

DECOR & STYLE FEATURED STORIES



The hallway to the master suite serves as a breezeway between the central courtyard and backyard. Light sconces were hand-fabricated based on the original sconces in the home.

SIGNATURE HOME

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INTEGRITY IN DESIGN - Signature Home

History is preserved in the meticulous remodel of this Spanish Colonial

by Rowena Kelley

photography by Jim Brady

When you buy a home with a history spanning 75 years, you have a responsibility to preserve its story—especially when that story involves Lillian Rice. The simplicity of design, the unity between buildings and their surrounding, the charm of the Mission Spanish style—all are marks the famed architect left on her beloved Rancho Santa Fe. And all are characteristics that remain in this Spanish Colonial Revival, despite the remodel that doubled its size.

Originally designed in 1929 by architect Handy L. Wass of Santa Barbara, in 1931 the ridge-top home was given a two-bedroom addition designed by Rice herself. Then again in the 1980s another addition was made, this time deviating from the original architectural style. So when the current residents decided to expand the home to accommodate their growing kids—they had five between the ages of 5 and 10—they committed to restoring the original architecture and carrying out its integrity throughout the remodel.

Today, the living space measures 10,000 square feet (the original was approximately 5,000), and features an interior courtyard, expansive kitchen, master suite and wine cellar. The 1980s addition—modern in style with a flat roof—was removed. Antique French pavers blend with decorative ceramic tile, and arches maintain symmetry throughout the home. Colors throughout are stronger, richer. And furnishings are a blend of Old-World finds—a French carved-oak grandfather clock, old andirons converted into lamps, a Portuguese table, antique iron chandeliers from France and antique doors from Mexico.

“Our goal was to design the addition so that someone who had never been to our home wouldn’t be able to tell the difference between the old and the new,” the homeowner says. It was no easy task, as the one-story structure contained layer upon layer of architectural detail. French doors, wrought-iron sconces, even the hardware on doors would have to be replicated; floor patterns would be repeated; and arches incorporated into the new wing. They brought in a team of experts that included R. Douglas Mansfield, AIA, in Laguna Niguel, Elizabeth Thiele Barkett, ASID, of Ross Thiele & Son in La Jolla, and Bill Matzinger of Matzinger Construction in Rancho Santa Fe.



A wrought-iron gate, original to the 1929 home, welcomes visitors to the great room, which features two sitting areas—one in the front for greeting guests, and the other closer to the fireplace.

“It’s tricky expanding a one-story home with so much character,” architect Douglas Mansfield says. “To add that much footage and keep it within its original style was a challenge.”

From concept to move-in, the project took three years and involved the preservation of mature specimen trees, rerouting drainage, and the installation of fire sprinklers in the existing wing. But the challenge was met, and historical integrity of the home preserved. Last year, the home received a Lily Award (named after Lillian Rice and given by the Rancho Santa Fe Association) in recognition of good design and respect paid to the existing structure and landscape.

“We are proud of receiving the Lily Award,” Mansfield says. “It is reinforcement of the good job that we did and acknowledges that we accomplished exactly what we had set out to do: Be true to the original house.”

Perhaps one of the most painstaking tasks of the remodel was in replicating the existing hardware. Curtain rods, door and window hardware, light sconces and wrought-iron gates—all, including door handles for the butler’s pantry, were hand-fabricated by an individual artisan. There is no telling which piece is the original model and which piece is new.

“You can’t match the hardware today,” says builder Bill Matzinger, who especially appreciates the history behind this home and its preservation. For the past 30 years, almost all of his company’s construction work has been in the Covenant neighborhood of Rancho Santa Fe. “I’ve grown to have a passion for what the Ranch and its historic homes are really about,” he adds. “It’s really important to continue that history and integrity in the construction of home additions. This remodel, in particular, was so well designed and kept to the integrity of the original home. I walked subcontractors through the new wing and told them it was the original, and they believed it.”

