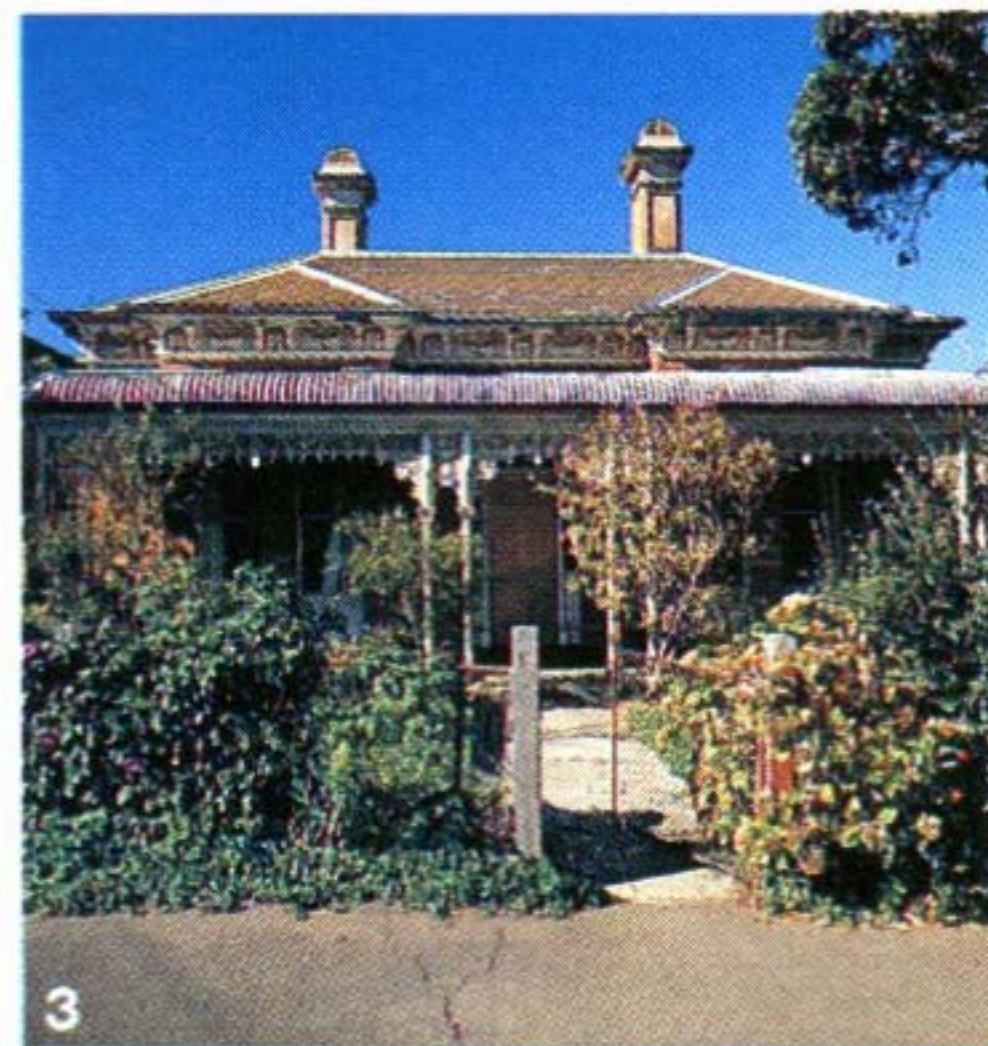
1. Andrew Fedorowicz carefully restored the original Baltic pine ceiling, seen here in the family room. 2. Owner and Victorian interior design specialist, Jackie Fedorowicz, relaxing with family friends. 3. The house is an excellent example of Victorian architecture just prior to federation.

colours to have a male ambience. The drawing room — or withdrawing room, the place to which ladies withdrew after dinner — was a more feminine room, a pleasant environment in which ladies often entertained friends and family.



‘Victorian bedrooms were usually simpler and restful, often with floral wallpaper, while the window treatments were less elaborate than in other rooms of the house,’ Jackie says.

She believes a Victorian house tells the story of its past. Consequently, owners of Victorian houses should respond accordingly and restore and decorate in a Victorian manner.



‘A Victorian house should reflect its architecture,’ she says. ‘So why knock out walls or modernise? Surely, it would be simpler to buy a modern house.’

Jackie and Andrew feel the decor of their house should dispel the image some people have of

sombre, museum-like Victorian environments. Certainly, this house is anything but museum-like. With its lively, harmonious colour scheme, eye-catching decorative detailing and antique furniture, it is a welcoming home enjoyed by all the family.

Written by Natalie Standfield. Photographed by Jeff Kilpatrick.