

New England HOME

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SEASON IN STYLE*



PAST PRESENT

Subtle alterations bring an antique house into the future—
without leaving its historical heart behind.

Text by DEBRA JUDGE SILBER | Photography by MICHAEL J. LEE

Designer Erin Gates used fabrics and furniture with modern lines to update the look of the original entry and dining room of this 1934 Wellesley Farms colonial.





Having built or remodeled some fifty homes in the Boston suburb of Wellesley Farms, Patrick Ahearn's architectural firm just might be remaking the leafy enclave one house at a time.

Not that anyone would notice. "You can't tell my new houses from my old houses," says the architect, whose signature style is best described as invisibility. Through adherence to classic proportions and architectural sleight of hand, Ahearn specializes in making older homes easier to live in without stripping them of their timeless character.

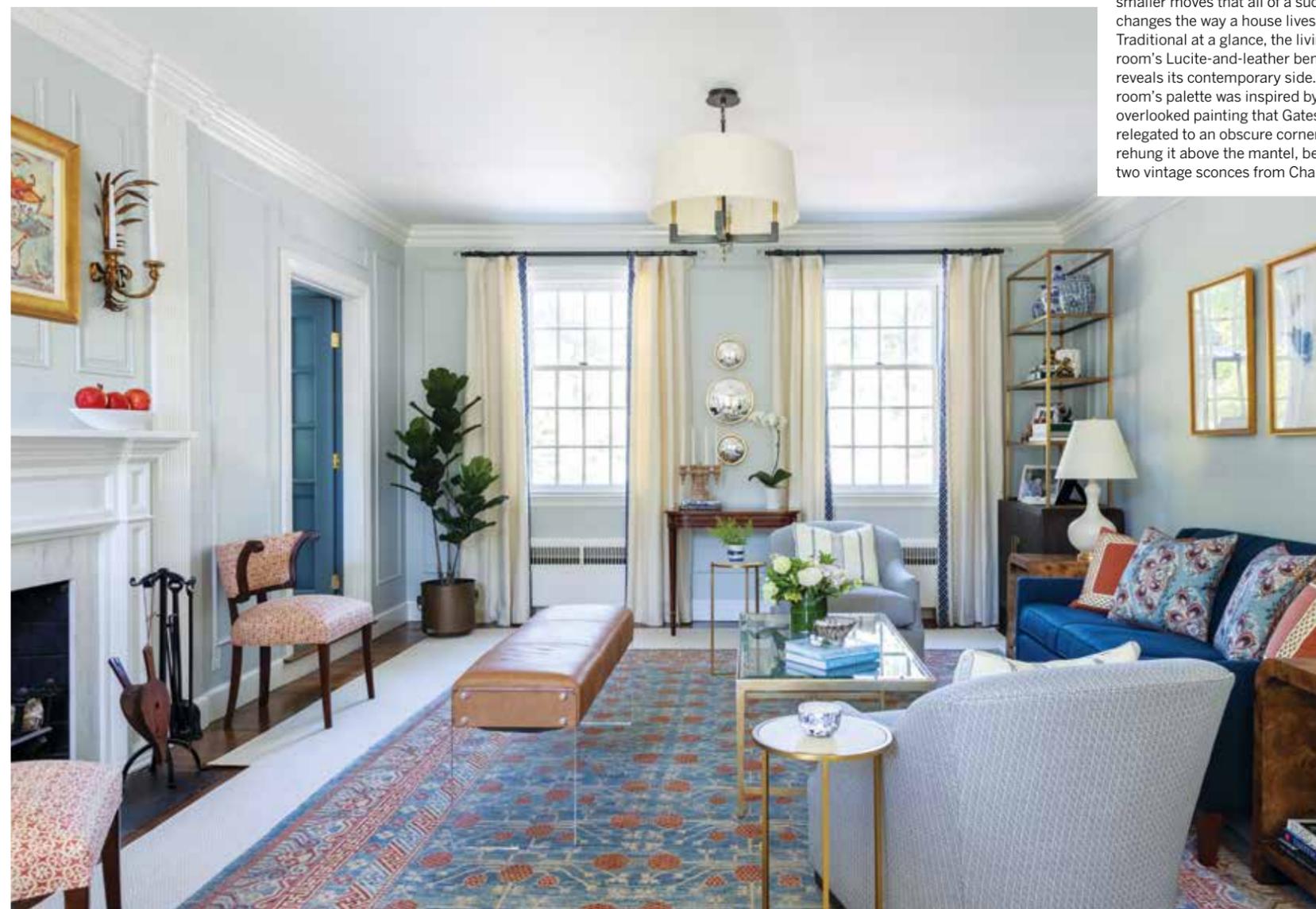
"We don't create a new architecture," Ahearn explains. "We study the architec-



ture that was there. If you don't know the past, you really can't do the future well."

