

QUALIFIED Remodeler

BEST PRACTICES, PRODUCTS & DESIGN IDEAS

www.qualifiedremodeler.com

Old-House
Contemporary
— page 46

34 Hiring and Retaining the Skilled

40 Franchise Ideas and Trends

52 Opening New Doors

*Historic 1867 Charleston home remodeled by
Classic Remodeling & Construction Inc., Johns Island, S.C.*

Historic Charleston, Contemporary Esthetic

An 1867 home with a contemporary-minded client challenged the team at Classic Remodeling, Johns Island, S.C.

By Patrick L. O'Toole

“**H**istoric” is often loosely applied to any home more than 80 or 100 years old. There are literally hundreds of thousands across the United States that fall broadly into this category. At the other end of the spectrum, there is no debate about truly “historic” homes. These are the birthplaces and residences of presidents and other important figures in the country’s past. Or they are homes where something historic happened — a home that housed a battalion in the Revolutionary War, or a home that was a stop on the Underground Railroad. They are officially designated as historic. Some are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Others may be World Heritage Sites. More commonly, however, they received state or local historic designations. Homes like these are rare for a remodeler to encounter in business. They number only in the hundreds nationally and typically, all renovation, repair or remodeling work is strictly controlled by historic covenants or easements.

There are, however, across the country, tens of thousands of great old American homes, eminently worth preserving for clients and future

The middle section of an existing 9-ft.-wide rear porch was converted to a sunroom and designed to retain the feel of a screened-in porch.

generations. They are more than loosely historic but are not designated historic either. These are the homes that many remodelers at some point in their careers will be charged with redesigning and protecting. In homes like these, one or more elements are preserved not only because there is a requirement to conform with exterior architectural guidelines, but also because it is clearly the right thing to do.

Such was the case with a Federal-style, 3,750-sq.-ft. wood-frame home located within a designated historic district in downtown Charleston, S.C. Despite the fact that it was built in 1867 as a United States government hospital during the Reconstruction after the Civil War; and despite the fact that the original building was cut in half (almost Ginsu style) and relocated to two separate but adjoining lots in 1874; and despite the fact that the “sister” home carries an official historic designation from the city of Charleston, this home does not.

The home’s historic status lies in a gray area where any alterations to any of the four sides of the home’s exterior must be approved by Charleston’s Board of Architectural Review. This is required because it sits in the center of Historic Charleston. But the interior of the home has no prescribed strictures. It is, as remodeler Bob Fleming, owner of Classic Remodeling says, up to the owner to decide what gets preserved and what gets tossed.

Fleming, who has worked on a number of homes of this vintage over the past decade, often counsels his clients to preserve and protect rare old features. It is an

advocacy that sometimes puts the client relationship on the line.

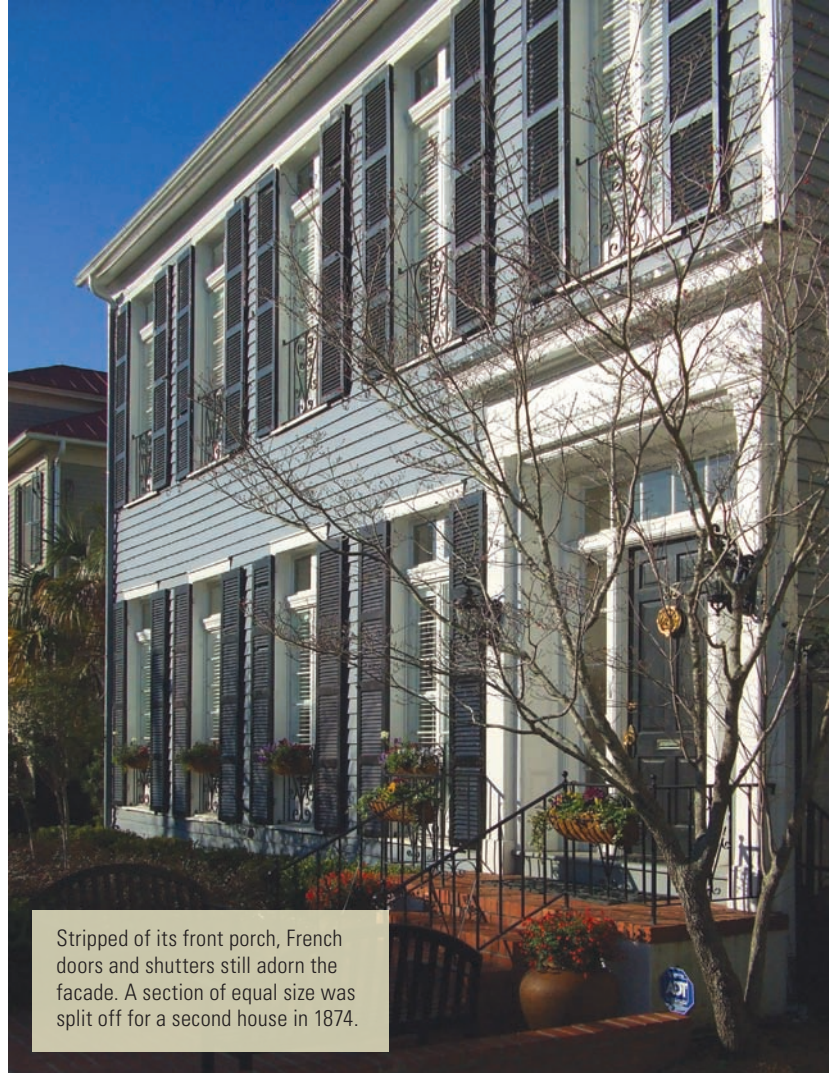
“We had a client one time, who wanted to rip out a historic door. It was 3 ½ ft. wide and 8 ft. tall,” Fleming recalls illustrating his philosophy of preserving old features in the homes he remodels. “They wanted to put a wall in and put a regular door in another location. Mind you, this was one of a few houses that I’ve been in where everything in the house was exactly correct historically. And I told the client, ‘Ma’am, you have a duty as a steward of this house not to change things around. We need to find a way not to move that door and to come up with an alternate solution.’

