

A Historic Home Built in 1776

In the loving hands of its latest owners, a quaint but careworn Colonial-era house is all prettied up and ready for the making of warm new memories.

February 05, 2018



Today's homeowners were enchanted by the peaceful ten-acre property, once an Industrial Revolution-era mill, where Wachocastinook Creek tumbles past the main house's front door.



Iconic Eames walnut stools are part of the room's playful mix of patterns and textures.



The refurbished Rumford-style fireplace warms the cozy library.



Favorite finds, like a collection of vintage die-cut children's books, adorn new shelves crafted with period details.



Traces of paint purposely left on the hefty beams speak to the home's age and its long line of inhabitants. Down-filled cushions make the antique French sofa as comfortable as it is chic.



New England
HOME

The dining room's plate rack holds a host of beloved treasures, including a circa-1920s elephant teapot.



Yellow River granite gives the streamlined kitchen a rich feel.



The sink's backsplash shape was modeled on Federal-style furniture.



A simple and sunny hall—with a wasp nest vignette—leads to the upstairs.



In the laundry/mud room, an antique zinc bath commands attention, as does the lovely wide siding the owners uncovered.



An Afghani rug inspired the guestroom's vibrant look.



New England
HOME

She also designed the main bathroom's generous marble-topped vanity, crafted by cabinetmaker David Bowen.



The homeowner designed the Chippendale-style headboard for the master bedroom.

Its very age—the house was built in 1776—gives this dwelling its provenance.

Imagine the conversations that have taken place in these same rooms, in the glow of the same hearth, to the tune of the same nearby waterfall. Not so long ago, though, the little timeworn dwelling was in need of thoughtful owners who would celebrate its ancestry. Along came Amanda and David Jones and happiness ensued.

In their thirty-four years of marriage, the couple have lived all over the world. A list of where these travelers have hung their hats ranges from Cape Town to the Netherlands to Paris to California, with numerous exotic addresses in between. Currently, their winters are spent in Florida, but summer and fall find them in Salisbury.

Call it coincidence, if you will: Amanda spotted the home online at just about the same time a dear friend, who also happens to be a real estate agent, sent her the listing. It was a cold winter day when the couple arrived, and the attraction was immediate. “It was so quaint and peaceful,” remembers Amanda. “We stood on the bridge with the snow all around and we loved it.”

Developed as a mill during the Industrial Revolution, the pastoral ten-acre property also includes a mill house (today’s studio, office, and guest quarters), a wonderful old barn, and a second barn David added to store his antique cars. Wachocastinook Creek, full of brown speckled trout, rumbles past the door, and the environment is home to beavers and otters, not to mention birds of all kinds.

Still, as idyllic as the location was, a mighty renovation lay ahead. Fortunately, Amanda is an artist and sculptor with an unerring design eye and a knowledge of how things work. “There were a number of small contractors like painters, roofers, electricians, and floor specialists, but I acted as the designer and the main contractor,” she explains. “We had plenty of nuts and bolts to fix.”

Of course, so distracting is the home's charm, no one would stop to consider the extensive labor that brought the storied place to this pretty state. Major excavation was the first step. Along with masonry expert Andy Savage, who is also responsible for the property's picturesque stone walls, the owners removed the excess soil that had built up along the back of the building, dug out the foundation, and replaced the failing sills.

Inside, aged plaster walls came down and new ones went up. Removing a cache of tiny, awkward rooms led to the creation of the laundry/mud and powder rooms, boosting livability. Amanda also cleverly eliminated several walls separating the kitchen, dining room, and library. This last strategy allows the spaces to flow together in a comfortable L-shaped plan. Existing beams were exposed and new ones (some hollowed out to conceal plumbing pipes) were subtly introduced. Between the beams, the ceilings were gently lifted to enhance the sense of space, and floors were rescued and refurbished, except in the more formal living room where the passing years had taken such a toll only a new surface would do.

The new openness allows the owners and their guests to move easily from one space to another, although the library is a favorite gathering spot. Skilled cabinetmaker David Bowen lined the walls with handsomely detailed shelves to display the couple's books and mementos. Old photos of the house, a host of vintage kids' books, and even a papery gray wasp's nest—prized by Amanda for its delicacy—heighten the room's personality, as does the rejuvenated fireplace.

Savage, who insists “old houses are fantastic because they're more of a challenge,” completely overhauled the shallow firebox, making it as functional as it is beautiful. Twin Chinese millstones and an antique spindle from the long-ago mill dress up the hearth when there are no logs blazing.

Amanda's soft, tonal palette underscores yesteryear's architecture and highlights Bowen's meticulously crafted cabinetry in the brick-floored laundry room as well as the kitchen. For the latter, she opted for a minimum

of cupboards and added open shelving for auxiliary storage. “Amanda has a great deal of artistry and design knowledge,” Bowen says. “She wisely didn’t want to fill the kitchen and make it cramped. Sometimes less really is more.”

Painted Benjamin Moore’s Pashmina, the cabinets are a perfect partner to the richly colored Yellow River granite counters. The generous, graceful backsplash guarding the sink, which was inspired by a Federal-style highboy, is almost too artful to be as utilitarian as it is. But then, Amanda sees no reason why any element should be less than lovely. The honed marble-topped vanity with tapering legs that she designed for the powder room is as delicate as the Pembroke table occupying a corner of the cozy dining room.

“Everything in this house has a history and almost everything is antique,” Amanda says. The dining room, with its hefty 200-some-year-old beams, couldn’t be a more suitable backdrop for the couple’s English Regency table. An expert at mixing and matching eras and styles, Amanda pairs the graceful table with Scottish farmhouse chairs. A French sofa offers additional seating, while an antique Heriz rug lends warmth. A stash of teapots, pottery (including a small jug by the English ceramics designer Charlotte Rhead), and silver—all either family heirlooms or discoveries the owners made on their journeys—fill the old plate rack.

The bedrooms upstairs have the same simple but elegant tenor. A soaring headboard clad in a classic embroidered linen Schumacher fabric anchors the couple’s sleeping quarters. The guestroom is “much louder because it’s based on the rug,” Amanda says. Purchased in Scotland, the lively rug depicting a fierce lion was woven in Afghanistan.

No doubt, as years pass, the owners’ stories will thread themselves into the narrative of the house. The merging of tales will make for a heartwarming saga of a couple in search of a New England destination—and the old house that really was, it certainly feels now, waiting for them to come home.

Project Team

Interior and architectural design: Amanda Jones