

Back to Its Roots

A GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA, DESIGN TEAM BREATHES NEW LIFE INTO A HISTORIC HOME WHILE PRESERVING ITS ARCHITECTURAL LEGACY.

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The design saved a one-of-a-kind Charleston-style dining room and a few new furnishings to give the formal dining room a period-appropriate makeover. Opposite the foyer steps is original architectural features, including the grand staircase that greets visitors.



Growing up in Greensboro, North Carolina, Jim Rucker couldn't help but admire the stately Matheson House each time he passed it on his way through historic Irving Park. When he and Melinda married, they settled down to raise a family a few streets over in the same neighborhood, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and features the city's most architecturally significant homes. Fast forward to 2019, and the Ruckers were in the market to downsize after becoming empty nesters. As fate would have it, the beloved Matheson home was on the market, and the Ruckers decided it was the perfect opportunity to restore the Colonial Revival landmark while preserving its historical architectural charm.

Rucker found the Matheson House was built in 1922 by real estate investors Jean and Junius Matheson. "I first connected with contractor Pat Parr of Classic Construction of North Carolina—he lives four doors down," says Rucker. "He introduced me to architect James S. Collins and designers Sydney Foley and Emma Legg of Kinred Interior Studios." Rucker asked them to restore the home to its Colonial Revival roots, removing piecemeal renovations from the last 100 years and adding new rooms to better serve his family.

Above: An addition on the left side of the house matches the original architecture and creates the left-right symmetry for which Colonial Revival style is known. Opposite: The living room is filled with the homeowner's antique furniture, passed down through the generations from as far back as his first-great-grandfather, North Carolina Governor John Motley Morehead.

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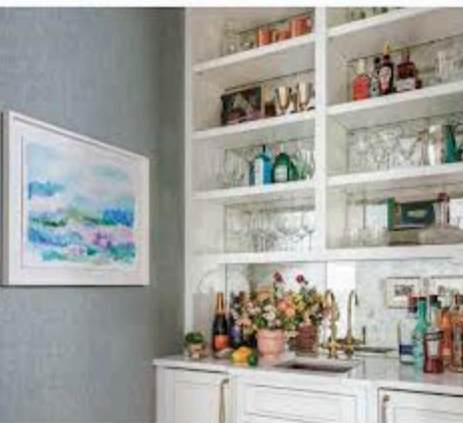
Safeguarding the home's rich architectural heritage was a primary goal. The team restored classical symmetry, designed multi-layered moldings to match original trim, added period-appropriate wainscoting and paneling and sourced historic door hardware to match the home's surviving pieces. "We helped the family decide what to keep and what to part with during an estate sale at their previous home and drew furniture layouts to fit keepsake antiques into the new home," says Peley. "We also designated places to display collected artifacts from the family's world travels."

While some rooms, such as the foyer, retained historical details such as the grand central stair case, original hanging lantern, and moldings, other rooms needed attention. A new study for instance, received a solid marble fireplace surround. "Most of the other fireplaces have wooden mantels, but marble is historically accurate and maintains the spirit of the house," Legg explains. "Our goal was to keep the home's authenticity while modernizing it for comfortable living."

The new study is a moody space that contrasts with the bright, floral living room, offering a his-and-her effect. Opposite the designers added oak paneling and a coffered ceiling to the library to bring it back to its roots.



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The team improved the interior flow by reconfiguring spaces and adding new rooms. They reworked the small kitchen, removing an old chimney and bumping out the walls to create room for banquette seating for ten and a large pantry. "In 1922, kitchens were not the social gathering places they are now," says Foley. "We needed to make this space fit the family's lifestyle." The bump-out had the added benefit of improving exterior symmetry, a key characteristic of Colonial Revival architecture.

Adding a second primary suite on the main level provided aging-in-place capability for the future. "Of course, we also completely modernized the original upstairs primary suite, adding slabs of Bianco Rhino marble and having the fabricator cut individual matching marble tiles for the flooring," Legg says. "We definitely were in the details, but they make the space."

Above: Enlargement of the eat-in kitchen jump-started the whole-home renovation project. Left: A seldom-used bar was transformed into an efficient entertaining space. Opposite: Woodland Furniture custom-made the table to fit into the kitchen's large banquette seating area.



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A neutral palette in the primary bedroom includes Sherwin-Williams' Sea Salt on the walls and Legacy Home spa blue-and-white bed linen. Opposite, above: A new layout, steam shower, custom vanity, and six jets of Blanco Rhino marble transform the update primary bathroom into a luxury modern living. Opposite, below: The sunroom's abundant windows border outside to the pool deck and the new pool house beyond.

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Outside, the Rackers embraced the addition of new formal gardens, a pool, and a well-appointed pool house, designed to welcome the occasional guest. "The juxtaposition of a traditional home with a modern pool house with doors that completely retract for West Coast in-lit living is refreshing," says Riley. "We asked the Rackers how they wanted to live in the home and designed accordingly. We balanced their lifestyle with architectural preservation and proved that you can adapt a historic home to modern living."



Glass doors in the pool house's living room slide completely open onto the pool deck for breezy in-lit living. A pull-out sofa invites guests to have a quiet quarter. Opposite, Jeff Allen Landscape Architects designed the new garden and pool.



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