

Soft Spoken

CUSTOM NORTHERN VIRGINIA HOME WHISPERS OF TIMELESS ELEGANCE

WRITTEN BY **SHERRY MOELLER** | PHOTOGRAPHY BY **BOB NAROD**

Just as an old home celebrates the history of an area and possibly of its era, a new custom home can provide just as much reason to rejoice. The excitement is always in how the homeowners perceive the design and how the builders execute it. Ultimately, it is how the home lives that sings the praises of all involved.

For the homeowners of a Northern Virginia home, BOWA Builders Inc. and Custom Design Concepts Architecture and Interiors delivered in a big way. The owners wanted longevity with quality materials; they wanted accessibility for their daughter who has disabilities; and they wanted a design that didn't say "new" as soon as one enters the door. A home with spirit, simplicity, and durability featuring the family as its epicenter and inherent warmth is what was designed, built, and now enjoyed.

Historic Language

The site – a wooded corner lot – initiated the home's design. "We built up the site thoughtfully with retaining walls," says Joany Janicki, principal at Custom Design Concepts, "so it wouldn't turn its back to the

neighborhood" and every main floor room opened on ground level.

"From the outside, we wanted to maintain a front porch, like turn-of-the-century homes, but keep the scale down," Janicki says. There are different levels of public and private spaces in this era of homes, with public sidewalks leading to more private porches. "We wanted to keep that same public and private transition," she adds, while blending into the neighborhood. The owners wanted a good relationship between the house and grounds.

One goal inside was to have light travel from the attic to the basement through the stairwell with the skylight and open floors as sources of borrowed light. "I wanted the staircase to be a surprise, too," Janicki adds. So when guests enter the formal foyer and move down the hallway, the "jewel staircase" greets them.

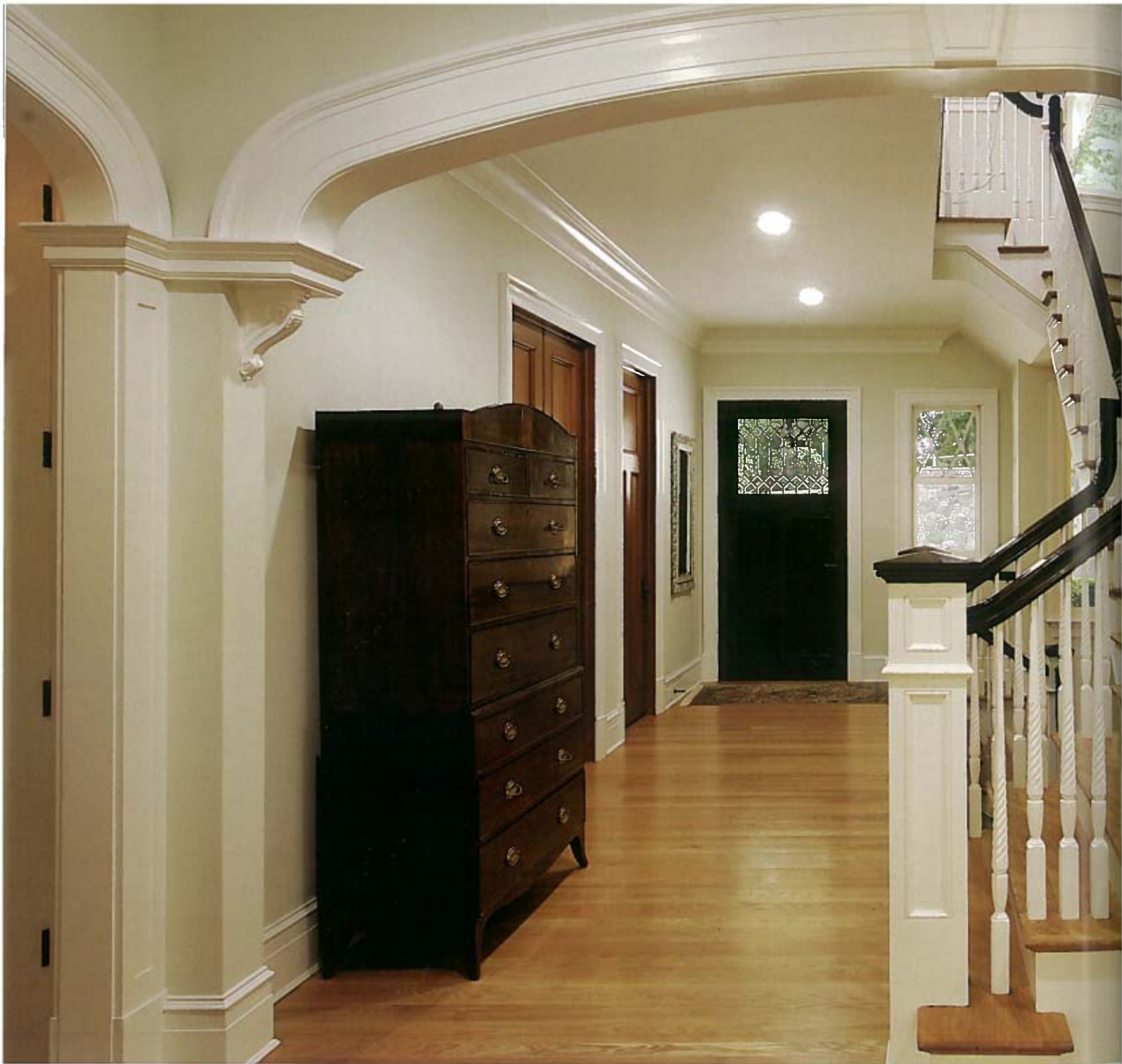
For the owners, key design elements from former homes, including the exact footprints of a foyer and dining room from a West Coast Victorian, a treasured second floor sitting room in a European residence, and the stone exterior from a childhood home, were important to replicate.



