

HOW ONE COUPLE'S HARD WORK AND DETERMINATION TRANSFORMED A
STORIED WAREHOUSE INTO LOFT-STYLE LIVING IN DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA

If Walls Could Talk



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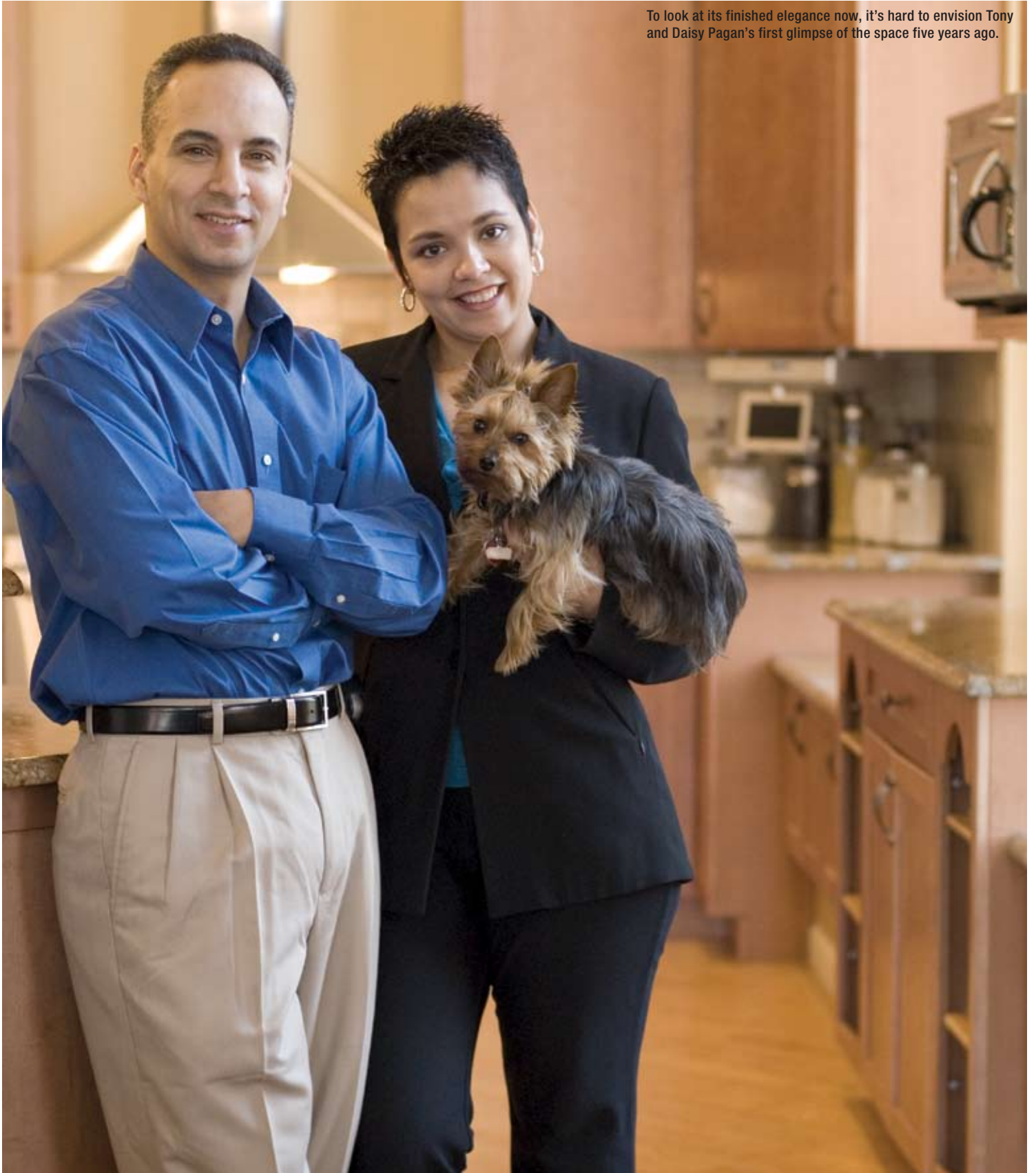
If these walls could talk . . . oh, the stories they would tell.

Once a cultural center, gentlemen's quarters, an oyster cellar, a speakeasy, school, machine shop, shoe factory, saloon, church, Civil War hospital, trimmery and vanity store, pharmacy, post office and more, 200 Locust Street in downtown Columbia is what many people would call a multipurpose facility. Once police even used it as a stake-out, observing the old hotel catty-corner for suspected prostitution. According to historical records, the "Chiquesalunga Tribe of Redmen" rented it in 1885 for \$15 per quarter, and Jenny Lind sang there in 1855. For much



The wide-plank original floors in the living room contrast nicely with the bamboo in the kitchen, and old fashioned multi-paned windows set off the stainless steel appliances, granite countertops and birch cabinets.

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of its life, though, 200 Locust Street was known for its ballroom and as the meeting place of the local Odd Fellows.