“She got very mad at me and I thought that I was going to be fired on the job. But she called me the next day and said, ‘You know, what you said made a lot of sense. I am going to listen to what you are saying.’ And we actually came up with a really cool solution. So you really have to try to keep an open mind about these things so you can work around a historic component.”

For this project, Fleming saw things more eye-to-eye with his clients on the value of preserving as much as possible during the renovation. Where they differed was on style. In remodeling this vintage home, the client was hoping to blend the very old with very modern art.

Mixing old and new

Geography was the initial challenge for Fleming and team. The clients were from out of town — a couple from Indianapolis who planned to relocate to Charleston as part of a “partial” retirement. This posed a challenge



FAST FACTS ABOUT THE COMPANY:

- **Remodeler:** Classic Remodeling & Construction Inc. Johns Island, S.C.
- **Project location:** Charleston, S.C. (Historic District)
- **Square footage before:** 3,750
- **Square footage after:** 3,750
- **Total project cost:** \$479,176
- **Project summary:** 1867 U.S. Government Hospital turned to private owners in 1874. Building is split in two and moved several blocks to adjoining lots. Clients seek to improve and update kitchen and first floor living spaces. They also seek a new master bedroom, dressing room and bathroom combination. Special considerations: Clients seek to display large collection of modern art glass and pottery.



The mantel and other trim details are not in strict keeping with Federal-style profiles. Instead they blend classic and contemporary themes.



Owners of a popular organic food store back home in Indianapolis and excellent cooks, the clients were very specific about their plans for this kitchen.

because Fleming typically relies on seeing a client's tastes played out in their existing residence. He draws from those tastes to put forth design ideas. And because Fleming could not justify a trip to Indianapolis to see their current home, his only visual point of reference was three poorly shot photos from a realtor Web site. From these he was able to discern the extent of their flair for con-

temporary art. In particular, the couple planned to feature a collection of modern art glass in the remodeled home. He wondered if the contemporary items would fit with the very old home.

"Here we have a 150-year-old home and the client wants to bring in very contemporary elements and I was struggling with that," says Fleming. "How do I take this contemporary stuff and merge it with this old house? It was hard to design and come up with a sleek contemporary style that worked with the old traditional."

Fortunately, the client had real vision for how the old and new would play out. First, the old blonde floor boards would be stripped and exposed. Interior colors would be bright and almost totally white. And in the end, the contemporary art asserted itself nicely when juxtaposed with the understated features of the historic

home. But Fleming had to make some concessions historically to make this happen. Squared door frames leading from the dining room and the living room were converted to arched doorways. And perhaps most significantly, each of the fireplace surrounds was completely redesigned in a more contemporary style. "I would describe the style as Romanesque," says Fleming of the new mantels that replaced classically Federal style trim work.

From a design and construction standpoint, the home posed a series of challenges at the rear third of the house. The rooms at the back of the house, both on the first and second floors, had been built and modified on the bones of an old 9-ft.-wide porch. Gradually over the decades, these porch rooms were converted and added into the working flow of the house. Much of the interior work in these spaces was not origi-

nal to the structure and was carefully removed by Fleming and his team to reveal hidden features that were kept and, in some cases, accentuated in the final design.

