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## Master Builders Magazine - Trash to Treasure

Reference #:	
Price:	\$
Square Footage:	sqft



## Features

**The incredible (real) journey of one house, two owners and a team of miracle workers.**

What do you do when you find the perfect house in the wrong location? You move it. Which is exactly what Tawny Davis and her husband Ian Wilson did. Why? The things the couple was looking for in their next home—history, character and high ceilings (Ian is 6 feet 9 inches tall)—just weren't to be found in any of the houses they toured. Maybe two but never all three. So they kept looking, until one fine day when everything came together.

## Love at First Sight

***a.k.a A historical heartthrob***

The Weitzel House. It definitely had high ceilings. Character? Put it in a movie and it would get top billing. And since according to the records it was built during or before 1908, there was no doubt the house had a history, but what exactly was it?

Way back when, before skyscrapers and condos spanned the gray Seattle skyline, before the tech boom and the influx of new residents, even before the Smith Tower, the Weitzel House was built on a lot 13 miles down a muddy road near some railroad tracks south of the city.

The house was home to several enterprising families over the years, including its builder, I. J. Weitzel. The eccentric original owner ran a general supply store across the street where he used his own currency to serve hopeful miners traveling through the area during the gold rush. In more recent times, the house served as a candle shop; a business which left it minus a kitchen.

The only obstacle: the house's location. Tawny and Ian wanted to live in Seattle. The Weitzel House sat south of the city near the West Valley Highway in Tukwila in an area previously known as Orillia—a once small but thriving rural community complete with its own post office, school and voting precinct.

One man's trash is definitely another's treasure and Tawny and Ian weren't going to let this small detail of location rob them of their historical dream house. It was too perfect and they were smitten.

So they decided to move it. All of it. The entire house.

## **Tales of Adventure**

### ***a.k.a Don't worry, we got this***

Finally, the time had arrived. With tension in the air and stress levels high, the crew got started. First, they removed the porches, eaves and chimneys (brick by brick) and added temporary supports to overhanging roof sections. House prepping took two days. Finally, eight lifting jacks were placed strategically underneath the whole structure. Up went the house.

Problems arose, of course. Extra support beams had to be added underneath the home to keep it from buckling, a solution which also brought the house closer to power lines and other dangers along the route.

With all the problems solved, the house began its move in the early hours of a December morning. Through narrow streets and around tight corners, even over a bridge, it headed for the Renton Airport. There, at the end of the runway, the house would board a barge and set sail for Seward Park. As dawn approached, the house was ducking under I-90 on Lake Washington. Things were looking good.

By midnight the next night, the house was back on dry land and still moving. Soon after, the house reached its final destination. Tensions subside. Hands shake. Cheers commence. Move accomplished.

## Happy Endings and Plot Twists

### ***a.k.a Just one more thing***

Two years later, the house sits proudly in its new home, complete with an added basement. Since then, Tawny and Ian have worked tirelessly, adding a beautiful new kitchen, stripping solid wood moldings of decades of paint and rebuilding the fireplace—all in keeping with the house's original design.

Today, the couple and their two-year-old daughter Brooke reside happily in the lovely historical treasure—one that would've cost hundreds of thousands more if had been originally located in Seward Park.

The final plot twist that makes this good story even better? Tawny is now part of the crew at Nickel Bros., spending her days (and nights) assisting other dreamers in making their similarly far-fetched housing wishes come true.

And so the story comes full circle. A unique piece of Northwest history continues to live on thanks to one couple's dreams, one company's incredible engineering expertise and a fair amount of good old fashioned chutzpa.

Call it the ultimate recycle or just a really cool feat of engineering. This story captivates because it is so fantastical.

It's like an "Up" version of the Lewis and Clark Expedition—a house navigating its way through our complex Northwest geography to find its new, perfect plot of land near the shores of Lake Washington.

There it will sit, happily cradling another succession of enterprising residents, for yet another century.

Article Author Cameron Poague

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