



# Brand-New Belle

HONORING TRADITIONAL PROPORTIONS AND CRAFTSMANSHIP,  
A NEW SOUTHERN HOME NEARLY PASSES AS A HISTORICAL GEM.

Writer Shannon Howard. Photographer Michael Parham. Field editor Brice Gallard.

OPPOSITE Architect Ken Pursley chose a simple look for the front facade, using classic brickwork and shadow lines to create definition. THIS PHOTO A playful animal-print runner lends a dash of whimsy to the sinuous formal staircase in the entry.



A dining room with a round wooden table set with a crystal vase of white lilies. A chandelier hangs from the ceiling. A window in the background has a lamp. The walls are dark wood paneling.

## PAIR STORAGE AND STYLE

Smart design can provide the storage space you need without sacrificing elegance. Silk velvet wraps the walls of this dining room, hiding the fact that cabinets with push-latch doors are built into the room's corners.



Driven by an affinity for charming old houses, Vicky and Bill Mitchener purchased a 1990s interpretation of a Georgian-style home in an elegant Charlotte neighborhood. They hoped to introduce character to the lackluster place through renovation. But when that prospect proved futile, the couple challenged architect Ken Pursley to create a new house on the same lot that blended with the venerable environs.

Wanting outside chairs and early-20th-century details throughout, the Mitcheners asked Pursley to craft a living space that felt cozy but was functionally modern. "Bill and Vicky were both drawn visually to a symmetrical, Southern restrained look," Pursley says. "But within that classical, traditional language, they really sought a liberal interpretation."

The architect, whose aesthetic leans toward "whimsical, asymmetrical compositions," responded by merging the couple's vision with two surprising elements: modest Shaker style and an unconventional room arrangement. On the

exterior, the home is formal and grand, a classic Southern beauty. Inside, with a sweeping layout spilling gracefully toward the back garden, it's warm and casual, fulfilling Vicky's wish that no room feel stuffy or off-limits.

"The front of the house is really a facade that doesn't tell much about what's going on inside," Pursley says. "I wanted to explore the idea of architecture having a public face and a private face." Bucking convention, he positioned the living and dining rooms (both formal spaces) in the center of the house, aiming to make them more intimate and approachable. He also avoided the idea of a soaring

OPPOSITE: Intended to be the heart and soul of the home, the Mitcheners' dining room is a "jewelry case," Pursley says, with opulent lighting, wickerlike walls, and a table that echoes the rounded ceiling overhead.

ABOVE: Pursley brought natural light into the living room by incorporating lots of long axes that allow light to flow in from multiple angles.



#### PRIVACY, PLEASE

Pocket doors provide an unobtrusive way to close off a room, offering instant quiet and hiding clutter. The library in the Mitchener home has two sets of pocket doors, done in paneled mahogany to match the window seat.

two-level entry, opting instead to reverse the staircase and fashion a low foyer that sits three steps below the other main-level rooms.

"One of the virtues that I value is having a sense of modesty in design," Parsley says. "By not doing a huge presentational entry, I was able to create more interesting layering as you move up and into the house." The lowered foyer also humbles the home, making it feel more comfortable for a young family, and it serves as one of several "sleight of house" features that Parsley was eager to incorporate.

"Old houses often have clues to their evolution—changes that took place over time and now tell a story," he says. "For the Mitcheners' home to feel old, I thought it was important to build in some of those mysteries so that people could ask 'Was this always here?' or 'Where did this come from?'" In the entry hall, for instance, Parsley honored the Shaker tradition of blurring the lines between inside and

outside by placing a quirky oval "porthole" in the middle of one wall. He followed another Shaker practice by covering many of the home's ceilings in painted wood, a distinctive choice that lends a charming, historical flair.

"Many people ask me when we renovated the house, and that's our greatest compliment," Vicky says. "Ken achieved our goal of creating an older feel by using specific finishes, such as the painted wood ceilings in the living room and foyer. He also used single-pane windows and doors, plaster walls, and extensive moldings."

Another key to this home's classic feel is proportion.

**ABOVE** Dark wood paneling, custom bookcases, and historically correct pocket doors give the library, the Mitcheners' domain, a masculine feel. **OPPOSITE** Creamy white is used throughout the kitchen. "When everything is one color, the architectural details stand out," designer Gator Kay says. "You get a true picture of the homeownership involved."





"I really wanted it to be intuitive," Pansley says. "Over the past few decades, new homes have gotten very swollen, and proper proportion has become kind of a lost language." To achieve an older look with the Mitchener home, the architect remained historically accurate to early-20th-century architectural design as much as possible, choosing custom-milled doors with narrow rails, proportionally smaller upper-level windows, primitive knuckle hinges and rim locks, and working shutters. He also went vintage with the floor plan, crafting chambered rooms that are all light, bright, and visually connected to surrounding spaces.

Interior designer Carter Kay embraced the notion of comfortable, timeless elegance. "Vicky likes to pay homage to the past, but she's excited about today and all the new things that are out there," Kay says. "She wanted a beautiful, gracious home, but one where people could feel at ease and not worry about setting their glass in the wrong place."

Kay worked with the homeowners to select a warm, neutral palette ripe with toasty browns, buttery yellows, and soothing off-whites. She drew inspiration from Vicky's vivid collection of Oriental rugs to introduce subtle patterns into such spaces as the living room and master suite, relying on rich upholstery fabrics and casually luxe window treatments to provide texture. By melding a handful of clean-lined, contemporary pieces with traditional sofas and chairs, Kay infused the home with Vicky's sense of playfulness and modern verve.

"Vicky is hysterically funny, and she's never met a stranger," Kay says. "At the same time, she's a very successful

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CP70618: The master bedroom creates an overhang for a porch, which overlooks Vicky Mitchener's garden.  
This PHOTO: An outdoor room of the garage is designed for entertaining, with a fireplace, grill, kitchenette, bar, and TV.





business owner with an elegant personal style, and she frequently entertains in her home. We needed to be able to serve those various aspects of her life." Flexible furnishings and easily adaptable rooms were vital, allowing the Mitchcens to enjoy both everyday comfort and special-occasion practicality. The tranquil family room, tucked away at the rear of the home, gives Vicky and Bill a private place to spend time with their daughters, while the kitchen, dining room, and living room form a versatile public circuit that can accommodate almost any size party or gathering.

"I wanted an old-feeling, traditional house with a twist, where I'd be equally comfortable relaxing and entertaining," Vicky says. "I got everything I wished for and more." ❧❧

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**ABOVE** Concocted as a lux sleeping porch, the master bedroom is graced with numerous windows that provide a topnotch view.

**RIGHT** A dreamy palette of soft yellows and creams is well suited to the master bathroom, where a decadent soaking tub, flanked by matching vanities, promises to soothe away the day's worries.





MAIN LEVEL SQ. FT.: 3,306  
 UPPER LEVEL SQ. FT.: 2,724  
 BEDROOMS: 5  
 BATHROOMS: 5 BAL. 3 HAF

## Architectural Highlights

- Scrolls and other classical elements for a "been-here" look in a new home
- Public rooms arranged in an L shape along the back of the house for outdoor access
- Powder room in the garage convenient to poolside entertaining area



Architect Ken Parsley Interior designer Carter Kay