Today, after extensive renovation by Tony and Daisy Pagan (pronounced pah-GONE), the building still performs several functions. The second story is the couple's loft-style living quarters and the ground floor will soon serve as a sizeable venue for Daisy's event planning business — Perfect Settings (717-684-4455).

SAYERS & DOERS

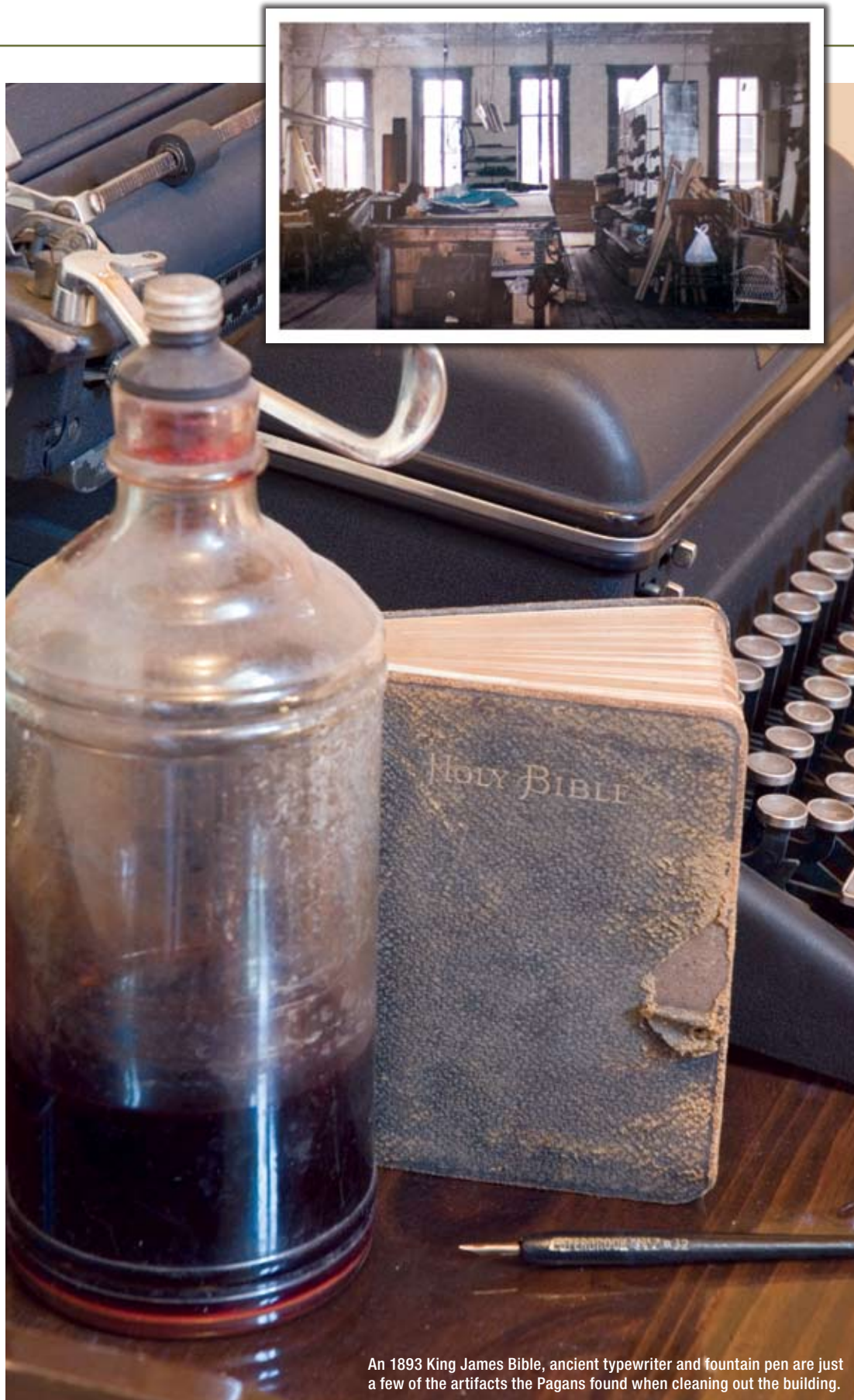
To look at its finished elegance now, it's hard to envision the Pagan's first glimpse of it five years ago.

"There was nothing here but sewing machines, all in an assembly line," says Tony. "The chairs and everything were still there. It looked like they had just left on a Friday." Tony remembers hitting the switch on the wall and recalls, "The whole thing kicked on. It scared me!"

The Pagans, who had already renovated three houses, were hard to scare permanently, though. They hauled out the sewing machines and removed an incredible amount of debris from the cellar, including a daunting amount of leather dust and scraps along with relics from past uses. In the process the couple learned a lot about the building's history and its previous occupants. Daisy and Tony have morphed into storytellers, displaying artifacts and explaining past events with the absorbed fervor of museum guides.

