

Home

# A LABOR *of* LOVE

HISTORIC HOME PROVIDES LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE FOUNDATION FOR RENO COUPLE'S TIMELESS LOVE STORY



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# Home



“VERY EARLY ON WE REALIZED THE SIGNIFICANCE  
OF THE HOME.” —DAN GUSTIN

## DETAIL ORIENTED

Opposite page, the entry parlor features Victorian brass wall sconces with silk shades complementing an antique gold gilt mirror. An 1860s black walnut Victorian Lincoln Rocker/balloon-back chair sits alongside a mahogany console from Baker Furniture. Atop the console: a signed, ornate porcelain bust, circa 1890.; Right, Francis Griffith Newlands is shown here circa 1870 as a young man in San Francisco. He was a visionary entrepreneur, lawyer, real estate developer and statesman.



IT'S A LOVE STORY OF HISTORIC PROPORTIONS, boasting far more characters than the typical Hollywood cast of one man, one woman and one happily ever after.

Starring in this modern romance are one man, one woman, one home, one community and one expansive history, all intersecting to create a love to stand the test of time.

"The home won me over immediately," says Melinda Gustin, one half of the couple who has owned the Newlands Mansion for the last 28 years. "Dan was a little harder to convince."

She saw the home advertised in a supermarket real estate publication and visited it on a whim; the City of Reno was in the process of condemning the historic property, a home constructed in 1888 by former Nevada Senator Francis Newlands.

"Melinda saw potential, whereas I just saw work," Dan Gustin laughs. "It was in such ill repair at the time."

The project was nothing if not expansive. The home boasts 22 rooms, three stories, 7,000 square feet of space, 87 windows, 2.5 acres of then-unfenced land and countless projects necessary to bring it to a livable standard, let alone one worthy of its historic designation.

Due to Newlands' prominence in politics and his significance to the nation — he authored the 1903 Water

Reclamation Act, served on the U.S. Senate's Titanic inquiry committee, and developed Chevy Chase, Md., and Burlingame, Calif. — the U.S. Department of the Interior named the Newlands Mansion a National Landmark in 1965. It is one of only eight properties in the entire state boasting this designation and the only residence.

"Very early on we realized the significance of the home," Dan Gustin says of the Queen Anne-styled mansion. "Because of its importance and Newlands' relationship to our community, we felt it was incumbent upon us to do the right thing — to honor history and to preserve the character of the home as it would have been in the 1880s. The home is living history, and we consider ourselves caretakers of that history until the next set of caretakers comes along."

The timing of the purchase was potentially precarious. Two weeks after the couple closed Escrow on the home, they were married. The reception, they had decided, would be held in their brand new, very old mansion.

"My mom gave us the idea," Melinda Gustin recalls. "She thought it would be a great way to kick off our marriage and to bring life to our new home. Having the reception here gave the home and the beginning of our marriage so much more meaning."

"It was passable on the outside," Dan Gustin remembers,



# Home



## HOME MEANS NEVADA

Above, the Gustins emphasize the local workmanship that goes into their home, like that provided by the Yerington craftsman who reupholstered the stunning Eastlake Victorian chairs (far side of living room) the couple purchased at auction. *Left*, Ladybird, an English springer spaniel, serves as sentry. She moonlights as a certified therapy dog.

“and far worse inside. But it was home.”

A wedding gift from Melinda’s parents would serve as a literal and figurative centerpiece to the home: an antique 1800s chandelier soon became the literal highlight of the couple’s new dining room. The original light shades on the fixture incorporated a fleur-de-lis design, which soon inspired other touches that would be mimicked throughout the house.

The Gustins — Dan first elected to the Reno City Council in 2004, Melinda appointed Western Advisor for the National Trust for Historical Preservation in 2006 — have resided within the mansion walls since day one, undertaking copious projects all designed to restore the home to its original glory. They note that the work has involved minimal structural changes, with the only significant wall to be removed making way for a more open kitchen, which was remodeled 12 years ago.

They have restored the home’s original mahogany hardwood







### HONORING THE PAST

Dan and Melinda Gustin spend time outdoors overlooking the Truckee River, much as Francis Newlands would have done more than a century before. “We believe in honoring the integrity of the natural habitat,” Melinda says.



### WARMTH AND CHARM

This Kalamazoo base burner stove features nickel, copper and brass ornamentation. Dan Gustin found the piece in an antique store, had it restored, and placed in the parlor — where a fireplace mantle was removed, the couple believes, in the 1920s.

floors. They have replaced every single-pane window with inserts that provide insulation yet protect the architectural integrity of the home. They have filled the home with local treasures and antiques.



Everything within the walls of the Gustins’ home seems to have a story about the past or about the community—from the railings surrounding the courtyard, which used to line the bus ramp at the old MGM Grand Hotel, to the grapevines in the home’s backyard, which are likely descendent from Newlands’ own grapes (evidence of which Melinda found in a photo in the San Francisco office of the National Trust).


“When we first bought the home, it literally echoed



## EVERY HOME HAS A STORY.

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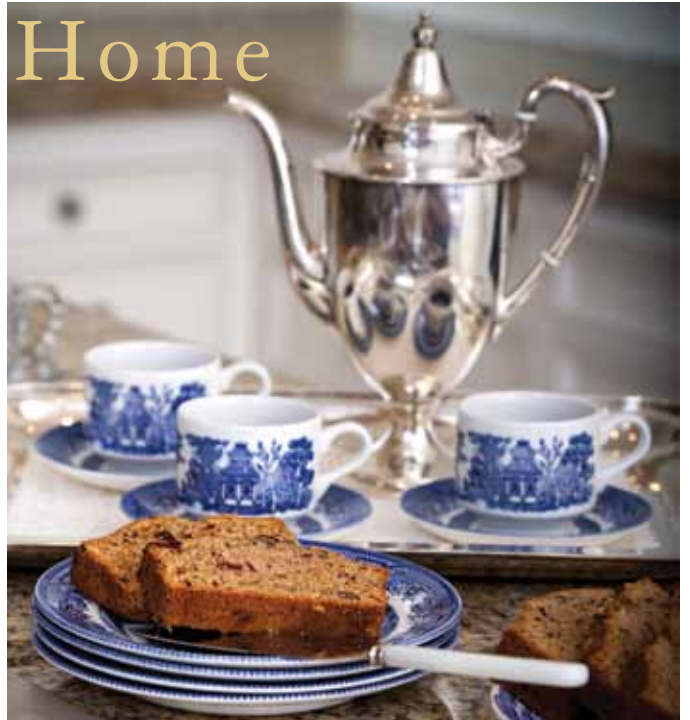


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### ENTERTAINER'S DELIGHT

The dual-fuel kitchen — patterned after a traditional English “Smallbone” design— was remodeled 12 years ago with the help of Reno’s Michael Doherty Construction. Features include custom cabinetry, cut crystal and brass hardware, slab granite counters and limestone floors.

inside,” Melinda says. “But we’ve been able to connect with so many local craftspeople, antique dealers and historians to include meaningful pieces in the home that reflect its character.”

“Connection” is clearly the appropriate cornerstone of the home — from the Gustins’ connection to Reno and to one other, to their obvious commitment to connecting past and present with integrity.

“I hope we have another 28 years here,” Dan Gustin says. “It truly is an honor to be stewards of history.”

“There’s such a romance to the home,” Melinda Gustin continues, staring wistfully at the walls in the home’s parlor. “It has enriched our lives in ways we would have never known if not for this amazing place.” ■