Matzinger’s team had their work cut out for them, as the seamless link between old and new resided in the details. In order to match new fireplaces in the family room and master suite to the original in the living room, they built molds and poured them in place. To replicate the beamwork, they bought vintage timbers and hand-scraped them to look like original beams. They hand-rubbed flooring material and burnished them with oil and wax for a finish that would resemble the patina that comes naturally with age. And what they didn’t re-create, they found in the exact style to match the original.

“Through an auction, we were able to buy the same roofing material made in the same era,” Matzinger says. “An Encinitas school had to replace the roof on one of its buildings to comply with the new earthquake code, so they auctioned off the red tile. It was a complete stroke of luck that we were able to buy the same vintage tile. It even had moss on it.”

What the original house was sorely missing was a central gathering place for the family. The original family room was small and not conducive to teenage activity. The kitchen, typically the core of a home, was a dark, 10-foot-wide galley with particle-board cabinetry. To come up with a solution, Mansfield returned to the architecture of old Spanish homes, which traditionally feature a central courtyard.



French carved oak grandfather clock stands next to a hand-fabricated scone. Antiques from Ross Thiele & Son.

“The interior courtyard is a traditional feature in old Spanish houses,” Mansfield says. “So I wanted it to be the core of this house. On beautiful days you open the doors, and it becomes another room. The family can eat breakfast out there or have a fire going when they’re entertaining guests. It functions as an additional room that can be used off the family room and also the kitchen.”

The homeowners agree that the courtyard was a significant addition to their home, and has become a much-used room. A built-in tile bench flanks each side of the brick fireplace. On the opposite side, a built-in oven has a backsplash of decorative tile matching the interior palette—turquoise, blue, yellow and green are the same colors on fabrics, walls and accessories. A star-shaped fountain, large urns with mini citrus trees and cozy cast-aluminum seating provide plenty of room to relax or catch up with friends.

On one side of the courtyard is a breezeway lined with French doors that lead to the lushly planted backyard and pool. And on the other side is another gathering spot for the kids: a family room complete with a pool table. “Seating and lighting were two challenges in this room,” says interior designer Elizabeth Thiele Barkett. “A pool table needs five feet of circulation around it, which was a consideration when designing the room, and it also needs plenty of light, which was difficult to achieve with antique fixtures.” Barkett incorporated lamplight and custom designed a sectional to accommodate the children and their friends. Low-back upholstered chairs also add comfort without commanding space, while built-in cabinets add storage space without competing with the ceiling’s dark, heavy beams.

Today, the kids and their friends can also spend time around a 7-by-10-foot island in the kitchen. Covered in black-and-white Bianco Venetino marble, the island is an expansive piece of furniture with legs inspired by a stair post Barkett found in an old book on Spanish design. “We did not want tile countertops so the marble was choice for keeping the kitchen light and bright,” she says. “It also gives high contrast to the wood cabinets.”

Barkett selected knotting alder for custom cabinetry throughout the house. “It’s not a distressed wood, and it is relatively easy to work with as far as color,” she says. While the cabinetry helps keep the kitchen light, it adds drama in the grand hallway between the dining room and master suite. “We wanted to give this space its own importance,” Barkett says. “So we added a built-in bar area and a center table.” Giallo Reale honed marble tops the bar. As they did throughout the house, the team combined traditional terracotta insets with antique French pavers to create contrast on the floor. Along the walls are faux-painted borders and various decorative tile designs to denote individual spaces.

“The challenge with using all of the decorative tile,” Barkett says, “was to create enough interest without repeating the patterns.” She saved the homeowners’ favorite pattern for the master suite—lions, farmers and other Old-World scenes are depicted on hand-painted tiles along the shower, tub and vanity. Along the fireplace are tiles the couple collected while traveling through Italy.

