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Three suspects sought in Thursday night fatal shooting in Richland County

'Snapshots in time'

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The Palmetto Trust for Historic Preservation gave out nine awards to individuals, organizations and businesses who have worked in historic preservation. The Columbia Law Firm Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice, LLP and construction company Celtic Works, Inc. were awarded for their work to restore the Lorick House. Celtic Works, Inc. restored the house by painstakingly finding wood, windows, glass, etc. that matched the original in age and historic likeness.

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Renovating a house can be tricky, particularly when that house is a Victorian-style city landmark and former governor's residence old enough to have survived Sherman's raid during the Civil War.

But a Columbia law firm managed to do just that, converting the more than 170-year-old Lorick House on Hampton Street into the firm's offices two years ago, adding modern conveniences while maintaining the building's historic character.

Now, they have an award to show for it.

Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice LLP was among 15 individuals, organizations and businesses statewide to be recognized Tuesday at the State House for their work in historic preservation. Gov. Nikki Haley presented the awards at the annual event, hosted by the Palmetto Trust for Historic Preservation and co-sponsored by the S.C. Department of Archives and History and the governor's office.

"We wanted all the architectural detail to be preserved, but we wanted it to function in a modern way," said Kevin Hall, a partner with Womble Carlyle and the one who spearheaded the Lorick House renovations.

The firm hired Columbia construction company Celtic Works, which also was recognized for its work along with the home's previous owners, L. Edgar and Lee Lorick Prina, who donated the two-story residence on 1.27 acres to the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 2008. The house had been in the Lorick family for more than 130 years, ever since Preston C. Lorick purchased it in 1877.

Throughout the restoration, Womble Carlyle and Celtic Works had to balance the need to update the building for modern business use with the desire to preserve the home's historic integrity.

The completed renovations, which wrapped up in 2011 after a year of work, reveal a negotiation of sorts between past and present.

Laboratory analysis of layers of exterior paint allowed renovators to discover how the house looked in the past. The newly-applied, two-toned paint scheme of muted blues and grays emphasizes the gingerbread-like mouldings and columns of the Victorian architecture.

Though the building was in good shape, the original slate roof needed to be replaced and parts of the front porch had rotted. On one side ivy had begun to grow through the windows.

The carriage house in the back also required extensive renovation, as much of the wood had begun to rot.

Inside, the home's decor features more contemporary touches. Abstract artworks adorn the walls, and modern furnishings fill the rooms. There's also WiFi throughout the house, a flat-screen television in the former dining room and such creature comforts as central heating and air conditioning.

Hall declined to say how much was spent on the restoration, though he noted it was in the "high six figures."

The renovations are hardly the first time the building has changed.

The house was a square Georgian brick building when Columbia leader Algernon Sidney Johnson first built it around 1840. Then during the late 1800s, the Lorick family made significant alterations and additions to bring it into the intricate and rounded Victorian style then in vogue.

Hall said the house provides a glimpse into the changing styles and tastes of affluent Southerners.

"This building is a series of snapshots in time," he said. "You can see the history of your community by looking at this building and how it changed over time."

John Strevens, president of Celtic Works, said "being faithful to the original fabric of the home" was the biggest challenge of the restoration. For instance, reproducing the house's original appearance required the company to find people skilled in historical construction techniques like plastering and stuccowork that are no longer commonly used. They also had to locate rare materials, like a particular type of pine needed to rebuild the deck.

"They were committed to doing this correctly," Strevens said of Womble Carlyle.

Robin Waites of the Historic Columbia Foundation praised the restoration, noting it allows residents to step back in time to understand the city from a different perspective.

"The work that they did to it makes sure that this place will be around for generations to come," she said.

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