

Too pretty to be the back entrance, the mudroom/rear staircase is springtime cheerful with custom white cabinetry and trellis wallpaper.



AWASH IN A FAVORITE PALETTE

Written By Joan Lerch / Photography By Alise O'Brien

When this husband and wife team set out to find the just-right home for their family of four, their search took several years. It was a friend who called one day and said, “I’ve found a house that is perfect for you!” When they saw it, they realized it ticked all the boxes—an older house with great bones, an ideal location, a not-too-big-lot, and lots of curb appeal.

Inside? Well, that was another story. In the back of the house, a chaotic cluster of hallways and small rooms was inefficient, and the décor was as dated as the floor plan. Even though it was almost perfect, it was going to be a challenge to make it the home of their dreams. “We were so excited,” says the wife, “but we had our moments of doubt.”

After about 18 months and the efforts of a talented team of designers and craftsmen, the house is reborn, with an opened-up layout that still honors its center-hall provenance, and a fun color scheme inspired by the lady of the house, who loves blue, green and especially lavender.

The family lived in the home for about a year before construction commenced, and the couple agrees that this was a good opportunity to gather ideas, although the old structure presented some challenges in terms of comfort and convenience. “The wiring was old, so Wi-Fi was spotty or non-existent,” the

husband remembers. “The microwave didn’t work, and we lived with the existing, rusty refrigerator for a year.” Remembering a few other quirks, his wife says with a laugh, “Now that I look back, it was pretty much like camping.”

The couple used the time to confer with their architect, Paul Fendler (“He’s fabulous!”), as well as the other members of their construction and design team—Troy Duncan, owner of PK Construction and Amy Studebaker, owner of Amy Studebaker Design. Together, they studied how the family lived and entertained, and then created modern, open spaces tailored to their lifestyle. “You have to know how you are going to use the space,” says the wife. “We spent a lot of time thinking about that. And we knew we wanted to open it up and make it a home that we could enjoy with our kids, our family and our friends.”

Commenting on the process, she continues, “For us it was really getting the right team and letting the team collaborate. I think that’s what made it a successful project—having everybody involved from the beginning.” The couple knew their builder, Troy Duncan, from work he had done on their previous home. “And his foreperson, Rich? He really listened to us and not only does he have the craftsmanship skills, the way that he interfaces with the customer is unmatched.”



A turquoise beaded chandelier is a can't-miss focal point in the newly created breakfast nook.



With a view of the color-coordinated swimming pool, the new family room echoes nature's palette with a little extra punch.

The original family room featured an oddly configured, semi-vaulted ceiling to accommodate a broad arch over French doors. “We didn’t like the ceiling and talked about making it flat,” explains the wife. Their builder agreed. “He said, ‘You have to get rid of the vault and here’s how we’re going to do it.’” The new beamed ceiling, spanning the family room and new breakfast nook, is painted a high-gloss white that reflects the cerulean blue of the swimming pool just a few steps away.

The breakfast nook bump-out is the only addition to the home’s original footprint. Explaining the decision, the wife says, “It’s all about function. While we had enough square footage to begin with, it just wasn’t configured in a useable way for us.” Her husband concurs, saying, “In terms of the aesthetic, my wife loves color, but the ultimate goal was making it functional for entertaining. We spent a year figuring that out.”

When the sun goes down, the nook is illuminated by a dramatic beaded chandelier in look-at-me turquoise. Previously hung in the dining room, Studebaker gave it a new home, saying “The bright color and whimsical beads felt like such a great compliment to this little nook that we just had to place it there.”

The old kitchen and adjoining areas presented the biggest challenge, but also the most opportunity, for making the best possible use of existing space. An abundance of hallways and

single-use rooms were combined to create the spacious new kitchen and adjacent mud room.

Custom, ceiling-height cabinets from Karr-Bick Kitchen and Bath were painted in a refreshing shade of blue which leans toward periwinkle. Echoing the husband’s observation about his wife’s favorite hues, assistant designer Michelle Thore, of Amy Studebaker Design says, “She is not afraid of color, so we went bold on the cabinets.” Marble countertops, gleaming white tile and just enough brass accents add elegance without formality. The center island, fitted with comfy upholstered bar stools, is ideal for homework time or guests, with plenty of room left for the cook. A wet bar sits within the kitchen space, and is party-ready and close to the family room.

The mudroom/back hallway also serves as an adjunct space to the kitchen, with appliance garages for microwave and toaster, easily accessible to the couple’s two children. The ingeniously planned space is truly multi-purpose, providing access to the rear staircase, the back yard, the attached garage and the kitchen. A large window welcomes the sunlight, and a trellis-style wallcovering in bright green adds to the home’s happy color scheme. Describing the wallpaper choice, Thore says, “It took us awhile to find that. The homeowner knows what she likes, and when we were searching, she would say ‘I like that one, but I just feel like there’s something better.’ So we kept looking and we found it.”

An existing powder room is artfully reinvigorated with a golden chandelier and spectacular wallpaper.



Ready for a crowd or a small family gathering, the new kitchen is the most dramatic change to the 84-year-old home.



Expressing her appreciation for Studebaker and her team, the wife says, “They took the colors I love, and amplified them and made them better than I could have ever done myself. They also pushed me a little bit, in a good way, to take some risks in terms of color and design and pattern. And that wallpaper was such a find.”

Existing floors throughout the space were “kind of a hodge-podge,” Thore explains. “So the floors were all redone to be the same throughout the back of the house.” Flooring got a bit tricky when it was time to make the existing powder room fit in. Originally accessed from the kitchen (down yet another hallway), it was a step up from the hall. The team was able to make the floor level, and now convenient to the family room and kitchen, the powder room was given new life with a spectacular wallpaper that the wife says is a hit with everyone. “That was all Amy and Michelle. It’s so fun and we love it.”

Throughout the home, the designers brought new energy to existing pieces with fresh paint or new upholstery. This repurposing philosophy is especially noteworthy in the dining room, where an old mahogany table is now a spectacular glossy white, with a mirror-like finish that reflects the room’s bold palette of green and purple.

The wife credits the designers with recognizing the table’s potential. “We would’ve gotten rid of it,” the wife explains. “Amy and Michelle are very thoughtful about using existing pieces. They have a vision—they can see something and just transform it.” Explaining the process, Studebaker says, “Michelle and I took inventory of all the homeowners’ items and decided where to place them as we worked on the design of each space.” In one corner, tucked between purple draperies, an armoire finished in apple green joins the celebration of color.

The transformation continues upstairs, a private oasis that includes a great room (dubbed “the lounge”), complete with a fireplace and plush seating for family gatherings. Down the hall, the designers revitalized a sitting room, bedrooms and original baths with fresh details, while preserving the best of the home’s history.

What began as a drive-by is now a story with a happy ending, thanks to a fabulous architect, a talented builder, and a visionary team of designers. All at once youthful but stately, exuberant but sophisticated, the old house is at last the perfect family home. **sl**