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HOME REMODELING

House on a Hill

CREATING A WELCOMING SOUTHERN COLONIAL | BY JOHN BYRD

Huntsville, Alabama is a pretty small town, yet it has three historic districts and more homes in the national register than most places twice its size. Growing up in such a community, Gina Jones is understandably attracted to welcoming porches and grand foyers—hallmarks of the Antebellum style.

Alas, when Jones relocated to Northern Virginia several years ago, the house that came the closest to suiting her family's needs was an Oakton contemporary, one of four on a private drive at the top of a hill.

Like most successful transplants, Jones adapted to her new setting just fine. But after occupying the house for a few years, she acknowledged the home had certain shortcomings.

"I was looking for a larger master bedroom, a guest room... and I really wanted a front porch and a foyer," Jones recalls. "The foyer was important to my childhood home; it's where the house begins."

However, there was a practical problem with creating the front porch: the front lawn steeply sloped immediately outside the existing front door. The more Jones learned about her home's inherent site problems, in fact, the more the search for new square footage became concentrated on the rear elevation.

"We wanted to stick to our budget," Jones recalls "so the remodeling proposals we received were all focused on the back of the house."

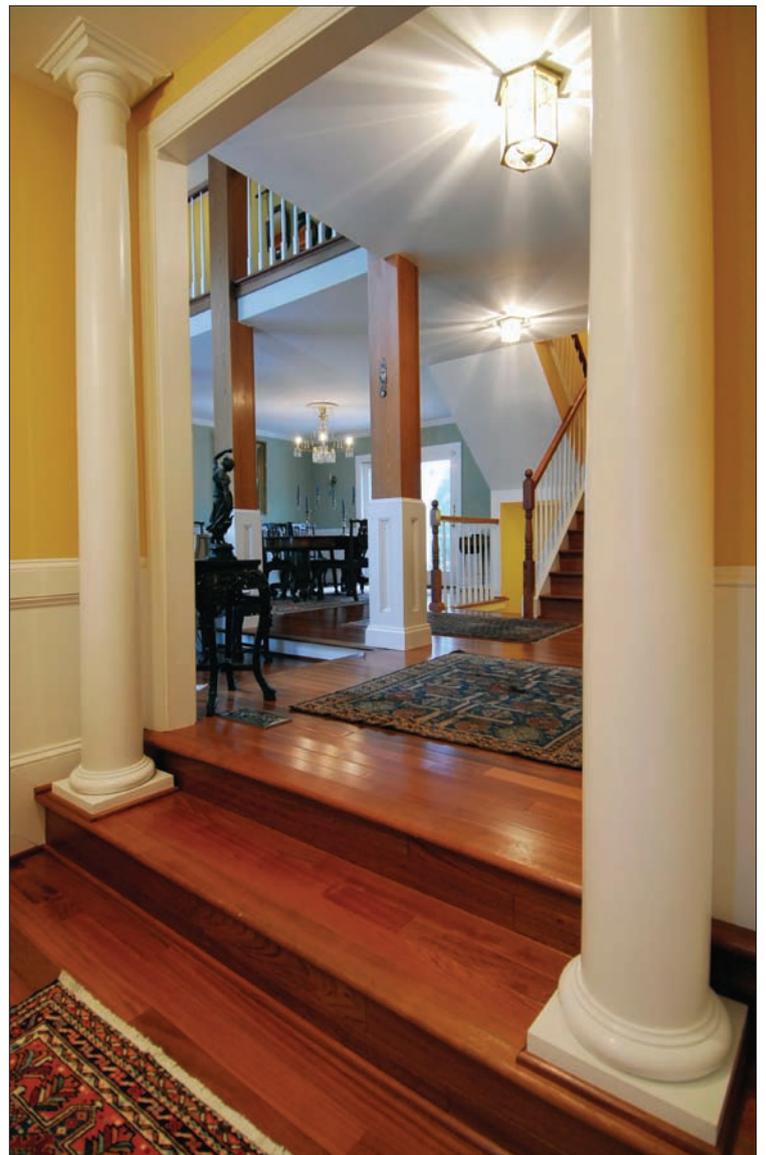
It was at this juncture that Jones met Sonny Nazemian, president of Michael Nash Kitchens and Homes, an innovative remodeler with a knack for finding unexpected solutions.