**Front entrance
Upper wall**
C2
Haddon Hall
C2-460*

OPPOSITE: The homeowners requested a generously-sized foyer, says Richard Cassagnol, principal of BOWA Builders Inc. "It was important that it be a gracious foyer and large enough to have a lot of people congregate for formal hellos and goodbyes," he says. The archways are repeated down the hall and into the dining room to the right and the stairwell to the left.





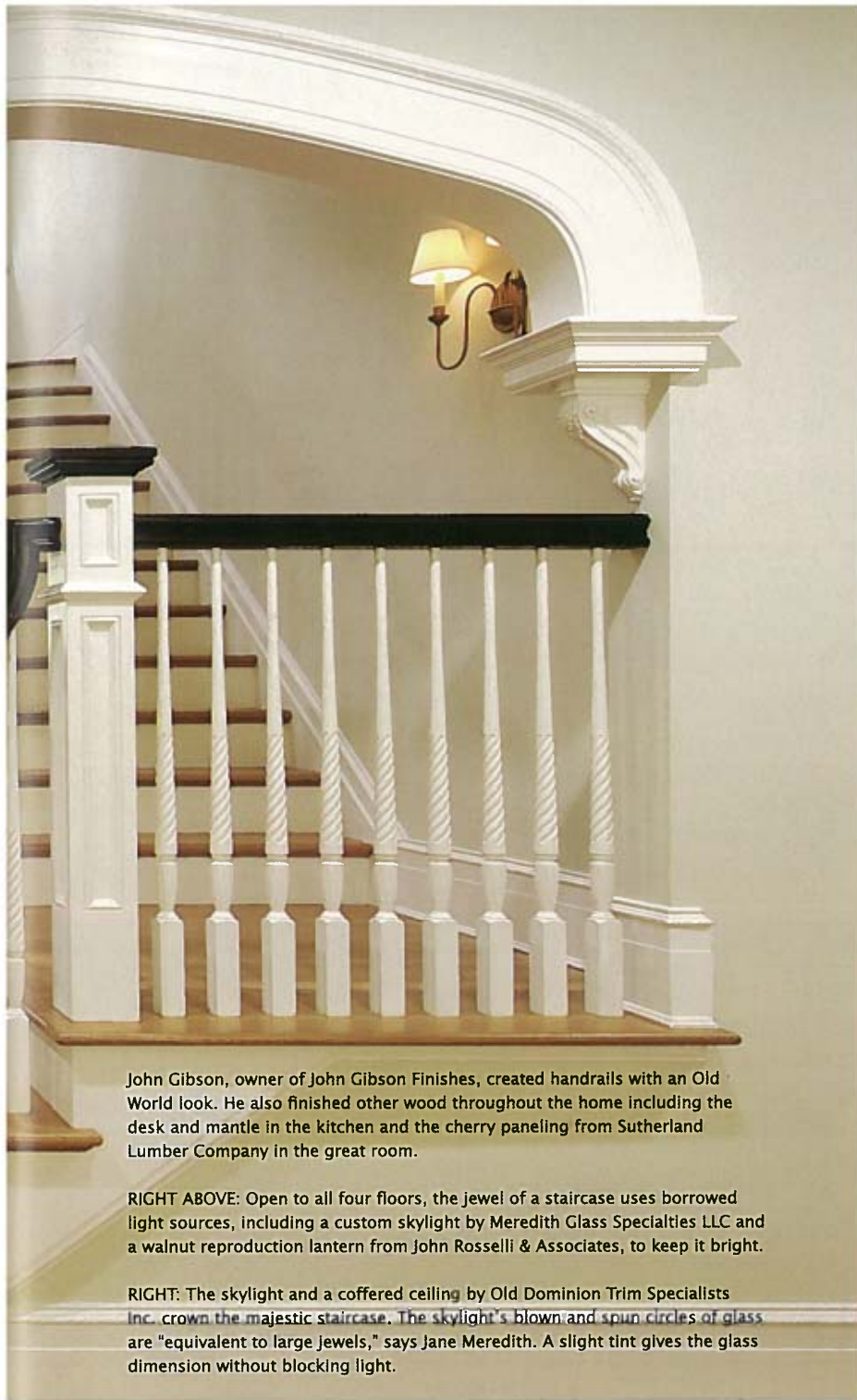
Formal Up Front

When given two choices, the owners opted for the lighter one. Soft wall and ceiling colors, organic-hued fabrics, lighting collected from travels, and furniture pieces reupholstered and possibly handed down from parents fit into the handcrafted corners, along wood-paneled walls, and in rooms featuring various door styles in this family home lovingly designed with their daughter's needs first.

You would never know that this home was designed

to integrate the principles of Universal Design and Aging In Place concepts. That is how the owners wanted it – to fit their needs without anyone realizing what they are. The elements had to feel natural without looking retrofitted. Most important, the home had to feel right.

"You walk into the house and it feels like a home," says Richard Cassagnol, principal of BOWA Builders Inc. "It feels like it's been there over 100 years." Quality was paramount in



John Gibson, owner of John Gibson Finishes, created handrails with an Old World look. He also finished other wood throughout the home including the desk and mantle in the kitchen and the cherry paneling from Sutherland Lumber Company in the great room.

RIGHT ABOVE: Open to all four floors, the jewel of a staircase uses borrowed light sources, including a custom skylight by Meredith Glass Specialties LLC and a walnut reproduction lantern from John Rosselli & Associates, to keep it bright.

RIGHT: The skylight and a coffered ceiling by Old Dominion Trim Specialists Inc. crown the majestic staircase. The skylight's blown and spun circles of glass are "equivalent to large jewels," says Jane Meredith. A slight tint gives the glass dimension without blocking light.



the overall design and finishing touches, such as the wood flooring found on every level. "The different flooring creates a lot of interest in the house itself," Cassagnol adds.

