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house was constructed.

Stenciled, period-reproduction fire boards, three fireplaces and a working beehive oven replicate early 19th-century living (as Napier has often demonstrated for schoolchildren on field trips).

Many of the light fixtures were crafted by tinsmiths at the Genesee Country Museum.

"When I get home, I feel like I'm in a different place – people were here preparing for the Civil War," Napier said. "There are people who would hate it. You have to like old."

Because of the home's landmark status, the exterior cannot be changed, except by the addition of an annual coat of fresh mud.

Napier and Kohl used to throw mud parties, all-day affairs, to complete the task.

Kohl said the Labor Day storm of 1998 lopped about eight inches of mud from the corners of the house, which, incidentally, does not have a right angle anywhere.

Throw more mud on – and presto! You have an instant, if not messy, do-it-yourself home-repair project.

"Nobody wants to paint your house," Napier said. "But everyone loves mud."

Gary Lehmann of Penfield

and his wife, Wendy, lived in the mud-coated house for 17 years before they sold it to Napier and moved into a 2,000-square-foot 1961 colonial.

They don't miss the mud maintenance, but they often reminisce about the good times they had there.

"My wife says, 'I really miss that place,'" Gary Lehmann said. "There's a special quality about it."

The Lehmanns spent a lot of time and money restoring the home to its original luster – if that's a word that can be used to describe mud.

"We put every penny we owned into it," he said. "With all big gambles in life, if you commit to it, it usually pays off.

It did for us. We did it out of love and devotion."

The couple, who raised a son in the mud house, said the Christmases in a historic home can't be topped.

Picture a roaring fireplace, snow-covered trees and family and, well, you have the picture, Lehmann said.

During her job interview, Napier was asked what the greatest challenge in taking the new position was, to which she answered, without hesitation, leaving the mud house.

"There's really a sense here of letting go of the tension of the day," she said. "It is small and really cozy. But we really like it."