Perhaps the only room void of tile is the great room, which is Barkett’s favorite for its “grandness, colors and architecture.” Wrought-iron gates (original to the home) beneath an arched entrance open onto a vast space with two sitting areas. “We wanted to make this room more intimate and have the fireplace become the focal point,” Barkett says. “Now we have a greeting area next to the piano, and



The former family room is now a sunken library with a floor-to-ceiling window looking onto the backyard. Interior designer Elizabeth Thiele Barkett brought coziness and warmth to the room with strong, rich colors, and fabrics such as silk chenille and French woven plaid.



A custom sectional sofa accommodates the kids and their friends in the new family room. Barkett had to reserve five feet of space for movement around the pool table, while incorporating lamplight to brighten the room.

the main conversation area in front of the fireplace.” A reproduction antique coffee table anchors the room, and two wrought-iron chandeliers remove central focus.

The great room is part of the original house—something a first-time visitor wouldn’t notice, as it blends into the landscape as well as the new wing does. Even Lillian Rice would approve.

“The original house inspired it all and made it easy,” Mansfield says. “We knew if we stayed true to the original design, we couldn’t go wrong.”

## RESOURCES

**Architecture:** R. Douglas Mansfield, AIA, 949-376-5444

**Contractor:** Bill Matzinger, 858-756-2465

**Interior Design:** Elizabeth Thiele Barkett, Ross Thiele and Son, 858-454-2133

**Landscape Architect:** Theresa Clark, 949-248-5404

**Terracotta Floors with Antique Terracotta Insets:** Classic Tile, 760-285-6652

**Ceramic Wall and Bath Tile:** Mary Ann Moffet, 760-268-0811

**Wood Floors:** Stomberg and Moore, 760-597-1801

**Custom Upholstery:** Ultimate Furniture Designs, 858-450-3110

**Custom Drapery:** Draperies by Picazo, 858-483-3877

**Antique furniture and Light Fixtures:** Ross Thiele and Son, 858-454-2133 and C’est La Vie, 858-549-6927

**Custom Tile Mural in Kitchen:** Irene de Watteville, 858-755-8211

**Tile Installer:** Paul Hoover, 858-204-4871

**Plumbing Fixtures:** European Stone & Tile, 858-792-1452

**Decorative Painting (dining room and powder bath):** Lisa Albers, 858-458-1181

**Painters:** Akeney Brothers, 760-944-2930

**Plumbing:** Signature Plumbing, 760-519-6289

**Electric:** Schmidt Electric: 760-753-3855

**Custom Light Fixtures:** Gibson and Gibson, 619-422-2447

**Custom Cabinetry:** Shawn Haddock, 909-970-7262

**Floor Sealing and Staining of terracotta tile:** Peligrino, 858-755-5580



A reproduction antique coffee table anchors the great room, where focus is toward the fireplace.



The formal dining room houses a rustic table from Mexico and an antique dresser for the family's collection of silver.



The legs of the kitchen island were inspired by a stair post Barkett had seen in a book on Spanish design. Bianco Venetino marble was chosen for the countertops and 7x10-foot island because it is a warmer version of Carrera marble. A custom tile backsplash behind the range features the blue and yellow colors the homeowner loves, as well as a crest to give it Spanish flavor.



The homeowners wanted their suite to be a comfortable place to read and watch television, while remaining welcoming for their kids. Plaids and Brunschwig & Fils fabrics bring playfulness to the room while also lightening the space.



A gatelake table and Windsor chairs in the new breakfast room provide a place for the family to gather.



A classic Spanish Colonial Revival, the original design of this Rancho Santa Fe home featured courtyards in the front and back yards. Architect Doug Mansfield preserved the integrity of the design, and added a central courtyard to serve as a core space for family gatherings.



Giallo Reale honed marble was used in the master bath as well as the bar adjacent to the dining room. And as in other rooms of the house, antique terracotta pavers blend with decorative ceramic tile.



The outdoor room can be accessed from the family room and kitchen, and features a fireplace, built-in cooking area and cozy seating.

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