



Exquisite details, from the antique light fixture to the English-encaustic-tile floor, give the new breakfast room a vintage feel.

# Perfect Match

A modern addition respects a century of tradition

BY JAMES WALSH | PHOTOS BY KAREN MELVIN

Rip Rapson's father, Ralph, designer of the old Guthrie Theater on Vineland Place, is a titan of modern architecture. But when it came time for Rip and his wife, Gail, to renovate and add on to their home in a historic district within southeast Minneapolis' Marcy-Holmes neighborhood, they wanted something that would embrace its 100-year-old pedigree.

They turned to David Heide, a former member of St. Paul's Heritage Preservation Commission and an expert at bringing vintage homes into the modern age. The resulting update and addition to the Rapsons' four square is nothing short of dazzling. A new kitchen, breakfast room, and master suite, along with tweaks to existing spaces throughout, create a twenty-first century home that maintains the original 1904 style and spirit.

"The focus of our business is specifically this kind of project," says Heide, a project and interior designer and owner of David Heide Design Studio in Minneapolis. "If old buildings do not change and evolve with time, they run the risk of becoming obsolete."

For the Rapsons, who bought the house 15 years ago, Heide's ideas for restoring the historic style of their home while addressing the needs of a modern family reflected their own. In the end, nearly every room in the house was touched—doors widened, new bathrooms added, views expanded. Before they could move forward, however, plans for the addition's exterior architecture had to be approved by the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission. And the Rapsons had to move out for nine months, not an easy thing with two young children, an aging dog, and two guinea pigs.

The centerpiece of the project was the kitchen and attached breakfast room. The challenge here, Heide says, was converting a room that was once an architectural afterthought into the new center of family life. He eschewed the trend toward a giant, wide-open great room, keeping the kitchen within its original footprint. By opening the existing



space to a newly added breakfast room, Heide let in light and views of the home's amazing perennial garden in the backyard, which Gail has lovingly cultivated over the years.

The modern kitchen features traditionally detailed, natural-cherry cabinets that will darken with time. The original birch floors in the kitchen were removed plank by plank, refinished, and reinstalled. The dramatic rust and blue granite countertops and slate mosaic backsplash sound a contemporary note. A traditional farm sink also is done in modern slate.

The light-filled breakfast room features a large bay window that overlooks Gail's garden and an old barn converted to a garage. An English-encaustic-tile floor features a Victorian design, creating almost a conservatory look. An antique light fixture with exposed bulbs echoes the early-twentieth century style. Built-in natural cherry cabinets hold games and art supplies, and define a small home office area. Though the original dining-room woodwork is oak, the entryway and living room feature stained birch trim. Heide says the existing mix of woods allowed him to take more liberties with choices in the new spaces. He also added a mudroom, lined with fir cabinets, and a screen porch off the breakfast room.

The footprint of the addition measures just 10-by-22 feet and feels almost as if it had always been part of the home. "All too often in additions, the scale of the house and the proportion of the rooms are obliterated or lost," Heide says. "There's a way to open up vistas between spaces to create a sense of a larger space without creating some enormous room."

The two-story addition also allowed the Rapsons a more contemporarily scaled master suite above the new breakfast

LEFT The new kitchen is equal parts modern and traditional, a design approach embodied by the farm sink of contemporary slate. ABOVE The new rooms complement the mellow glow of the original oak dining room.

room. Surrounded by double-hung windows, the room from the outside looks more like an old-fashioned sleeping porch than a modern addition. Hardwood floors strewn with oriental rugs line the sleeping area and sitting room, providing a low-key refuge to parents of school-age children. The room is painted a cool blue and adjoined by the master bath, which is tiled in light green with classic white hexagonal floor tiles and a white pedestal sink. A walk-in shower with a glass door almost blends into the background.

"It's a very nice mix of new space, renovation, and restoration," Gail says.

The original second-floor bath was removed to make way for the master suite. A new, second bathroom was located at the opposite end of the upper level and adapted to the children's needs. Heide added another bathroom to the first floor, carving a powder room out of an original closet.

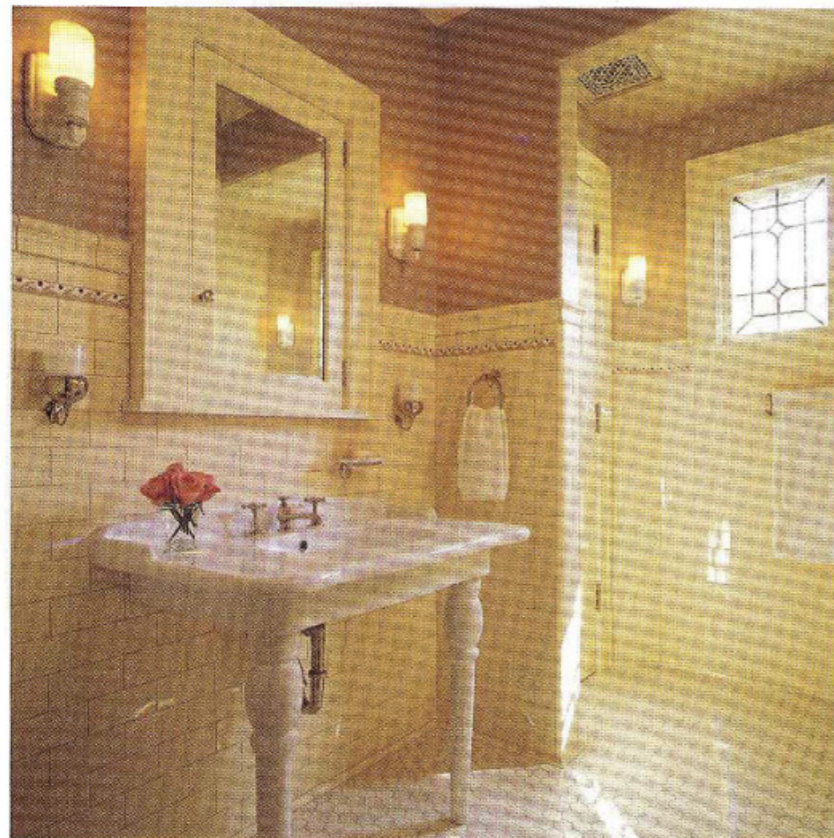
Rip says it was a pleasure working with Heide, who had a clear vision of how to transform the home, yet was open to the family's desires. Heide reciprocates the praise, saying the Rapsons didn't just give him a to-do list, but were open to his ideas. "Because they are from an architectural family, I felt that there was a little more respect for my craft."

Though he insists that he inherited few of his father's design genes, Rip does respect the process of a shared vision. "That, for me, is a pretty deeply ingrained value."

Such a joint approach simply makes sense, adds Gail. "When you let people do what they do, you get better results."

Indeed, the results were honored in 2004, winning the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission's award for an "Addition to a Historic Building". However, the designer says, he doesn't try to blend the new with the old seamlessly. "The house still needs to be able to tell the story of what it was and what it's become," he says. "All of these homes are part of a collective memory, part of a collective spirit. Sure, I get to do this part of it now. But somebody will get to do another part of it later." ■

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THIS PAGE The master suite above the breakfast-room addition allows for contemporary spaciousness in a serene, traditional room. OPPOSITE PAGE Hexagonal tiles, art glass, and antique sconces create a children's bathroom that peacefully coexists with the century-old house.