

## History in the remaking

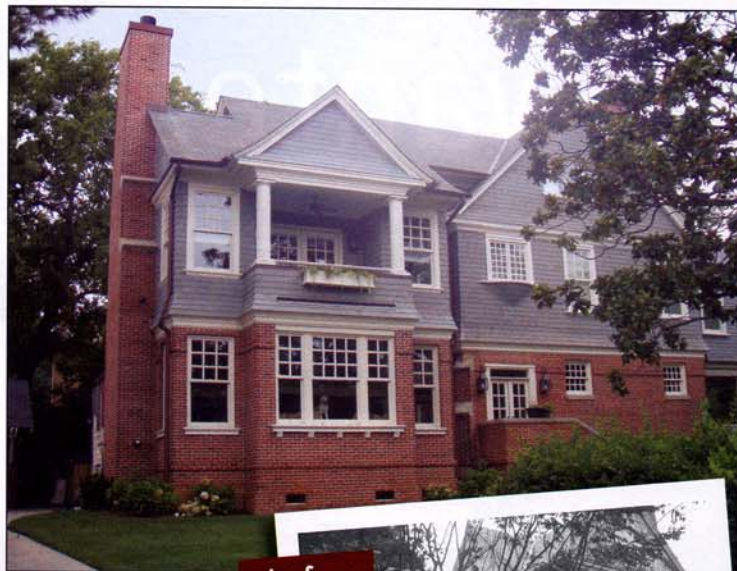
by Sandra J. Pennecke, photos by Andria McClellan

Andria and Mike McClellan knew instantly when they walked into the 100-year-old home in Ghent that it was where they wanted to raise their family and grow old. “We were drawn to the character of a historic home and the eclectic nature of this one,” Andria says. But, it would be a year, countless hours and an excess of funds before the couple and their sons — now ages 9, 6 and 3 — actually got to move into the home on Warren Crescent.

In 2005, the couple purchased the house, built in 1905, and immediately began a year of renovations followed by a 900-square-foot, two-story addition of a first-floor family room and second-floor master bedroom that took another year to complete after they moved in.

“Restoration is like a puzzle,” Andria laments. “You have to figure out where it was originally and put it back with modern amenities while keeping it usable for a family of five.”

They contracted Thad “Pete” Broom Architects and Designers PC in Virginia Beach and Leo F. Johns Contractor Inc. in



before

After the McClellans moved into their circa 1905 home in Norfolk, they added a 900-square-foot, two-story addition. The addition, which comprises a first-floor family room and an upstairs master bedroom with a balcony, took another year to complete.



Chesapeake to do the job. Leo Johns started the company in 1976, and 20 years later, Jerry Pattenaude, who had worked with Johns since 1981, took over.

“Historic restoration is something we like to do. It’s different because you need to take your time and you need the right craftsmen,” Pattenaude says.

### Shifting the innards

The historic renovation of the McClellan home, originally designed to be similar to an 1850s’ Newport, R.I., shingle-style beach house, garnered Leo F. Johns Contractor a 2008 Stanley Award of Excellence in the Historic Restoration category. The full-service remodeling company also won a 2007 Stanley Award for Best Master Bath Remodel over \$50,000 in the McClellan home.

The house, with its 6,071 square feet, includes six bedrooms, six bathrooms, two laundry rooms, a music room, office, five rooms in a full basement and a two-car detached garage.

The original family owned the house until 1992 when it was sold to a local architect who transformed the interior into a contemporary style.

“He put the kitchen in the octagonal dining room, took a double-wide pocket door out, walled over the front foyer entrance and walled over a fireplace,” explains Andria.

The new family room, which is built where a porch once stood, opens up to the kitchen to create a modern, open living arrangement.

## Back to Plan A

The McClellans were intent on restoring the house to its original layout, which required removing and relocating several interior walls. The kitchen was moved back to its original location and the once-removed kitchen was restored to a grand dining room.

The renovation left virtually no stones unturned — inside and outside, the house underwent repairs, replacements and restoration.

Cedar shingles were replaced, all wood trim was stripped and painted, and the original slate roof was repaired. Aluminum gutters were swapped with period-appropriate copper gutters. Chimney liners were installed and the exterior brick was re-pointed. The aluminum garage door was removed and a period-appropriate carriage-style door with a similar lite pattern to the house's main windows was put in.

Original double-hung wooden windows were restored and new Marvin windows, made specifically to match the old, were installed. All original window hardware was reworked and made operable or replaced. Hall lighting was substituted with period-appropriate gas-electric style fixtures. Damaged leaded glass in the front door and office cabinet was restored and replicated throughout the house.

Walls were replastered and heartwood pine was installed throughout the house to match the remaining flooring. Stair treads and risers were sanded and refinished. The center chimney stack was cleaned, relined and made operable.

A modern skylight in the kitchen was replaced with a coffered ceiling modeled after the original ceiling in the foyer area. Period-appropriate subway tiles were used for the backsplash and Richlite countertops — made from recycled paper — were chosen because they looked like soapstone. Custom period-appropriate cabinetry was installed in the kitchen and transoms were restored above doors in the dining room.

## On to the finish

Surprises abounded throughout the renovation, too. A 6-foot-wide pocket door found in the garage was repaired and reinstalled in its original location between the foyer and dining room. All the fireplace facades — a total of six — were restored, even ones found covered up by walls.

"This was the largest historical renovation we've worked on in Norfolk," says Frank Healey, project manager, noting the job was made easier by the McClellans' quick decision-making and Andria's research abilities.

"I found a lot of great ideas and resources online including [www.gardenweb.com](http://www.gardenweb.com), [www.ThisOldHouse.com](http://www.ThisOldHouse.com) and [www.OldHouseWeb.com](http://www.OldHouseWeb.com). I picked out the fixtures, tile, flooring, hardware, cabinetry and so on," Andria says, "but it was a team effort. The success of this project and the major credit goes to Frank because he had great ideas and a lot of experience working with older houses.

"It was a challenge to do the historic restoration of the original house and tie in the addition in a respectful way to the original architect," she adds.

The McClellans applied for and received a historic rehabilita-



The kitchen, which was situated in the original dining room area when the McClellans bought the house, is back in its original spot — where the family room was before the remodel. Below, this is what the family room looked like when the home was purchased. To the left is the old view from the kitchen to the family room.

tion tax credit administered through the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. "It's a three-step process and I highly recommend using a consultant to assist with this application and dealings with the state," Andria says.

The McClellans also intertwined some environmentally friendly components into their home: a geothermal heating system, recycled rubber tires made into tiles to give the appearance of a slate roof on the addition, removal of shag carpeting and installation of period-appropriate cork flooring on the third floor, and the recycled paper countertops in the kitchen and bathrooms.

"It was a labor of love. We love the neighborhood. It's a unique and special place and we love living in something historic with the modern amenities," Andria says.

"We have the best of both worlds and now we have the opportunity to enjoy it. We already know where the elevator is going to go one day," says Andria, a self-proclaimed serial renovator.

The couple has moved onto their next renovation project, in Wintergreen, where this time they plan to create a modern and contemporary vacation home.

(Sandra J. Pennecke is a free-lance writer living in Chesapeake.) 🏠

