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SUMMER 2001

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MULTI-PURPOSE OUTBUILDING

*Complementing
A Potomac Estate*

BUILDER BOWA Builders
McLean, VA
TEXT John Byrd, Reston, VA

At a glance, a spacious Colonial revival-styled manor house on three acres in Potomac would seem to have everything a family with three small children could want. The house includes six spacious bedrooms, a den, family room, a sunroom—plus a pool with a small, functional pool house.

But, after occupying it for a few years, Mimi Harris began to see some of the ways the home failed to meet evolving needs.

Lifelong Montgomery County residents, both spouses had an extensive network of friends and family. Moreover, when Ms. Harris' parents sold a nearby home in search of more travel-time, the dotting grandparents were without a local habitat.

Add to this the number of neighborhood kids and classmates steadily swelling as the three children progressed in school, and it was clear that what was needed was a kind of residential complex designed to satisfy a range of uses by multiple generations.

"I suppose it all started when we realized we didn't have room for indoor entertainment and exercise areas," Ms. Harris recalls. "The basement was windowless and tiny—and frankly the rest of the house didn't retrofit very easily."

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RIGHT: The project's most ambitious requirement was designing a seamless architectural complement to the 70-year-old main house.





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ABOVE: To lend visual interest to a stairway separating the dining area from the front hall, BOWA specified a hand-forged wrought-iron rail in a spiral basket design capped by a custom-designed hand-rail milled out of solid Ash. Stark carpet in neutral tones was selected for the stair runners.

"Plus, we wanted rooms where my parents could enjoy privacy when visiting. That was when we began to think about converting the old pool house into a kind of all purpose outbuilding with private guest quarters."

Not surprisingly, there was more to the task than meets the eye, notes Steven Kirstein, a principal with the nationally-renowned design/build firm BOWA Builders, Inc.

"The grade was uneven... yet we were required to put in new lines for gas, electric and water as well as

an independent sewer system."

Re-working the entire rear landscaping plan was also on the agenda.

A flagstone path direct from house to pool was removed in favor of a route incorporating the proposed outbuilding and linking breezeway.

The old pool was renovated and its terrace resurfaced with heat-resistant materials that closely match existing flagstone.

The project's most ambitious requirement, though, was designing a seamless architectural complement to the 70-year-old main house.

Since none of the original blueprints existed, extracting specifications for essential details meant recreating elevations from scratch. Dormers, columns, cornice treatments, pilasters and beaded siding were all painstakingly measured in order to create usable schematics and working drawings.

And, despite such close controls: the challenging terrain meant that some elements of the breezeway had to wait until the new building was almost completed.

The Multi-Purpose Floorplan

Following extensive owner interviews, the BOWA design team devised a plan that cleverly integrates specific use-zones on three floors, and functions with equal integrity from several directions.

Sited for privacy, the new structure provides all the features of a stand-alone residence.

Exiting from the rear parking area, one walks under the breezeway to a front door and enters a spacious foyer.

A turn to the left takes one down a hall with hideaway powder room to a sizable eat-in kitchen. Here one enters a lovely screened-in porch, or walks into the cozy, pine-paneled den.

A right turn from the foyer takes visitors to an expansive great room replete with vaulted ceiling, stone hearth and double sets of French doors.

Three sets of French doors along the rear elevation provide functional entranceways from the pool to, respectively, the great room, a dining room and a pool-specific suite fitted out with "his" and "her" changing areas, a full bath, a kitchenette and a laundry.

Two well-appointed upstairs bedrooms, each with private bath, offer views of the pool and grounds. A home theater, exercise room and third guest room with windowed egress are among the lower level features.

Consistent with their reputation for going any length to help owners achieve a distinctive look, BOWA's skills in locating matching materials proved

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critical to this project's success.

To assure a harmonious roof line, the main house was stripped of its original shingles and redone in a cedar shake specified for the breezeway and the new outbuilding.

A search through a variety of resources produced brick perfectly matched to materials used in the main house.

Main house exterior lights were replaced with wrought iron lanterns disbursed throughout the complex for heightened visual unity.

Limestone specified for the entire first floor was, likewise, the result of a painstaking search for a darker-than-average vein that especially suited the rooms' color scheme.

A Texas outfit was found to forge the great room fireplace—a custom designed, cast stone product.

A fish motif selected by the family and hand-painted in Italy on ceramic tiles provides delicate accents in the pool room bath, around a striking hand-made mirror and as an inlaid element along the pool room floor.

Finishwork

Since it's the fine details that truly distinguish an interior, BOWA's collaboration with the owners and decorators DeFord-Sharp are notable.

Floral moulding on the exhaust fan above the Viking range coupled with hand-painted ceramics behind the hearth lend a French country ambience to a kitchen usually bathed in natural light.

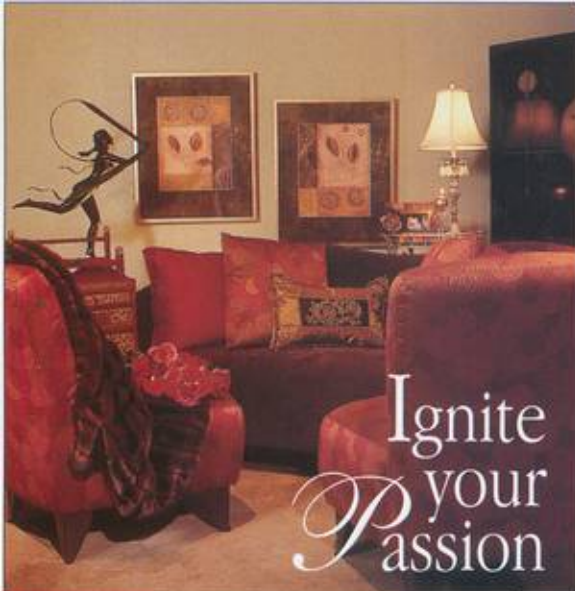
Crown moulding, built-ins and a lighted "tray" ceiling grace the upstairs bedrooms.

In the great room, a slightly bumped out floor-to-ceiling chimney flanked by two sets of divided light mirrored doors gives vertical accents to a multi-level vaulted ceiling which is, in turn, balanced by a wrought iron chandelier.

Faux painting—in the great room, master bedroom and even the pine paneled den—picks up subtle textures in well-chosen fabrics.

Outside, the breezeway linking old to new structures is redolent with fine craftsmanship. Left to the end, the roof line is an aesthetically masterful reconciliation. The breezeway's bead-board, tongue-and-groove ceiling and hand-routed columns invite surrender to the day's gracious possibilities. Copper-roofed bump-outs, in turn, intimate this architectural style's early American antecedents.

This handsome residence was featured in the Potomac Country House Tour.



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