



Tony Frisone working at Barrington's White House in July 2015.

## The Master's Touch

A MASTER CARPENTER BRINGS NEW LIFE TO 900-YEAR-OLD WHITE OAK DETAILS IN A DOWNTOWN BARRINGTON HOME

ONE OF THE BENEFITS OF SAVING AND RENOVATING the Fred Lines' built Classic Revival home on Main Street is in its wood trim, decorative accents, stairway, and side paneling. The mahogany, white oak, and maple found on walls and the floor have deepened in color density with age. And while years of wear, tear, heavy foot traffic, dings, cuts, dents, and alterations have taken some toll on these hidden gems around the house, Tony Frisone is taking what Fred Lines placed 116 years ago and returning it to its natural glory and original manmade craftsmanship.

Tony Frisone is one of a small handful of Illinois' master woodworkers and carpenters. His only advantage over Fred Lines? Steady electricity and more sophisticated woodworking tools. The training, experience, skill, and passionate effort is the same, though 116 years later. Frisone grew up in Chicago where he was a carpenter's apprentice. He has worked his magic with wood for 38 years, starting in Chicago where high-end homeowners wanted to return their stairwells and woodwork to original splendor.

For the past 18 years, Frisone has worked for Pepper Construction. "Pepper is a good company," he says. "They treat their employees well, and they care about safety and quality work."



The second-floor's temporary woodshop.





Above: The house that Fred built in 1898. This image c. 1904.  
Inset: Fred Lines

And they leave me alone to do my thing.”

Frisone has set up a woodworking shop on the second floor of Barrington’s White House, just like Fred Lines’ woodworking shop, which was out back behind the house in the late 1800s. Over a century later from its original placement in the house, Frisone says the wood is much older than the property.

“These panels are from 900-year-old white oak—first growth trees probably cut in Illinois and taken to Chicago to be quartersawn,” Frisone says. Quartersawn trees produce wood panels that are more stable and offer the beauty of quilting, which looks like marbling of light and dark colors.

Great care is taken at every step in recovering the wood. The stairwell base needs some new pieces, decorative capitals are refinished, columns are saved and rebuilt, and wall panels that have sunk with age are reconstructed. When some of the wood is lost to damage, a panel much like a table runner is created to fill the gap. To reuse some of the wood, Frisone will cut a board in good condition in half along its length, to be then split into two pieces of the same size that mirror each other in quilting to make a visual match.

Frisone says he lives his job at work and at home. “This is a unique project for me. You don’t see old staircases like this, with the time and effort put in. It needs to be recreated the way it was originally installed. “Fred Lines was very detail-oriented,” Frisone said of the woodwork he is saving and refinishing for the next one hundred or more years. U



Left: Tony Frisone shows where the stair edge was cut off and will be replaced.  
Right: The beautiful quilting on the refinished white oak.

BE OUR  
MUSE.  
WE’LL BE  
YOUR  
ARTISTS.

YOUR INSPIRATION  
IS OUR GUIDE.  
HAVE OUR TALENTED  
DESIGNERS PERFECT  
YOUR STYLE.

**DRURY  
DESIGN**  
Kitchen & Bath Studio  
Est. 1987

Join us on houzz.com

GLEN ELLYN, IL 888.422.0110

[drurydesigns.com/portfolio](http://drurydesigns.com/portfolio)



*Some wood panels are connected with mortise and tenon joints.*



*A before and after look at Tony Frisone's wood refinishing. The beading detail around the recessed edges was created by hand over 100 years ago.*



*The original wood columns, some of which are load-bearing, are being restored and in some cases, portions are rebuilt.*



*Tony Frisone explained that the flooring is of a museum-grade quality. The thin wood panels alternate between maple and cherry.*



*Progress in refurbishing and repairing the stairway is visible from above and below the horizontal railing.*