

In Essex home, traditional meets contemporary

By **Jaci Conry** Globe Correspondent, January 26, 2017, 10:00 p.m.



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A sliding door made from reclaimed wood adds impact to the dining area. (JARED KUZIA)

The owners of this home in Essex appreciated classic historic architecture, yet the young family required a layout that was suited for modern living. Rather than buy and renovate an antique home, they went an alternate route: They hired Vermont-based

builder Connor Homes to create a “panelized” home for them that was historically accurate on the exterior with a contemporary interior.

Perhaps you’ve never heard of a “panelized” home, so a brief explanation is in order. A panelized home is custom designed and parts and pieces are built in a factory. Floor and roof systems are precut and brought to the home site partially assembled.

“The result is that the house comes together twice as fast as it normally would,” says designer Kristina Crestin, who worked with homeowners to develop the décor. The home’s exterior is a painstaking rendition of an early 19th century Federal-style home. “The homeowners wanted the inside to be less traditional,” she adds.

Crestin worked with a blue/gray palette punctuated by black and white. Rooms feel open and airy thanks to lofty ceilings and abundant windows. As a complement to the more contemporary interior, the homeowners wanted to incorporate elements with historic origins. As it happens, Crestin has a passion for architectural salvage. So she turned to Kennebunkport, Maine-based Old House Parts for reclaimed materials to accent the design.

The pantry, located off the hallway between the kitchen and dining room, had doors that swung awkwardly into the hall. “I thought sliding doors into the pantry would work better,” says Crestin, who was thrilled to find a pair that came from an old building in Maine. “When I saw the doors were painted black I knew they were perfect, since the home’s window sashes are also painted black.”

A hand-painted light fixture from School House Electric offers illumination and decorative appeal. “I love how a corridor that is a forgotten space can become appealing by adding a couple of interesting elements,” the designer says.

In the dining room, Crestin sought to add a focal point on the wall to the foyer. “We had a big blank wall. Rather than add art, I thought an architectural element would have a big impact.” The folks at Old House Parts directed Crestin to a striking piece of aged lumber that was then fabricated into a sliding door, fitted with heavy black hardware.

While the table and chairs have a more traditional feel, the chandelier has industrial appeal.

“It’s eclectic and fun,” she says. An old-fashioned, blue rag rug is simple and casual. The landscape painting from Jules Place, a South End art gallery, plays off the blue and the moss green velvet drapes that frame the windows.

“The drapes add a pop of color,” Crestin says, “while bringing the outdoors in and adding warmth to the room.”

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