

# Iron Illustrated

Herndon & Merry, Inc.

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Garden Park Antiques

## Envisioned as a Focal Point, It Gets Attention

"We wanted it to stand out; that's why we contacted Herndon & Merry," says Sandra Force, referring to the magnificent European-style stairway Herndon & Merry created for the interior of her home in Bowling Green, Ky.

Sandra and her husband, Gary Force, enlisted the services of interior designer Elizabeth Potts, who worked with Herndon & Merry Senior Designer Bill Merry, Sr. in coordinating the design of the unique stairway. When it came time to produce the railing, Herndon & Merry incorporated extensive hand-wrought ironwork, a curved and bowed "Juliet" balcony at the top landing, and a forged center design featuring gold leaf. A verdigris finish was applied. "It has more of a blue cast than a green one," says Sandra. Stained oak risers and treads, uncarpeted, add their own appeal to the handsome stair.

One unusual feature of the railing is an iron cap (handrail) rather than a wooden one. "We chose the iron cap to complement the 'external' look of the room," explains Sandra. "The wall finish looks like the exterior of an old Italian villa."

The Forces say they hear lots of positive comments about the stairway from guests. "It adds architectural interest to the room," says Sandra. "You can see it from the living room as well. We knew it would be an architectural focal point."

The creation of the stairway

railing in the Force residence represents a good example of the collaboration that is so often an integral part of the Herndon & Merry design/production process. Personal, on-site consultation by

H&M's Bill Merry, Sr. with the customer and/or the customer's design professionals helps to garner input from a variety of perspectives. The exchange of creative ideas and the expressions of

personal taste, style and privacy requirements assure a finished product that is in keeping with the vision of all those involved. On-site consultation is also offered independently of commissioned projects.



*Guests visiting the home of Sandra and Gary Force nearly always express their admiration for the European-style stairway by Herndon & Merry. The inset shows a close-up view of the unusual "Juliet" balcony at the top landing.*

**Herndon & Merry, Inc.**, founded in 1959, is a designer of residential entrances and a designer and fabricator of custom architectural metalwork, including entrance gates, garden gates, stairways and railings. The company, winner of 33 national design awards, serves both residential and commercial customers, and is located at 7121 Cockrill Bend Blvd. in Nashville. **Garden Park Antiques**, a separate division at the same address, deals in decorative antique architectural elements, antique iron garden ornamentation, and original-design furniture crafted from salvaged ornamental ironwork and other architectural elements. It was established in 1987 by Keith Merry, son of Herndon & Merry co-founder Bill Merry, Sr.



*Bill Merry, Sr.*

## The Ironwork of the Czars

by **Bill Merry, Sr.**

During the 70-plus years that the Communists ruled Russia, much of the grand architecture and public art created under the czars was destroyed or simply fell into disrepair. Preserving things associated with the old regime simply was not a priority.

Yet, during a recent trip that my wife and I took to St. Petersburg, it was obvious that much of the old ironwork created prior to the Bolshevik Revolution had survived intact, even though some of it was badly in need of repair. We toured much of the downtown portion of the city, which has an important place in both Russian and world history.

The ironwork we saw in the public spaces was unlike anything I have ever seen before, in large part because of the sheer magnitude of the work. It's a style unique to Russia. Whereas here in the U.S. we might make a leaf of iron two inches wide and six inches long, in St. Petersburg it would be 10 times that size. Everything was on a huge scale; it was not uncommon to see ironwork scrolls six to eight feet in diameter.

I highly recommend making St. Petersburg a destination, not just to see the ironwork, of course, but to visit the palaces that once housed the royal family and the many other treasures. It is definitely worth noting, though, that the ironwork of the czars outlasted those who overthrew them.

# Conceptualizing the Entrance as a Whole

During the 41 years that Herndon & Merry has been in business, repeat customers have been a constant. That's the case with Genette and Gerald Robeson, who purchased their Nashville home in 1991, and about a year later had Herndon & Merry produce a railing for the terrace at the back of the house. Last year, when they decided to

tory, having once been the home of entertainer Dottie West.

"One thing we really like about the entrance is that it looks like it has been there for a while, even though it's very new," says Genette. "That was one of the design goals."

The gate features all solid-steel construction, highlighted by a row of spearpoints and a central



*A dramatic nighttime shot captures the detail of the driveway gate at the Robeson residence in Nashville; H&M's Bill Merry, Sr. designed both the gate and the accompanying piers and walls.*

add a driveway gate and accompanying entrance features, they again called on H&M.

"Bill Merry, Sr. designed the gate and the stonework as well," notes Genette. "The house is one-of-a-kind, and we wanted the entrance to reflect that. We are very pleased with the result."

The house, built in 1970 in a style resembling the architecture of Williamsburg, has undergone extensive interior remodeling following its purchase by the Robesons, although it continues to project a traditional image. It also has a place in Nashville his-

fleur-de-lis design. An automatic opener system allows for both security and privacy.

"We always prefer to design the entire entrance, when possible, and not just the gate," says Bill Merry, Sr. "That allows for not only a unified visual impression, but also technical compatibility between all elements involved in the support and operation of the gate."

"We get positive comments about the entrance constantly," says Genette Robeson, "and not just from guests. People driving by sometimes stop and ask who built it."