Inside this particular Wellesley Farms home, the future was already coming into focus. For more than a year, interior designer Erin Gates had been working with

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Maintaining an appropriate scale when adding on preserves the remodeled house's vintage appearance, says architect Patrick Ahearn: "It's the collection of smaller moves that all of a sudden changes the way a house lives." Traditional at a glance, the living room's Lucite-and-leather bench reveals its contemporary side. The room's palette was inspired by an overlooked painting that Gates found relegated to an obscure corner; she rehung it above the mantel, between two vintage sconces from Chairish.



CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW: In the kitchen, glass pendants from Rejuvenation are airily transparent but hefty enough to make their presence known, while the Danby-marble-topped island is painted Farrow & Ball Castle Gray. In the new family room, an antique brass detail in the top of the custom walnut side table is an electrical port. The butler's pantry off the kitchen gets more than a passing glance with a gallery of family photos, a ceiling papered with GP & J Baker, and walls the bold color of Benjamin Moore's In the Midnight Hour.



the owners to better adapt the 1934 brick colonial to their needs and those of the couple's three teenagers. "They wanted to respect the history of the home and the style in which it was designed but make it more friendly for a modern family," she says.

But it soon became clear that a more extensive remodel would be needed for the family to gain the space and comfort they desired. The owners called on Ahearn and Michael Tartamella, Ahearn's managing principal and project architect, to join Gates on the renovation.

Past additions to the brick portion of the house had added some space, but the rooms remained disjointed. "Our task was to update the existing house and reimagine some of the additions to make them more cohesive," Tartamella says. The key was to preserve the hierarchy of the original architecture. "It's all about scale," he says. "You want to make the additions appear as if they were part of the original massing. That sets the tone for how to add onto the house while maintaining authenticity."

Using this formula, an unheated porch on one side of the house became a one-and-



Her clients' willingness to take risks is what made their game room successful, says Gates. "Not everyone will commit to wall-to-wall blue-plaid carpet. But they really went for it, and it's so perfect for what that room is." The carpet is from STARK, while the pool table and shuffleboard are custom through Pharaoh USA. A ceiling fixture from Visual Comfort tops it all off.





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Tucked in the half-story above the game room, a sparkling new bath connects directly to the primary bedroom in the original section of the house. Behind the house, the new wing comprising the kitchen and family room anchors a patio equipped with a grill, smoker, and dining area. Local brickmakers are experts at sourcing replicas of original bricks, says builder Jack Sullivan, but matching mortar is even more important to disguising new features and additions on an older home.



ARCHITECTURE:
Patrick Ahearn, Michael Tartamella, Patrick Ahearn Architect

INTERIOR DESIGN:
Erin Gates, Erin Gates Design

BUILDER:
Jack Sullivan, The Chelsea Company

LANDSCAPE DESIGN:
Ryan Wampler, Matthew Cunningham Landscape Design

a-half-story addition, its modest height preventing it from competing with the main brick structure; the new section houses a game room below and a luxurious primary bath above. On the opposite side, an undersized garage was replaced with a larger but otherwise identical replica, faithful down to the gambrel roof that nearly sweeps the ground.

In the back of the house, a small breakfast room bump out was replaced with a much larger addition containing a new kitchen and family room. Positioning this

addition behind the house not only preserved the view from the street, but it also created an anchor for an outdoor kitchen, dining patio, and fireplace just steps from the new family room. “They really wanted an amazing outdoor space to integrate with both the interior and the yard,” says Ryan Wampler of Matthew Cunningham Landscape Design.

With those strategic additions, “the most useful parts of the home got much more enjoyable, functional, and beautiful,” says Gates, who enhanced these qualities

further by intermixing contemporary and traditional furnishings as seamlessly as the architects blended the exterior details. Classic burled wood shape-shifts into modern forms, while occasional pieces incorporating glass, metal, and Lucite crop up throughout rooms anchored by colonial-style moldings. “We really wanted to make sure the materials were rich and felt traditional, with a little bit of a twist,” she says. Just enough of a twist, that is, to make this old house live like new.

EDITOR’S NOTE: For details, see Resources.

Exterior photography by Taylor Ahearn