

New England HOME

CT

Celebrating Fine Design, Architecture, and Building

High- Impact Design

Styles may differ, but the
goal is the same: livability
and visual punch



Its new homeowners loved the 1882 Queen Anne Victorian for its historic charm as well as its location on a quiet Southport street within walking distance of both the beach and town.

HOW *DARE* SHE?

A designer's bold vision merges traditional and modern to give a nineteenth-century Southport house a vivacious new look.

Text by ANNIE SHERMAN
Photography by MICHAEL PARTENIO
Produced by STACY KUNSTEL



LEFT: Lotus-patterned wallpaper makes a bold background in the dining room. **BELOW:** Homeowners Sandi and Chris Wright had different ideas for the foyer, so designer Rachel Reider made them both happy with the red-wine-colored paint for Chris and white marbled wallpaper for Sandi. **FACING PAGE:** Reider salvaged some of the great room's old wallpaper, pairing it with gunmetal paint for a contemporary touch.



it

began with the stained-glass window. Tucked in a corner of the dining room, the shrinking violet's subtle shades of aquamarine, red wine, and goldenrod were all but hidden from view, overwhelmed

by busy wallpaper and layers of lacquer trim. Even its lead seemed withered. But the redesign plan for the circa-1882 Queen Anne Victorian near the water in Southport held something special in store for this vintage detail, something more apropos of the home's stately provenance.

Built for John Hoyt Perry, a prominent judge, politician, businessman, and philanthropist at the turn of the twentieth century, the 6,000-square-foot home features numerous period details. The original

architectural embellishments—from the intricate corbels and exposed beams to the inlaid parquet floors—were resuscitated with the help of daring new owners, Sandi and Chris Wright, and designer Rachel Reider. “It was important to the owners to respect and maintain that architectural history, but make it feel more like theirs,” Reider says. “Make it fresher, a place they could feel comfortable spending time as a family.”

“We like old homes with character,” says Sandi. “We always wanted to live in the village because the kids could ride their bikes, walk to town or the beach, do things on their own. Then we saw this house, on a nice quiet street, with a five-minute walk to the train. And it’s so unique. It just needed a facelift.”

With three daughters and a full-time life in New York, the family spent weekends, holidays, and a

PROJECT TEAM

Interior design: Rachel Reider, Rachel Reider Interiors

Builder: Taylor Moore, Moore Carpenters

Landscape design: Kristina Gates, Southport Design Works



Metallic paper on the ceiling ramps up the glamour in the show-stopping dining room. Reider's color scheme for the room, like the rest of the house, is based on neutrals energized with jolts of vivid color.



“The stained-glass window was the starting point for the color palette on the whole first floor, with touches of teal and maroon dotted throughout,” says Rachel Reider.

LEFT: A fun powder room pushes the design envelope. “You might not want to see that pattern in a large room, but here, it’s a little surprise,” says Reider. **BELOW:** Reider added spark to the quiet palette with accents of gold. **FACING PAGE:** Benjamin Moore’s Arctic Shadows trim lets the parlor’s rich architectural detail shine.

few summers here before attempting this first-floor refresh. Sandi was torn about the direction to take, however. The mother in her yearned for a clean and simple aesthetic, a neutral backdrop to balance their multi-state menagerie of activities and events, work and school, the constant to and fro. “An inviting, comfortable space” was what she wanted. But, she relates, Chris, more of a purist, told her, “That’s not this house. It can’t be white. We have to respect its history and integrity. It wouldn’t be respectful to strip it all away and paint it white.”

So they didn’t. Paint it white, that is. Nor did they gravitate toward the traditional out of guilty respect. Rather, it is contrast and geometric patterns that transform this Gilded Age beauty into a welcoming retreat and entertaining haven. And it all originated with that overlooked stained-glass window. “That was the starting point for the color palette on the whole first floor, with touches of teal and maroon dotted throughout,” says Reider.

Although the house comes across as colorful, Reider points out that the foundation is anything but. “It’s comprised of neutrals—whites, blacks, grays, and



BELOW: Cozy velvet chairs and an oversize wool sofa make a convivial seating arrangement in the great room. **RIGHT:** The kitchen strikes a balance between modern and traditional with its leaded-glass-front cabinets painted a rich green. A Dunes and Duchess chandelier in an unexpected bright red illuminates the island.



some metallic accents—with layers of jewel tones,” she says. Even in the show-stopping dining room, where the peacock trim and lotus wallpaper are standouts, the designer notes that upholstery in black and white, a geometric wool rug, and the family’s traditional dining table and chairs (now covered in a modern abstract fabric) form the nucleus of the novel new space.

To Sandi’s initial chagrin, Reider suggested leaving some of the tapestry-patterned wallpaper in the great room—an expansive space that holds two sitting areas—to accommodate her honor-bound husband. She added a merlot-hued textured wallpaper and Benjamin Moore’s Gunmetal trim to update the old-school vibe. “It was so dark and it ran through the whole room. I didn’t like it,” Sandi says about the paper, “but Rachel found wallpaper that

tied the space together and drapes to lighten up the other part of the room. So she neutralized it and we met in the middle.”

Snuggle-friendly velvet chairs and an oversize wool couch strewn with pillows call for settling in with a book, and there’s room for the whole family to gather to watch a movie or play games. Meanwhile no one is afraid to touch anything, Sandi says, especially the faux snakeskin leather ottoman, because the whole house is designed to be lived in. “It was made for holidays and entertaining.”

In the separate parlor, Reider went for a quieter look that relies more on texture to create interest. A muted grasscloth invites tactile discovery, and black-and-white furniture is enlivened with accents of gold and turquoise.

The original wood trim throughout the first floor



“We took who we are and what the house was, and synthesized them into a space that is very comfortable... something that feels very livable,” says Sandi Wright.

also received lots of attention from Taylor Moore of Moore Carpenters. His team of six “took off 100 years of paint, lacquer, stencils, and wallpaper, stripping it down to nothing and starting from scratch,” Moore says. Benjamin Moore’s Adriatic Sea washes across the dining room, causing jaws to drop the moment one walks through the front door. “That teal trim was something that really resonated with me,” says



ABOVE: The Wrights “have a clean and modern aesthetic,” says landscape architect Kristina Gates. “We removed plantings that blocked the house, added hedging, and created little moments to enjoy.” **LEFT:** A lush landscape provides shade for the pool and inviting fire pit areas, where diving contests and s’mores are regular summer rituals. **FACING PAGE:** A pagoda-inspired pergola makes a welcoming shelter by the pool.

Sandi. “In a circa-1882 house, you don’t expect to see statement wallpaper and teal trim, and I think that’s really fun.” A metallic wallpaper on the ceiling adds a magical glow for entertaining.

Boldness billows into the foyer where eggplant trim and wainscoting in Farrow and Ball’s Brinjal is the ultimate compromise. “My husband and I went back and forth on the entry,” Sandi admits. “I wanted it to be light. He wanted dark mahogany because of the house’s history. But we both agreed to this purple wine color because at certain times of day you saw different colors.” White-on-white marbled wallpaper

adds a note of modernity and reflects light.

The old house now has a fresh new look that respects and celebrates its history. Every room makes the family happy, and they can really unplug the moment they arrive. “We took who we are and what the house was, and synthesized them into a space that is very comfortable, extremely unique and special, and also something that feels very livable,” Sandi says. And the unassuming stained-glass window that kick-started the design now gets the attention it deserves. ■

RESOURCES: For more information about this home, see page 158.