# Custom Iron Panel Finds Its Niche

Claire Coble had always liked the idea of having an exterior niche with ironwork in it, so when she and her husband, Neely Coble, Jr., built their present home, a niche on the front wall was part of the overall design. Having previously been customers of Herndon & Merry, the couple called on the company for a custom iron panel.

H&M's Bill Merry, Sr. sketched out some potential designs and presented them to the Cobles for their input and evaluation. It didn't take long to arrive at a decision, and a short time later, Claire's idea began to take shape.

Approximately three-and-a-half feet wide by six feet tall, with a verdigris finish, the panel resembles an antique piece even



*An architectural niche at the front of the Coble home became the setting for a one-of-a-kind iron panel that adds visual interest and complements the overall style of the house.*

though it was newly crafted. Composed almost entirely of hand-forged scrollwork, it complements the basic Country French style of the home and is in keeping with the design of other ironwork H&M provided for the Cobles' courtyard entryway.

"It's like putting artwork outside," notes H&M President Bill Merry, Jr., "and like a work of art, it garners lots of attention. It's a piece we're quite proud of."

In addition to creating new pieces for special applications, Herndon & Merry is also able to draw upon the huge inventory of antique architectural pieces at its Garden Park Antiques division, many of which can be altered undetectably to fit a homeowner's specifications.

# These Trees Never Require Pruning

In the small town of Smithland, Ky., near Paducah, is the comfortable, unpretentious house that Steve and Terri Smith call home. Long and rambling, it's "like an old Texas ranch," says Terri. The sprawling residence, with its cypress-and-stone exteri-

or, sits on a hill overlooking the Ohio River in the middle of a thousand acres.

When the house was about four years old, the Smiths decided to add a front porch railing and a back porch/patio railing. By then, they were already customers of

Herndon & Merry, which had built a custom wine rack and an iron kitchen archway for the home. "We liked what they had done with the other two projects, so we called them for the railing," says Terri.

Inspired by the nature of the house and the surroundings, H&M's Bill Merry, Jr. proposed something very different for the front: an iron railing that would resemble trees, complete with bark, branches and leaves. The Smiths loved it.

The solid iron cap on the "tree railing" was created through a blacksmithing technique in which the iron is heated almost to the melting point and then hand-hammered, a process known as "upsetting" the metal. "It's time-consuming and requires a lot of experience," says H&M President Bill Merry, Jr.

"Guests always want to know who made it," says Terri Smith, "and we always tell them how it came about."



*One of the most unusual designs ever executed by Herndon & Merry is the "tree railing" commissioned by Steve and Terri Smith; the close-up shows the realistic trunk, branches and leaves, all made of iron.*

## News & Notes

### Blacksmith Finds a New Home

Refurbished, altered a bit and given a new coat of paint, the famous Herndon & Merry blacksmith sign was recently installed on an exterior wall at the company's new location, 7121 Cockrill Bend Blvd. in Nashville. For nearly 40 years, the sign was a landmark for



*A landmark for nearly 40 years at Herndon & Merry's previous location, the company's famous blacksmith sign now welcomes visitors to the new location at 7121 Cockrill Bend Blvd.*

customers and passing motorists at H&M's previous location on Thompson Lane. The "sign of the master blacksmith" was also mentioned in a radio jingle produced many years ago for Herndon & Merry and still recalled by many Nashvillians today.

"The blacksmith is almost like a member of the family," says Herndon & Merry President Bill Merry, Jr. "The new building just didn't feel quite right until he was part of it."

### Bill Merry, Jr. Named NFIB Leadership Council Chair for Tennessee

Herndon & Merry has been a member of the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) since 1968, and as President of a member company, Bill Merry, Jr. has long been an active participant in the organization's advocacy for small business. Now, as recently appointed Chairman of the NFIB's Tennessee Leadership Council, he sees even more opportunity to make a personal impact on behalf of small-business owners.

"This office brings with it the responsibility of basically 'rallying the troops' and helping develop the future leaders of the organization in the state," says Merry. "That is something I am more than happy to take

on, because I sincerely believe in the NFIB mission and the need that prompted it."

### Draperyrods.com Now Up and Running

A new Web site that allows customers to choose from a wide variety of Herndon & Merry drapery rod designs and then custom-order to their exact specifications direct from the screen is now available at draperyrods.com. Rings, tiebacks, "scarf hooks" and a special open-weave center design are also available.

"We believe selecting and purchasing drapery rods on-line is a service customers will really appreciate and find cost-effective," says Herndon & Merry's Bill Merry, Jr. "Draperyrods.com enables homeowners, interior designers, drapery houses and others to see our full line of rods and accessories and then order from the screen or by phoning (615) 350-7007. We are able to process and deliver orders promptly."

The Renaissance Collection™ by Herndon & Merry, a line of fine, hand-crafted drapery rods and accessories, was introduced in 1993. All pieces are produced on the premises at the Herndon & Merry facility, which includes one of the finest blacksmith shops in America.

### Herndon & Merry, Inc.

(615) 350-7007

[www.herndonandmerry.com](http://www.herndonandmerry.com)

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by Herndon & Merry

[www.gardenpark.com](http://www.gardenpark.com)

(615) 350-6655

7121 Cockrill Bend Blvd.

Nashville, TN 37209

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