



*Above: The warm reception area*

*Immediate right: Back door leads to a colorful garden*

*Right: Front view of Victorian-style law office in downtown Greenville*



# Where Michigan Lawyers Work

*Victorian charm and small-town friendliness in Greenville*

**Who:**

Richard D. Palmer,  
solo practitioner

**Where:**

111 South Lafayette,  
Greenville

**What you see:**

Victorian office building nestled in downtown Greenville, located 35 miles northeast of Grand Rapids. The pitched roof, filigree work, and scalloped siding are Victorian motifs. Shades of blue, mauve, and ecru pull the exterior together giving the whole front a “gingerbread”-house charm.

Inside, the entryway and small office exudes warmth and small-town friendliness. The town’s history is literally captured in the walls. The oak board paneling came from the old police fire building down the corner. “When they tore that down, I took those out from there. It was like a big roll top door. We cut it down, refinished it, and put it up,” said Palmer, who has practiced law in Greenville for 25 years.

The Palmers bought the 1,000 square foot property in 1991 and remodeled it extensively, doing most of the work themselves—gutting the entire inside and completely changing the exterior, including putting on a new slanted roof and adding a walkway and garden in the back. They also painstakingly applied a heavy embossed wallpaper that looks like old Victorian plasterwork onto the ceiling.

The décor is a mix of older styles, incorporating family heirlooms and pieces of local memorabilia. A pneumatic wall clock in the entryway (now refitted with batteries), came from an old high school that has since been demolished; pictures on the wall depict scenes from a 1920s Greenville fair. A more recent addition is a political pin and button collection that Palmer proudly displays in the entryway.

In his office, there are various antiques—an art deco chandelier from the 1920s, a Victorian-style lamp inherited from an aunt and uncle, an old spool cabinet that has found new life as a filing cabinet, as well as watercolors of Michigan scenes done by Palmer’s father.

“We like the Victorian style. A lot of people say it’s the Little House on Main Street, and it looks like a home,” said Palmer. “My wife [Jemery] chose the hues. The cooler colors to make it feel comfortable when clients come in here. Some people come in obviously nervous. Hopefully, it has that [calming] effect. . . . A lot of people will comment on the outside or the inside or some of the things that they see in here. These things start conversations. It’s kind of nice; it breaks the ice.” ◆

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*Richard Palmer*