

# Housewright

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is having built for the structure. Unheated, the chapel will be open from early May until the end of October.

According to the project's Web site [www.nobscot.net](http://www.nobscot.net), local Amish tradesmen have been contracted to do the roofing and foundation work and "the windows and plaster will be restored by David Lewis of Holden, Massachusetts, a specialist in 18th and 19th century buildings."

The bell tower is intact but the church spire was blown down in a 1950s tornado. Because photos exist, Lewis will be able to rebuild the spire to its original detail, after he restores the nine Gothic windows.

"[Smith] called and described it when he bought it," Lewis says. "I was already very excited about the prospect of restoring the windows. Then when I saw the photos ..."

He trucked the windows back to Holden, where he will restore the recent glass replacement panes with 19th century "wavy glass" from windows that Lewis has been able to find and stockpile.

### Maine project

The Eastport house was a more "typical" project for a preservation carpenter. The front door porch enclosure had rotted away in places, and it was Lewis's job to take what was left and fashion detailed drawings



*BEFORE AND AFTER: Age and the elements took their toll of this entryway of a house in Eastport, Maine. Lewis fashioned new balusters at the step in keeping with the architectural time period, and used the rotting balcony rail as a pattern to create a new one.*

from which to make new wooden pieces.

"I use materials to maximize longevity," he says, which means he uses stainless steel fixtures because they won't corrode like the original iron ones, and very carefully selects the best wood to use for his projects.

Up until the last century, wooden houses were covered in paint, because at the time, paint was the best long-lasting coverage you could buy.

"Wood moves," Lewis says, "it's constantly in motion. When it does, finishes crack, moisture gets in, and rot starts."

He says wood needs to be checked yearly for proper maintenance. "If you keep up with cracks on a small scale, you don't have to get into major replacements," he says. He does a lot of work using marine-grade epoxy, because it impregnates the wood, solidifies with it, yet remains flexible.

### Definition

"When someone says, 'I want to restore a house,' it depends on what the customer wants — whether he wants to go back to the original, or just update," Lewis says.

He worked on a 1720s Georgian colonial in Northboro, which had been remodeled in the 1990s. The owner spent a lot of money on hand-forged hardware made by a blacksmith, had a paint analysis done, and the 1990s windows removed and replaced with historic replicas.

But because the owner did not want to drill into the walls

Submitted photos

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