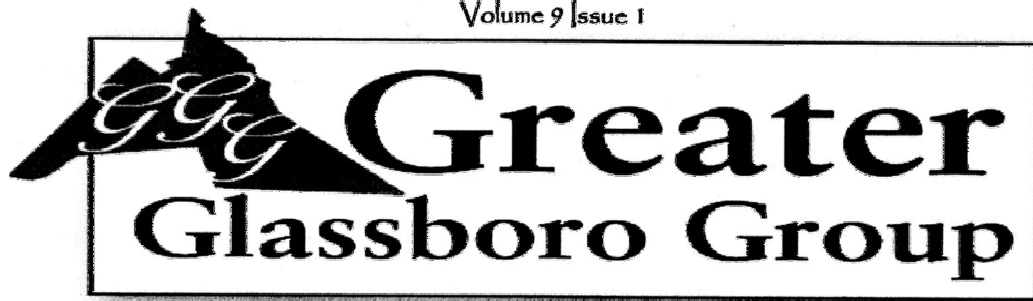


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Working Toward Preserving Our Community's Heritage, Architecture and Pride

VENTFREE GAS COAL BURNER

**THE LITTLE FIREPLACE THAT COULD NOT BE USED IS
RESTORED TO ITS FORMER CHARM**

Isn't life funny— with its unexpected twists and turns? In the middle of life's bitter disappointments, frustrations, hard work and misery, gifts arrive, what seems, from the Universe.



Many years ago a friend of mine noticed the fireplace and said, “You know, Darla, that was a coal burning fireplace.” Well, I didn't know. I knew the soot started a foot or so above ash dump. Otherwise I never thought about coal. Fireplaces are only for wood, aren't they? My interest was piqued.

The fireplace chimney had been removed at the attic floor before we purchased our home. I had no idea why. With two small children in tow and no closet space, I had what remained of the chimney and fireplace in our upstairs bedroom removed for much needed closet space. I also knocked out the plaster inside the sitting room fireplace. The slate mantel (faux marble) took its place as the focal point of the room.

With a fireplace screen, it looked almost functional. It wasn't until recently that I realized why the top of the chimney had been removed. The support bricks in the basement had been compromised for the installation of heating and plumbing pipes!

Years ago I noticed a designer on HGTV put a natural gas coal basket fireplace in a room that she decorated. “Amazing! I like it. Where do I find it?”

Several years later, a natural gas coal basket was featured in a design magazine. I cut it out and took it to a bunch of fireplace stores.

“No, never heard of it. No, no, no.”

“What part of the chimney is missing!” was repeated over and over again to each fireplace establishment to which I spoke.

“No, No, and No. It can't be fixed for use.”

A month or so ago I decided to try again. This time— success! The fireplace people gave me the name of Smith's Chimney Service, LLC. Mr. Smith came, evaluated the chimney's many problems and told me I could have a vent free fireplace if the chimney was capped and filled with fire retardant material, and removed debris lodged at chimney top. While he was giving his evaluation, he took out the bricks at the bottom of the firebox. Once a bed of concrete was poured, he would set the firebricks in place and fix the existing old mortar between the bricks.

The chimney would then be safe and ready for the ventfree coal basket that I found at Four Season's Supply in North Carolina on line at www.CoalBaskets.com. Lee, the sales representative, patiently answered all my questions and advised me about the necessary things to do to be safe. Concerning safety?

Yes, my closet to be exact. Carpeting now lay where a second floor fireplace had once roared. I was taken aback when Mr. Fetterman removed the carpeting to look for the chimney. Indeed, it was a very narrow space. Questions ran through my mind. How did they do that? The skill and knowledge it took to build such a chimney. With a long pole, Mr. Fetterman nudged the debris free, poured the concrete at the bottom of the fire box and left it to cure.

Little over a week later, Mr. Smith returned to cap the fire place and fill it with fire retardant material, point the old bricks and install the firebrick. The vent-free coal basket sits unwrapped next to the fireplace waiting for Mr. Fordyce to run the gas line, install the coal basket and the borough inspection.

Because of their expertise and interest, Smith's Chimney Service, Williamstown, and Four Season's Supply, North Carolina, out of nowhere, a dream came true. •

..Darla