The simplicity of random-width white oak flooring on the main level, the richness of cherry on the second floor, and the ruggedness of hickory on the third floor, plus the earthiness of elm paneling on the lower level – all from Sutherland Lumber Company – emphasize the owners' love of fine finishes.



Notches Above

Trying woods that are not commonly used, especially hickory and elm, and pairing the floors with accenting wood borders were risks worth taking and made all the difference, says Bill Sutherland, owner of Pennsylvania's Sutherland Lumber Company and a third generation William Sutherland to run this company founded in 1912. Sutherland and his staff purvey a dozen different hardwood species including walnut and chestnut, as well as provide products that range from flooring and boxes to playhouses and crown moldings cut to Versailles' design specifications.

"Sutherland Lumber Company is almost exclusively involved in transforming green hardwood lumber from sawmills in the Appalachian region of New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, Tennessee, and Ohio into kiln dried and finished products," Sutherland says. "Much of the flooring and many of Sutherland's molding products are manufactured from lumber grades two or three notches above those commonly used in narrow, shorter flooring," he adds. "Also, our lumber comes primarily from forests where selective harvesting techniques are practiced. This means the forest is still a forest after the timber harvesters are finished."

"The woodwork was a major factor in the design," the owner adds, as was using substantial hardware that wasn't overbearing. It is all about creating congruity in a space.

"I like the way the house flows," says Joshua Cooper, president of Old Dominion Trim Specialists Inc., who installed most of the home's woodwork. "It's one of the finest houses we've trimmed."



As Promised

The process of graphing out the furniture arrangement came about early. Working with Janicki and Miriam Dillon, Custom Design Concepts interior architect who designed the millwork and built-ins, the homeowners also recruited Judy Wientzen, principal of Bevacqua/Wientzen Associates Interiors, to incorporate current treasures, such as the dining room table and chairs, and to add new elements, including designer seating in the living room. They chose to keep the hallways clear of furniture for ease of movement as well as to make thresholds flat throughout the main level. Wider hallways and uncluttered spaces stay in tune with Universal Design and are visually appealing.

The plan moved smoothly, unveiling exceptional features from floor to floor, such as the creation of a sensational formal powder room. "The powder room off the beautiful staircase needed to be something special," Dillon says. By adding an elliptical curve in the wall and using antique and new iron and stone pieces, the space obtained a Victorian flair.

"I love how all the interiors come together," Janicki says, with their long vistas, views throughout the house, and natural light. Custom designed millwork, casings, moldings, mantles, and built-ins accentuate the overall craftsmanship of the home and take the homeowners on a journey of styles. Iron hardware on the main level, elegant levers on the second floor, and crystal knobs on the top floor transcend the home from formal to cottage styling. "You get a different feeling each time you're in a different room," Dillon adds. A four-level elevator provides vertical movement.



ABOVE: Miriam Dillon added a curved wall, a vanity from Salvations Architectural Furnishings, and 12"x12" Griggio Sabbio limestone and hand-clipped mosaics from Best Tile to create a dramatic and beautiful formal powder room. Tile installation was by GLB Tile & Marble Co.

LEFT: Two Niermann Weeks sofas, two chairs recycled from former homes, a Lewis Mittman settee, a chandelier from a California auction, and new draperies sewn by Robyn McCahill establish a living room with character and old-fashioned charm. Where they could, the owners reused furniture and draperies they had.

OPPOSITE: The banquet-sized dining room, across from the stairwell and open to the outside, is a prominent feature of the house. Judy Wientzen suggested sheers along the bank of windows and drapes tied back to allow natural lighting to fill the space. A wedding cake-style chandelier takes center stage. Chairs are from Miller & Arney Antiques.

