




The Best of Two Worlds

A suburban-Boston house that straddles town boundaries also strikes a perfect balance between traditional and contemporary.

Text by Lisa E. Harrison // Photography by Michael J. Lee // Produced by Kyle Hoepner



Traditional aspects of the house, like the handsome paneling in the library, were retained. FACING PAGE: "I like seating in an entryway," says interior designer Mally Skok. "It does double-duty; it looks welcoming and you can dump your things."

Skok paired the antique dining table, a holdover from the Battats' Needham house, with classic Greek klismos chairs. FACING PAGE, TOP: Architect Chip Dewing created an addition, clad in off-white clapboard, that is packed with personality but complements the original house. FACING PAGE, BOTTOM: Silk and velvet fabrics give the living room a luxurious formality.



Back when they moved to the Boston area from the West Coast for work, Chris and Randy Battat bought a house in one whirlwind weekend. The plan was to make the move, acclimate to the region, and then find a permanent place within a couple of years. Before they knew it, fifteen years had passed.

This time around, there was no need to hurry. "We wanted to take our time and find the right house," says Chris. She enlisted the help of designer

and friend Mally Skok, who had spruced up the interiors of the Battats' Needham house as well as their Nantucket cottage. In turn, Skok reached out to builder Chris Hart of Concord-based Hartwright Company. "It's such a time- and money-saver to have the whole team assembled beforehand," she says, "because you don't go down any rabbit holes."

Together the three scouted, assessing the renovation prospects of a dozen or so properties. "We were looking for a good lot and good bones," says Chris. "I actually wanted to redo a house so we could get what we wanted."





Location was also key: twenty-minute access to the city was a must, as was proximity to the outdoors for hiking, biking, and running. "We like to go out our door and be active," she says.

"The Mass Pike was the answer to their problems," remembers Skok. The trio struck gold in Wellesley and Weston (the double-lot straddles both towns), finding a mid-1960s Royal Barry Wills house that had been lovingly looked after. The original house—a stately whitewashed brick structure—boasted good proportions and nice detailing. A later addition to the property would be lopped off and reimaged.

That's when architect Chip Dewing of Dewing Schmid Kearns, in Concord, joined the team. Dewing's task was to design a companion piece that would work with the traditional New England vernacular characteristic of Royal Barry Wills. "We wanted to be complementary and respectful to that era," he says, "but at the same time we have a mantra in our office to 'blend in and stand out.'"

True to the architect's philosophy, the new 3,500-square-foot add-on comes with its own identity: painted off-white wood acts as a nice foil to the original, clearly delineating both architects' work. Dewing simultaneously links to the past with big bays, dormers with curved rooflines, and a whitewashed brick facade on the back side of the house ("matching the brick was quite a process," remembers



A stunning shade of turquoise acts as a subtle "road map, linking the spaces in the house together," says Skok.

Hart). Other than reconfiguring the front foyer to open it up and let light in from the second story, Dewing left the original space intact.

The new build-out sees the most activity day to day. The first floor contains the mudroom, kitchen, and family room, while the top floor houses the master suite and media room, and the basement holds an oft-used workout area. A three-car garage replaced one that parked two. The original section encompasses the butler's pantry, a living and dining room, and a study; three additional bedrooms and baths keep company upstairs with the master suite.

When it came to decor, the Battatts had a general aesthetic in mind. "I like the look of older houses, but I like it modern inside—traditional but fresh," Chris says. Armed with this directive, Skok set to work.

Embracing color, the designer integrated a stunning shade of turquoise that acts as a subtle "road map, linking the spaces in the house together." The color is present in the barstools and the hand-stenciled backsplash tiles from New Mexico in the kitchen, the lamps in the living and family rooms, the fabric on the chairs in the dining room, and the butler's pantry. The statement-making pantry (painted Farrow & Ball Sugar Bag Blue in high gloss) was reconfigured

PROJECT TEAM

ARCHITECT: Allen "Chip" Dewing Jr., Dewing Schmid Kearns
INTERIOR DESIGN: Mally Skok, Mally Skok Design
BUILDER: Chris Hart, The Hartwright Company
LANDSCAPE DESIGN: Craig C. Halvorson, Halvorson Design Partnership

High-gloss turquoise cabinets and ceilings lend the butler's pantry a jewel-box vibe, while copper sinks and hardware provide a lovely contrast. **FACING PAGE, TOP:** The refrigerator, pantry, and other utilitarian elements are stowed behind the kitchen's tiled wall. **FACING PAGE, BOTTOM:** Fabric from Skok's Ikat Crazy collection adds a dash of color and fun to the relaxed family room.





by their far-reaching names: The India Collection, Ikat Crazy, and The Africa Collection. Her fabrics make multiple appearances throughout the house, from the slipper chairs in the family room and the dining chairs in the kitchen to the wallpaper and curtains in the grown daughter's chic bedroom outfitted in white with accents of orange and pink.

Skok, who describes her style as a few degrees from center and "not for everyone," pushed the house in a fresh direction. No room was left untouched, whether that meant an entire overhaul or simply a coat of dark chestnut floor stain and new paint on the walls.

"I'm all for no waste," notes Skok, who took a streamlined approach to the project. No need

"Re-cover this, don't need that, get something new; she's very quick...but she's not cookie-cutter," Chris says of Skok.

from its past life as a kitchen with entertaining in mind. It boasts plenty of counter space, a warming drawer, a dishwasher, and a copper sink that, when filled with ice, doubles as a chiller for white wine and beer during get-togethers.

Chris credits Skok with steering her out of her comfort zone. "She got me to branch out, to use different pops of color than I might have gravitated toward," she says. Many of these color accents come through in Skok's fabric choices—no surprise given that the designer has her own line of fabrics and wallcoverings, hand-printed in Great Barrington Massachusetts, with more than 100 options. Skok, who hails from South Africa and lived for a time in London, takes a global approach to her creations, as evidenced

to knock down walls or overcomplicate matters if it's not warranted. Her efficiency jibed well with her self-described practical client. "She'd say keep this, re-cover this, don't need that, get something new; she's very quick...but she's not cookie-cutter," Chris says.

Skok, like Dewing, understood the delicate balance between old and new. Just as the house they created straddles the line between two towns, the pros brilliantly balanced the past with the present, tradition with modernization. For Chris and Randy Battat, the result—sophisticated, original, and, most important, comfortable—was worth the decade-plus wait. •

RESOURCES For more information about this home, see page 185.

Neutral tones are a quiet, calming palette for the master bath. **FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** The daughter's bedroom is dressed in fabrics from Skok's India Collection. The chair and ottoman were recycled from the Battats' former house. The focal point of the master bedroom is this joyful hand-embroidered headboard by Eric Cohler for Lee Jofa.

