

## Steel Casements (Grant Story)

By Jeanne Albrecht

The Conservation Society values all of its Community Grant winners, but some go way beyond the ordinary to restore the historical integrity of their homes, and give us quite an education in the process. Gary Hudman is one such grant winner. Built in 1928, Gary's home on 250 Mary Louise Drive, in the Monticello Park Historic District, is a neighborhood icon known as "The Castle." The home was designed and built by architect Frost Carvel for Mr. & Mrs. George Morgan in 1928. However, the house had fallen into serious disrepair over the past decades until Gary bought it in 2009 with the intent to fully restore the house back to its 1928 splendor.

In 2011 the Society awarded a portion of the money he requested to restore the 17 original steel casement windows that were severely rusted, twisted and "racked," due to decades of paint buildup and lack of upkeep. This deterioration meant they did not close properly, resulting in air leakage, water damage, and the inability to lock the windows.



The reduced grant did not stop him. Nor did the realization that no one in San Antonio had the expertise, parts and equipment to restore these windows to their original condition, which means that most San Antonians usually replace steel casements with cheap vinyl windows.

He finally found Fenestration Metal Smiths

in Salado, TX: a "professional studio committed to the heritage of authentic quality." "I give them a lot of credit," Gary states. "Even though restoration was not a focus of the firm, we learned together the arduous process of restoring these windows, and often referred to Preservation Tech Note #19 from the National Park Service (<http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/tech-notes/Tech-Notes-Windows19.pdf>) which describes the best process for steel window restoration."

The entire process took approximately four months. The Fenestration team came to San Antonio, removed the windows, and boarded up the house. They took the windows to their workshop in Waco to strip them to bare metal, adjust all steel to operable condition, replace missing/damaged hardware, and then prime and paint with a durable finish coat. Next, Fenestration took the windows to Art's Glassworks in Austin to be reglazed with laminated glass, which significantly reduces ultraviolet light and sound transmission. Finally, the windows returned to San Antonio in January of this year for a two-day installation process.

"I have always been fascinated by the historical dialogue in architecture as each epoch tells a story of its time and people," says Joe Pehoski, president of Fenestration Metal Smiths, Inc. "Fenestration Metal Smiths strives to preserve that dialogue for future generations. We believe it is not just a matter of doing good work, but also to be in tune with the project's emotional environment."



"With the right techniques, steel casement windows can be made quite energy efficient, but many homeowners in San Antonio do not understand this," Gary adds. "As a result, many owners of historic homes choose to replace steel casements with modern windows, which completely changes the character of the house. I look forward to opening my home to restoration professionals, historic homeowners, and anyone interested in learning how steel casements can be restored to give great energy efficiency and beauty to the home while maintaining historical integrity."

And speaking of replacement windows, Gary is searching scrap yards, Habitat for Humanity restores, Craig's List and salvage stores for period steel casement windows to replace two Pella windows that a former owner installed. "I have been looking for three years, including scrap yards in Detroit, where my Fenestra brand windows were originally produced by the Detroit Steel Products Company. I have even told replacement window companies that I will pay them double scrap value for any windows they remove—and that offer stands for anyone!" ■

*Photos courtesy of Gary Hudman.*

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