"Sonny's plans not only made our new façade feasible, but actually created more square footage than we'd thought we could afford," Jones explains. "Naturally, we were thrilled."

The project's main challenge was engineering a struc-

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tural template that would allow for a front-facing addition on a sharply sloping front yard. Because of its formidable downward-thrusting weight, a two-level addition traditionally must be offset by an eight to ten foot foundation. Nazemian's team, however, proposed an alternative that was every bit as effective, yet less expensive.

"We re-graded, leveled and re-compacted the whole front yard," the remodeler explains. "That may sound simple, but the site changes are very carefully calibrated. This allowed us to specify deep footings for structural support, eliminating the need to excavate," Nazemian says.

Naturally, the plan required working closely with Fairfax County building inspectors. But Nazemian says the option saved his client substantial sums of money which was used to increase the project's size and scope.

With the site satisfactorily prepared, Nazemian next concentrated on the addition itself, converting the existing front patio into a 14' x 26' footprint for a two-level enclosure. The lower level now accommodates a spacious foyer with 10' ceilings, a first-level guest room and a full bath. On the second level, the remodeler co-opted one of three existing bedrooms to form a sub-



Page 45: The new entrance foyer

Above: The new interior faithfully explores late 18th century design elements—presenting a period-appropriate setting for several collectibles and antiques; and two Doric columns on either side of a stair accessing the main living area are both decorative and structural. The new floors are Brazilian cherry wood.

Opposite: Gina Jones purchased an Oakton contemporary with a deeply sloping front yard that seemingly made it impossible to add on to the front elevation. Michael Nash resolved inherent site problems by deploying deep footings as foundation support, eliminating the need to excavate. Jones' new Georgian-style façade includes a brick surfaced porch, an Adam-style entry and a second-level balcony with balustrades.

Inset: Before exterior front elevation



stantially larger master bedroom suite.

Best of all, the new site plan permits a top item on the wish list: a 25'x 6' two-level front porch that, Jones says, evokes the graciously welcoming façade of her childhood home.

Inside, the new interior faithfully explores late 18th-century decorum in detailing appropriate to several period collectibles and antiques. Beginning with an Adam-style front door bordered by sidelights and a Palladium window, the foyer is a perfectly articulated anteroom embellished in hardwood flooring, crown molding and embossed knee high panels. Two Doric columns on either side of a stair accessing the main living area are both decorative and structural.

Adjacent to the foyer, the new first-level addition provides for a home office that doubles as a guest suite with a private entrance. The suite includes a full bath finished in Brazilian slate-tile, granite countertops and cherry cabinetry; it is practical, yet aesthetically-pleasing.

"When the homeowner's goal is to create a seamless addition, that's when our interior design department is invaluable," Nazemian says. "We can provide a whole catalog of inspirational ideas based on recent work,

which makes it easier for homeowners to think through the many possibilities."

Upstairs, the new front-facing master bedroom is more than double the size of its predecessor. The master suite opens out onto the upstairs porch with a stunning view of wooded acreage abutting the property. In a corner of the master suite, Nazemian installed a gas fireplace, elevating it for visibility from the bed. "It's a Bed and Breakfast fireplace," Jones says, "and it's also an effective heat source."

The master bath features a double vanity and soaking tub, a walk-in shower and heated floors and towel racks. Structured porcelain covers the floors, shower and tub surrounds, while the cherry cabinets have granite countertops. Warmly cream-colored walls confer a restful ambiance ideal for soaking.

"It's the details that make the whole house so cohesive," Jones observes.

To give the eclectic architecture a unifying cast, the exterior elevations are clad in cedar shake and painted a vivid Wedgwood blue.

"It just works beautifully," Jones says. "And it feels like home."

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