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Preserving a Bit of History

This remodel retains its sense of history, while adding modern additions to enhance this family's home.

When William and Debi Lamb purchased their 1930s Buckhead English Cottage-style home about two years ago, they knew that it would have to be remodeled and enlarged to fit their needs. "We loved the location of the home and we loved the existing house. We loved all of the mahogany wood throughout the home and the historical feel it had—it just wasn't big enough," Debi said. "We knew we could open up some walls, enlarge the home, keep the historical existence, and turn it into our dream home."

The home also included a guest house on the property, so it was perfect to live in that space when the remodeling project was underway. An area watercolor artist, Debi also eventually wanted to turn the guest house into a part-time art gallery space.

NOT NEW TO REMODELING PROCESS

Debi said that this was not her first remodeling project she's ever done. "I knew what I wanted and what I liked about the existing home. I had built a new home in the past, as well as several remodeling projects, and I knew what I wanted to do for this home."

So, when she began to plan for the project, she wrote down everything that she wanted as her 'wish list,' such as several fireplaces, ceiling beams in the living room, vaulted ceilings, an enlarged living room area, more closet space, a new master bedroom suite, and much more.

NEIGHBORS GIVE REFERRAL

The Lambs chose Norris Broyles and Associates as their architects and began to research area builders to interview about the project. They met their new neighbors throughout the Mt. Paran neighborhood at a social gathering and received several recommendations, including Paces Construction Company. Paces Construction Owners John Beach and Richard Everett grew up in Buckhead and graduated together from The Lovett School before going to college. They both had corporate careers but eventually left to pursue their dream of building and remodeling homes. Since then they have completed many remodeling projects in the Lamb's neighborhood.

"Richard had done several additions and remodels on our same street and close to us, lived nearby, and we liked what we saw," Debi said. "We wanted our home to fit in with the neighborhood, and Paces Construction was also highly recommended by our architects. When Richard gave us an estimate for the project he was very detail-orientated, so we decided to go with Paces and it worked out perfectly," Debi said.

BLENDING OLD WITH NEW

According to Paces Construction's John Beach, who lives a few blocks away, this particular Atlanta neighborhood was farmland, a Civil War-era battlefield and

at one time it even had a gold mine on it. Residential development didn't start until post automobiles in the 1920s, and then was interrupted by the depression and World War II. So, houses from the 1930s through the '60s mix with a few newer homes on the street.

Many of these area neighborhoods and streets are curvilinear, following creeks and ridgelines, and layouts were influenced by Frederick Law Olmsted's work in Atlanta. Coyotes, deer, and fox live in backyards and can be occasionally seen by neighbors. "It has a really wooded charm," Debi said.

The original Lamb home was a charming cottage that had been added onto several times in its lifespan, giving it tons of character. "One of Paces Constructions specialties is working to retain a sense of a home's history, and we believe the organic nature of periodic remodels over time resonates with a home's inhabitants," John said.

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"We have updated many older homes like the Lamb's using our EarthCraft green building skills, an eco-friendly building certification program sponsored by the Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association and Southface Energy Institute. We care about the history of our area and use sustainable approaches to help prepare these wonderful older homes for future generations," John said. "We also believe homes built over a longer span of time add visual interest and dynamics to these Buckhead neighborhoods not seen in areas built over a shorter timeframe with more limited styles. And tearing down and starting over is the least sustainable thing builders can do, basically throwing a whole house in our landfills."

When finding a remodeler, this concept was important to the Lambs because they liked the original house so much. "We wanted to keep a lot of what the original house had to offer. We wanted everything to match, so you couldn't tell that it was an actual addition." According to Paces, in historical renovations, one approach is to let people subtlety know they're in an updated space, but not be able to tell where it started. "It's kind of like documenting the transition of time while leaving a bit of difference, but not being too obvious."

To match the antique flooring, Richard and a wood specialist counted the number of knotholes per foot, located appropriate beams from an 1800s mill in New England, had them sawn into flooring, then installed and finished them to match. "The existing stone foundations and walls on the property featured an unusual installation technique and random pattern from the 1930s," Richard said. "The colors and types of stone appeared to include grey and black granite, red oxide, crab orchard, and quartz."

Paces brought in their third-generation stone mason from North Georgia who recognized the blend as Cherokee Scrape, a mix of surface stones found in Cherokee County. Generations of farmers there scraped their fields to make stone walls, barns, and houses, and offered it free just to get rid of it. "It was used around Atlanta during the Great Depression, and we found a farmer who was happy to part with a few more truck loads," Richard said.

ENLARGING THE SQUARE FOOTAGE

The original home was about 2,100 square feet and Debi wanted to add on a ground floor master suite, a family room, and a deck. She also wanted to add three fireplaces; one in the master suite, one in the family room, and one out on the deck. "I've always wanted a fireplace in my bedroom with a vaulted ceiling, so that addition was important to me."

Working with architects Norris Broyles and Candace Carlson, Paces Construction extended the kitchen into a beamed and paneled family room with fireplace. In addition, they created a vaulted-ceiling master bedroom with a fireplace.

Walls were also reconfigured to provide new master closets. An extensive wrap-around deck with a fireplace extends out back and has become a gathering spot for neighborhood events. About an additional 800 square feet was added to the completed home's interior, and Debi said that it turned out great.

BEAUTIFUL OUTCOME

According to Debi, Paces Construction enlarged the living room area, matching the styles and materials where appropriate. "Everything blended in very well," she said. "They were even able to match up the existing stone with steps walking up to the entrance, and it really turned out great." Additionally, this home was the winner of the Gold OBIE Award for best addition over $100,000. To see the award, see page 20. Richard says the credit is shared, "It takes a special caliber of client, like the Lambs, who put together a team with similar beliefs and a vision for this approach, to create an awarding-winning project."

"I love my home," Debi said. "We got everything we wanted out of this remodel and I couldn't be happier with the results. I highly recommend Paces Construction; they were great people to work with—I have nothing but nice things to say, and they did an excellent job. They were just a great fit to do this home. Everything worked out perfectly, and I'm so glad that we chose them."

Sources for this Article:

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Art Gallery Hosts Shows for Local Artists

As well as remodeling their main home on the property, Paces Construction Co. also helped update the guest house, which Debi turned into an Art Gallery, doing four long weekend shows a year to show off local artists and raise proceeds for area charities, which vary quarterly.

"Paces did some work on this space, such as installing gallery lighting, which turned out very well," Debi said.

The Lambs held their most recent open house in early May 2009, which featured about 35 different local artists, and the proceeds benefitted the nearby Chastain Park Conservancy. The previous show supported Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, a non-profit with three children's hospitals in Atlanta.

"I think it's important to support local Atlanta artists," Debi said. "It's a way for them to come in and show their work and for local buyers to come and purchase wonderful pieces. They all need places to sell their work, and we try to bring in different artists every time. We are big advocates and supporters of everything original; it's a great way to promote unique creations and the local artists, as well as benefitting local charities."

The next show is slated to be in mid-September 2009 and proceeds will benefit Sheperd Center, a local spinal cord injury center. For more information about the gallery, visit its website at www.TheArtHouseAtlanta.com.

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