Living room walls

C2
Gull
C2-429*





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Jack Rosen Custom Kitchens worked with the homeowners to design a kitchen combining classic charm with modern amenities. Built-in storage and a checkerboard-patterned floor of Caesar porcelain stoneware from Best Tile outfit the entrance mudroom. The great room has a French-country feel with a tin-topped table purchased in Atlanta, chairs from Thos. Moser, sofas from Pierre Deux, and a painting by France Audoul above the custom mantelpiece.





Family as the Epicenter

Visiting the homeowners in former homes was valuable to Wientzen. Those houses had warm qualities and celebrated beautiful choices in design and furnishings. While some people may shop for a scarf, this owner buys a piece of art or a light fixture as a souvenir, Wientzen says. "If you have good taste and buy things of value, they last," she adds.

When choosing wall colors, the owners kept longevity in mind. While they used more than 40 colors throughout the home, including slightly different colors on most ceilings, they went with neutrals that weren't bland. They used blues, greens, and terra cottas as accents. "Everything came together ... the use of materials, the paint colors," says Michael Martin, project manager with BOWA Builders, who tracked up to 10 miles of walking a day while completing this project.

In the kitchen, the homeowners wanted a space where they could gather comfortably while cooking and entertaining. Encased in Jack Rosen Signature Cabinetry in a glazed

cherry finish, the kitchen is home central. Making use of the 10' ceiling, the cabinets meet crown moldings and a custom hood with pullout spice drawers on either side. The owner purchased an antique light fixture from Paris to illuminate the Golden Green quartzite along the island designed for their daughter's needs. The handcrafted richness of the kitchen works well with changing seasonal decor, the owner adds.

Knowing that everything will eventually go digital, Tom Wells, owner of Integrated Media Systems, future proofed this home with extensive wiring, including Lutron lighting controls and high definition TVs with TiVo capabilities in every room. A digital music server allows different family members to listen to their favorite songs stored in one location. "It's like an iPod with four different people listening simultaneously," he says. A wireless control touch panel can be moved from room to room, while the theatre projector uses the highest resolution available, 1080P, for broadcast film or DVD.

ABOVE: American cherry manufactured and installed by Wooden Design warms the main floor library with the stairwell visible in the back hallway. Sosa Upholstery re-covered the sofa that has traveled from home to home with the owners. The matching loveseat is in a bedroom. Quality Floors installed the home's flooring.



In the owners' suite, one chaise from Miller & Arney Antiques and another reupholstered in a Calico Corners fabric bookend the round table Wientzen found at Paper Plus, a Richmond, VA, shop. One of the only design changes was adding this second floor balcony overlooking the pool.

A Spirited Design

There were very few changes in the design along the way, the architect says, which translated into a smooth project, especially for a home of this scale.

"You walk into the home and it exudes quality," Cassagnol says. "Everyone took pride in this home ... the design was so right and the family was so passionate," Cassagnol says. "It was the result of a good team," Janicki adds.

"Although the house has the appearance of formality, it's one of comfort, a home that's lived in," the builder says. It is a home that wraps its "arms" around you; a home that speaks to the design aesthetic of understated elegance and the spirit and endurance of its owners. **ws**

RESOURCES

■ **Best Tile**
301.984.3399
besttile.com

■ **Bevacqua/Wientzen Associates Interiors**
703.525.5651
301.590.0670

■ **BOWA Builders Inc.**
703.734.9050
bowa.com

■ **Custom Design Concepts Architecture and Interiors**
703.749.9040
cdcarch.com

■ **Integrated Media Systems**
703.464.0736
imsva.com

■ **Jack Rosen Custom Kitchens Inc.**
301.984.9484
jackrosen.com

■ **John Gibson Finishes**
301.767.0014

■ **Meredith Glass Specialties LLC**
301.793.4030
mererglass.com

■ **Old Dominion Trim Specialists Inc.**
703.494.1401

■ **Sutherland Lumber Company**
724.947.3388
sutherlandhwd.com

Owners' suite walls
C2
Chit Chat
C2-208*

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