On one wall is a poster the couple found and framed, featuring "patented New Era trousers," made on-site — white, one pair: \$1.50. The fancy striped mole-





An 1893 King James Bible, ancient typewriter and fountain pen are just a few of the artifacts the Pagans found when cleaning out the building.

skin pair, also shown, sold for \$2.50. An 1893 King James Bible unearthed from the rubble sits on a landing next to an ancient typewriter and an old-style ink pen used by a schoolteacher, a former resident.

A few items were sold on eBay, but most of it the Pagans had to throw out. "There was just so much stuff!" says Tony. What they were left with was a primitive, gutted interior few people would recognize as promising, and many months worth of work.

And all this followed an equally arduous struggle just to get the financing to purchase the building. The problem, Daisy explains, was that there was nothing comparable in the area, so it was difficult for the bank to establish its value. It had no running water, no sewer and no heat. "And worse, no air conditioning," complains Daisy. "And it was *hot* that year!"

Once the bank resolved its dilemma, the Pagans purchased the building and soon began to wonder if they had done the right thing. Daisy laughs, remembering, "We actually thought we had a white elephant on our hands. So we just sat on it for eight months." The question was whether Columbia was, in fact, up and coming. There seemed to be a revitalization effort emerging at the time, and the couple was willing to gamble. "I kept hearing that Columbia was coming back," says Tony. "I think it is starting to brew. The word is out and it's just a matter of marking the turn." He looks to Daisy for confirmation.

"We hope," she says, raising her shoulders. "It was a huge sacrifice. But when you have a vision, there are doers and there are sayers." The Pagans, clearly, are doers.

SEVEN REDESIGNS & A FEW FIGHTS

Although Tony is a sales rep by day, on weekends, he uses his carpentry skills to work on whatever property the Pagans have bought. Here, he and Daisy sanded down the wood floors to a satin finish. They built a partial upstairs area, where they — and their two teenagers — live, and placed a decorative railing around a narrow hallway, creating a balcony overlooking the large main space. “I hated going up there before we put the railing in,” confesses Daisy, her eyes wide. It is a big drop to the kitchen and living room, one you wouldn’t want to attempt in a free fall.

On the main level, after “seven redesigns and a few fights,” the Pagans came up with a floor plan they liked. The kitchen is open to the spacious living room, and a cozy alcove family room was carved out underneath the newly created upstairs.

As for the style, it is what you might call eclectic. A Kandinsky print faces a Monet, and classic chairs sport a modern-patterned fabric under a beaded glass chandelier. The wide-plank original flooring in the living room contrasts nicely with the bamboo in the kitchen, and old-fashioned, multipaned windows set off the stainless steel appliances, granite countertops and birch cabinets. A small landing on the third floor boasts a scarlet chair and a view



A third-floor landing boasts a scarlet chair and a view onto the roof, where the Pagans will eventually create a rooftop terrace.

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onto the roof. “My IKEA room,” explains Daisy.

“I buy what I like and I just put it together and hope that it works,” says Daisy. And it does. The home is airy and inviting, with an interesting combination of the old and the new. At approximately 3,000 square feet, not including the bedrooms, the living areas are essentially finished.

Two areas, however, are currently under construction. One is up three flights. The building, originally four stories, burnt down partially, and only two floors remain. But the Pagans are adding more living space, skyward. They’re building on to the roof carving out a terrace, which Daisy plans to use as an additional venue for her events. From the roof, you can see the Susquehanna River when the trees aren’t fully leaved, and the outline of nearby roofs creates an intriguing view. Tony has plans to add potted trees, vines and tall grasses. “He loves to garden,” says Daisy, “and I wanted to have a place like a porch, so we felt we could work with the roof.”

COMING SOON

The other area undergoing transformation is the building’s ground floor. Stripped down to bare brick, electrical wiring and plaster, it didn’t look like much this past summer. But give the Pagans time.

The home is airy and inviting, with an interesting combination of the old and the new.



The reception hall, when Daisy's plan is completed, will seat 130. "There just aren't enough places to hold events in this area," she says. "I realized that when trying to book venues for my business, so I decided to create another one."

As the banquet hall nears completion, the events continue to roll in and one of Daisy's clients came up with an alternative in the interim. "I met with [a client] here to plan a party they wanted to have," she recalls. "When we started discussing where to hold it, they looked around our house and said, 'What about here?'"

"We're [now] on our fourth or fifth party," says Tony.

But the ever-hospitable Pagans don't seem to mind strangers coming into their home and partying. After the initial weirdness wore off, they actually began enjoying it.

"In fact," says Daisy, "one event we held here was probably the best party I have ever had. These were fantastic people."

With courage, flexibility and persistence, Tony and Daisy Pagan have succeeded in creating a delightful home. It was a tremendous undertaking, and they still have a ways to go, but they're happy they took it on.

When Daisy recalls how they used to crawl around the dark, creepy space with flashlights, and work in the uncomfortably hot building discovering all sorts of rubbish (including a gravestone), she concludes, "Even when we moved in, I didn't feel like it was coming together. I wouldn't do it again."

But Tony has the final word in this case:

"I would." **SS**



The final design the Pagans selected created an upstairs living space for bedrooms (above) and bathrooms (left) that overlook the main living quarters.