"We rebuilt in place," explains Fleming of the work his firm did to reclaim the rear porch space. "We used as much of the original as we could. Some of the columns remained in place. The siding — when you are doing historic work — you don't want to remove any more than you absolutely have to. Most of the cleaning up we had to do was on the inside, where we had several different renovations where they just added on and added on within that existing space."

According to Fleming, the home also had 9-ft.-wide upper and lower porches on the front of the house. Evidence can be found in the existence of the front porches on the "sister" house that was once part of the original government hospital.

"The porches on the front of the house were probably lost sometime in the '50s or '60s, before the preservation movement became as powerful as it is," says Fleming. "By that point, those porches were likely in really bad shape so the owners got approval to remove them from the house."

In renovating and remodeling the rear porches, it was important



Had the home been designated a historic landmark as its sister home next door, alterations to the interior would have been strictly limited. Arched entryways on the first floor replace the originals, which were square. A contrast between old and new is seen in the perpendicular lines of the French doors and transoms that open onto the sunroom.

that the existing footprint and roofline not be altered. These are exterior elements subject to approval of the architectural review board. Every inch of space was needed for part of the kitchen, a butler's pantry, a sunroom and an existing study.

Avid cooks, the clients were specific in their vision for the kitchen. The kitchen primarily occupies the same space it did from the existing plan, but was opened up more to the existing family room at the front of the house. Beyond the kitchen, a butler's pantry was designed to serve many functions. Completely gutted and remodeled on a portion of the old rear porch, it is the primary access point for the clients. It opens onto a broad new rear entry where the clients park their cars and enter the home with groceries and packages. And it serves a host of functions for the couple. Aside from its function as a butler's pantry, it is a bar area, food storage area and surprisingly, a place to casually entertain.

Adjoining the pantry on an old porch, a sunroom was designed to look as though it was original to the house. The original old porch columns were preserved to give the impression that it was simply an enclosed porch. Here and in the formal living room, the couple's modern art glass and pottery are displayed on glass shelves — modern and vintage working in tandem to create a transitional look that is increasingly sought after by designers. Importantly, the sunroom's design became a huge source for natural light.

"Our goal, from the beginning was to bring more natural light into the back of the house," notes Fleming. The sunroom really enables that objective to be achieved. It not only allows extra light to come in through the living room, it also bleeds light into an adjoining study as well as the kitchen pantry area.

Rethinking the upstairs porch

Allowing more natural light from the former rear porch area

of the home was also a priority upstairs as well. On the rear porch area upstairs, all interior finishes and partition walls were removed. In their place, Fleming and team created new spaces to round out a full master suite and master bath. The existing master bedroom stayed put, but a den with a fireplace was converted into a spacious walk-in closet that broadly opens into the master bath. There is a sitting room at one end near the bedroom and a laundry room tucked away at the other end of the master bath.

"The new master bathroom features dual sinks and vanities,

a larger shower enclosure and whirlpool tub, a separate water closet and in the laundry room, plenty of storage for items that often clutter up a bathroom," notes Fleming.

With a more open floor plan upstairs light filters throughout more of the spaces. "It really turned out great," says Fleming. "The clients love the project. They were a lot of fun to work with. They were specific with what they wanted, but they also allowed us some creativity. I have taken several prospects here and I watch them express how great the project is. That is what helps sell more jobs." | QR

Specified Products

Bath Cabinets	Charlestown Caseworks, Cherry with Cordovan finish.
Bath Fixtures	Porcher — Kyomi above counter basin
	Porcher — Alfieri monoblock faucet
	American Whirlpool — Ohio 6042
	Kohler — Bancroft Comfort Height toilet (K-3487)
Fireplace Mantel	Custom millwork by Rothton
Wood Flooring	J.T. Flooring LLC — Antique heart Pine
Tile/Stone Flooring	Coastal Surfaces — statuary marble (honed); ceramic prints (basketweave)
HVAC	Action Heating & Air
Kitchen Cabinets	Charlestown Caseworks — Conestoga door style "Verona"
Kitchen Countertops	Coastal Surfaces — Everest White granite
Kitchen Appliances	Dacor — 36 in. gas cooktop, convection oven
	Sub Zero — 42 in. side-by-side refrigerator
	GE Monogram 15 in. ice machine
	Bosch dishwasher
	Sharp microwave drawer
Lighting Fixtures	Charlestown Lighting
Paints/Stains	Benjamin Moore — Winds Breath (3101B)
	Sherwin Williams — Extra White (SW7006)
Solid Surface	Coastal Surfaces — statuary marble (honed)
Windows	Andersen