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BY MEGAN SWOYER
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Raising the Roof



◀ THE HOUSE BEFORE
RENOVATIONS IN 2004

Almost everything was perfect for newlywed Lisette Keil when she set up housekeeping in Birmingham's Poppleton Park neighborhood seven years ago. The friendly neighbors, the tree-lined streets, the sprawling park — it was all there.

The one thing that wasn't quite right was the house itself, which her husband, Richard, had purchased from the original owner in 1994. The couple felt their home, like so many Colonials built in the 1950s, needed a face-lift — a dose of charm and sophistication. So they began creating renovation plans in 2004 with architect Glenda Meads.

"We wanted to achieve that old-home, East Coast, back-staircase kind of feel," says Lisette, who grew up in Grosse Pointe Farms. They also wanted space to accommodate their art and antiques, Richard's love of cooking, and their daughter's need for play space.

So what can you do with a basic brick-on-bottom and siding-on-top Colonial? Meads, of Birmingham-based Swanson Meads Architects, started at the top, and considered the roofline.

"Houses from the 1950s through the 1970s typically have a relatively low-pitch roof," Meads says. For the Keils' home, she designed a steeper pitch that sloped up, around, and over the original roofline, making it a dormer. The new roofline





allowed for a third-floor playroom.

Meads also gave extra attention to the front porch, which is bluestone slate. The columns and trim were newly detailed, while the porch ceiling was finished in stained bead board. Three French doors (one is the entry) add elegance.

"We considered a stained front door, but wanted to keep all the French doors looking the same — clean and white to emphasize the whole porch," Meads says. "This is a great example of what you can do with your basic Colonial style, rather than just putting up something like a gabled porch over the front door, which does not always enhance the house."

Inside, the former living room, which runs along the front of the home, was converted to a dining room large enough to accommodate their dinner parties. Lisette says they don't miss having a living room, which is becoming a common sentiment. Michelle Mio, of Rariden Schumacher Mio Interior Design in Birmingham, who worked on the home's interior, says, "We're seeing less and less formal living rooms. People simply don't use them and just pass them by."

The rear of the house, which originally ended at a tiny kitchen, now features an expanded kitchen, a dining nook, a spacious family room, and a den.

The kitchen is one of Richard's favorite spots in the house. "My husband's an

FRONT EXTERIOR: A new roofline and front porch transformed the home. Three French doors (one is the main entry) provide a uniform, elegant look. Like putting on the wrong shoes with a stylish ensemble, adding a standard blacktop or concrete driveway just wouldn't do, so architect Glenda Meads suggested crushed granite, saying: "It adds to the charm and looks great with the garage doors." Faux bois porch pots courtesy of Blossoms, Birmingham.

PLAYROOM: The higher roof created space for a third-floor playroom. The sunny décor includes a daisy-pattern carpet. "It's very modern and a departure from the rest of the house," Lisette says.

KITCHEN: The couple entertain frequently, and the new kitchen accommodates their needs. The subtle gray-green backsplash tile is from Ann Sacks Tile & Stone, at Michigan Design Center. The kitchen configuration was designed to allow the couple to view the living space without being directly across from it. A butler's pantry/bar connects the kitchen with the formal dining room. The window covering adds extra cheer to the space, interior designer Michelle Mio says. "Lisette grew up understanding that window treatments finish off a space," Mio says. "And her love for fabrics made the design process so fun." (Lisette is a former sales representative for Lee Jofa Furniture and Kravet fabrics.)



awesome cook," says Lisette. "Michelle and Glenda understood that we didn't want a huge kitchen that looked out to a huge room ... it would be like you are cooking on stage."

On the second floor, two bedrooms were untouched, while a master suite with a walk-in closet and bath were added. Three new fireplaces (including one on the patio) completed the makeover.

The home's interior reflects the couple. The palette of the master bedroom, for example, evokes the green/blue hues of the Hotel Wales in New York's Carnegie Hill section, a place the couple visited every year in December. "There was a fireplace in our hotel room, and exposed brick, which I love," Lisette says. Mio suggested that they incorporate those hotel elements into their master bedroom.

Those aesthetic plans are easier to accomplish when the practicalities have been addressed. In enlarging the home, Meads paid careful attention to window spacing, wall space, detailing, and materials. "That should all be part of a larger vision," Meads says.

That larger vision goes beyond the usual advice about renovating for "return on the investment." The big picture is how a house "lives." As Lisette puts it, "I feel an overwhelming sense of contentment. It feels like we are home." ■

DINING NOOK: A new dining nook was added to the back of the home. The couple purchased a distressed table and chairs, knowing their future family would do their own "distressing" to the pieces," Michelle Mio says. The chairs are upholstered in Sunbrella fabrics for extra protection from stains and fading. The windows are covered with grass blinds and decorative panels in a multi-colored buffalo check.

MASTER BEDROOM: A chic blue-and-brown palette in the master bedroom accents heirloom pewter plates from Lisette's mother's collection. "I placed them the same way she did in her home, over a mantle," Lisette says. The couple found the brick for the fireplace

surround (and the outdoor fireplace) from a Detroit reclaimed brick company recommended by Michelle Mio.

DAUGHTER'S ROOM: The daughter's bedroom was finished with pinks, greens, and creams because, Lisette says, "I wanted the room to be young, girly, but still somewhat sophisticated." Furnishings include a Lee Jofa loveseat upholstered in a floral motif. "It was fun to pull the room together from that piece," Mio says.

BACK PATIO: The bluestone patio is used like another room, thanks to its new fireplace. "We love having parties outdoors, even in colder weather," Lisette says. Each October, they invite friends over for gourmet grilled-cheese sandwiches and homemade soups.



