

(habitat)



Country Living

A majestic Chester County farmhouse defies its true age. *By Tara Behan*

Dotting the magnificent landscape in East Fallowfield Township, Chester County, are farmhouses that date back to the mid-1700s. Set among these historic gems, there's also one that's a mere four years young. And thanks to architect Richard Buchanan and builders Robert Griffiths and Wayne Rowland, it's a challenge to discern new from old.

The owners wanted the house "to feel as if it had grown there" over the centu-

ries. In fact, it appears as if it could've been an 18th-century farmhouse that was expanded from three bays to five.

Buchanan, of Archer & Buchanan Architecture in West Chester, has an unrivaled reputation for similar projects in Chester County and beyond, as does Griffiths. "We specialize in good construction," says Griffiths. "We do quite a bit of this period work just because of where we are. There's a

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(resources)

architect: Archer & Buchanan Architecture, Ltd., 125 W. Miner St., West Chester; (610) 692-9112; archerbuchanan.com.

builder: Griffiths Construction, Inc., Robert Griffiths and Wayne Rowland, 851 Kimberton Road, Chester Springs; (610) 827-7990; griffithsconstruction.net.

interior designer: Meadowbank Designs, Kirsten McCoy and Laura Buchner, 37 West Ave., Suite 101, Wayne; (610) 688-8090; meadowbankdesigns.com.

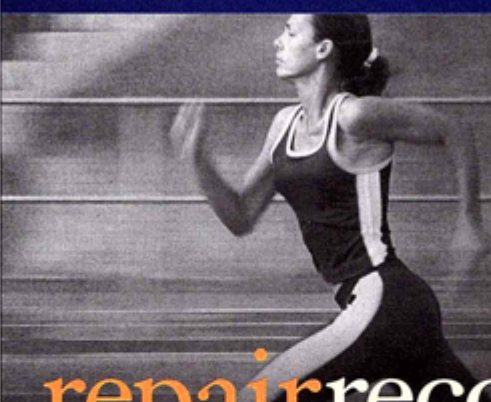
landscape architect: Jonathan Alderson Landscape Architects, Inc., Wayne; (610) 341-9925; jonathanalderon.com.



ACTING ITS AGE: (Clockwise from opposite page) The cozy dining room features a harvest table, an open hearth-style gas fireplace and a chandelier modeled after a piece from the Winterthur Museum collection; the home theater room was a request of the man of the house, while the master bathroom's claw-foot tub was his wife's idea; reclaimed beams from an old barn add rustic charm to the kitchen.



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high call for this sort of thing in the Chester County area."

Formerly of Bryn Mawr, the owners never had any desire to buy a farm—that is, until they got horses. "My neighbor moved out to this area," says the owner. "As far as I was concerned, he may as well have moved to Iowa."

Soon enough, though, they found themselves making the drive to East Fallowfield every weekend to ride. "We looked forward to coming here, and I finally said, 'This is ridiculous. Let's buy a country house,'" says the owner.

With that, the search for the perfect stone farmhouse on just the right piece of land ensued. What they found was a remarkable 33-acre property with a less-than-remarkable house—one loathed by neighbors. Built in the 1980s, the stucco home was a startling "Pepto-Bismol pink." "When people asked why I bought the pink monstrosity, I showed them the view," says the owner.

The home overlooks two valleys of uninterrupted farmland open to the occasional fox hunter or fellow horse enthusiast. "I'd argue that they have the best view in Chester County," says Rowland. "It's absolutely spectacular."

At first, the home looked to be salvageable. But then came some honest advice from an architect: "Someone is going to knock this down; it might as well be you."

Starting fresh, Buchanan designed a home with an authentic feel of an old Pennsylvania farmhouse, but with all the modern amenities. A priority was the use of old materials, including fieldstone reclaimed from a demolished Lehigh Valley barn for the home's façade.

The trend continues inside. Mantels in the dining and living rooms came from 19th-century homes in Chester County and South Carolina. Many of the interior surfaces were hand-planed for an antiques look, while wood panels and floorboards salvaged from old barns were used throughout the home. "Finding all these materials was a team effort—from the homeowners and Richard, to myself and the interior designer," says Griffiths.

The responsibility for maintaining the period integrity of the interior spaces fell on Kirsten McCoy, partner at Meadowbank Designs in Wayne. "My partner, Laura Buchner, and I have worked

on restorations of several of the Old houses on the Main Line," says McCoy. "Homeowners are usually willing to do what it takes to get it right."

McCoy needed a clear understanding of the time period and a sound idea of how best to interpret that for today's lifestyle. "You can have references to the time period, but it has to be livable," she says.

The proper selection of paint colors and furniture helped to achieve that. "The colors are more vibrant than the drab, traditional period colors of that time," she says. "And if we filled the house with furniture from that time period, it wouldn't be practical."

The home's kitchen comes by its rustic aesthetic through the use of reclaimed unfinished hardwood floors and exposed barn beams on the ceiling. Distressed green-blue cabinetry from Waterbury Kitchens in Kennett Square adds to the look. "I love that the cabinetry has a unique finish," says McCoy.

A large center island with a soapstone surface provides plenty of prep space for cooking. It would have been impossible to disguise the stainless-steel, professional-grade oven. Instead, McCoy opted to

hide the refrigerator behind wood paneling, making it look more like an armoire than anything else.

The kitchen opens up to the dining room, which was designed around an antique, cornflower-blue corner cabinet from Philip H. Bradley Antiques in Downingtown. "We had it before we built

The chandelier, various sconces and hardware came from a company licensed to reinterpret or copy designs from Winterthur Museum.

the house," says the owner. "The architect knew to work that into his plan."

The open hearth-style fireplace is gas, "so we can regulate it when we have dinner parties," the owner says.

Also in the dining room, a long harvest table can handle both intimate and larger dinner parties. The chandelier, various

sconces and hardware came from Heritage Metalworks, a Downingtown company licensed to reinterpret or copy original designs from Winterthur Museum in Delaware. "The owner and I toured Winterthur several times," says McCoy.

The home's lower level boasts a workout area, a wine cellar, an office and a home theater room. Upstairs, the master bedroom has a fireplace with an antique mantel, plus built-in cabinetry and drawers for storage. In the master bathroom, the lady of the house requested a custom-designed washbasin vanity and a claw-foot tub. Elsewhere, the third-floor bedroom suites can accommodate overnight guests.

Wayne's Jonathan Alderson designed the landscaping, which complements the existing natural surroundings. Outdoor living spaces aren't limited to the back porch. A wide path leads to a natural-form, in-ground swimming pool surrounded by a flagstone terrace.

"My wife and I saw this project as a four-legged stool: Archer & Buchanan, Griffiths, Meadowbank and Jonathan Alderson," says the owner. "If there had been a weak leg, the whole stool would have fallen." MLT

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