



FOUND IN TRANSLATION

Awkward spaces, as well as a lack of space, had these homeowners searching for the perfect house. They found it in their own backyard—an addition and whole-house transformation with a French accent.

Text by LUCY MERRILL / Photography by JEAN ALLSOPP

BEFORE



The original house was run-of-the-mill American colonial, but the mansard roof suggested French possibilities. “We like that look and wanted to go in that direction,” says the homeowner. The translation to French country manor not only suited the homeowners, it fit naturally into the home’s wooded environment.



THE NONDESCRIPT BRICK HOUSE WAS DUE FOR AN OVERHAUL, and its owners were overdue for a comfortable, livable home. “Functionally, the house was not adequate,” says architect Adam Gerndt of Adams Gerndt Design Group, who headed the rejuvenation project.

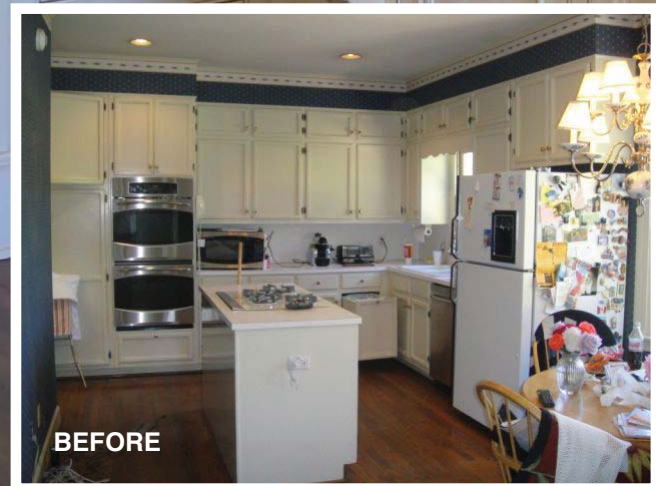
Among the dysfunction was a kitchen that was small and showing its age. Another impetus was the desire for a workable master suite. The couple had never used the original master bedroom because its position next to the kitchen did not allow privacy. Plus, when the owners first moved in years ago, they didn’t want their two small children (now grown) isolated in their upstairs bedrooms.

Instead, the original master bedroom was used as a den, and the couple settled into an upstairs room with a narrow bath and limited closet space. The husband used the small bedroom closet, while the wife kept her clothing in the downstairs master/den closet. “For over 20 years, I went downstairs to get my clothes and back upstairs to get

ABOVE: The clean lines of the master bedroom make for a calm and sophisticated retreat, positioned away from the rest of the house. “The scale of the room was such that we needed vertical pieces,” builder Adam Gerndt says. An antique linen press and a tall, custom linen headboard help to draw the eye upward. The vaulted ceiling is warmed with oak beams reclaimed from an old tobacco barn. Literal warmth is provided by a limestone fireplace. RIGHT: Bathed in natural light, the master bath is resplendent in marble, with a mosaic inlay on the floor breaking into the overall white for added interest. Curves, from the barrel-arched ceiling to the classic footed tub, set a feminine mood.



Kicking the kitchen up a notch or two was one of the primary goals of the remodeling project. Before, the kitchen was functional but prosaic. Through the renovation, it was translated into a gourmet kitchen with a Euro-style coffered ceiling, a massive island, limestone countertops, and custom cabinetry by Cantley and Company that included such touches as appliance garages.



“I wore out more real estate agents because we needed a *house that works*. We never could find anything like this location, so we decided to renovate.” —homeowner



The rear of the property offers a fabulous view, but the original house didn't provide many places from which to enjoy it—just a few windows and a conventional deck. Now, a pool that is serenity itself offers a place to take in the surroundings. Before the renovation, the pool deck was a ravine. Even after the addition of a retaining wall and fill dirt, the property's precipitous dropoff dictated the deck's distinctive scalloped lines.

dressed,” she says.

Despite the inconveniences, this couple stayed in the home because they love its location. One of the home's greatest charms is a captivating vista of Shades Mountain, and the owners did not want to leave that behind.

Having given up the idea of searching for their dream house, the couple finally realized they could create it themselves—right where they were! This way, they were sure to get everything on their wish lists, including an exercise room, swimming pool, and sun porch. And one more thing—while the Georgian-style house was stately, it was, perhaps, a bit staid. Could it be more French?

Fortuitously, Adam found that fitting an addition onto the house necessitated design choices that made a translation from English to French not only possible but the natural outcome. “In the design of the addition, we came up with a flat roof system with a parapet, and that dictated a French style,” he explains

Adam's design exchanged the Williamsburg-like brick façade for the earthy, Mediterranean texture of stucco. A new limestone entry, illuminated by French gas lanterns, anchors the transformed exterior, while limestone headers over the windows reinforce the country manor appeal. Rustic shutters complete the look.

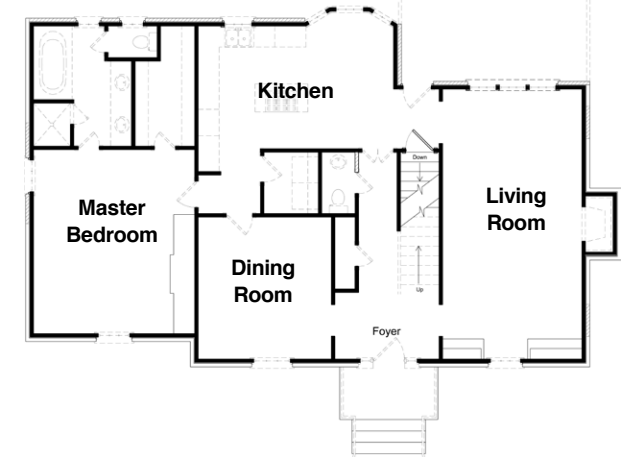
Inside, the design allowed for a modern reinterpretation of a Mediterranean villa. Spacious and flowing, the interior lives up to the exterior's promise of luxury and comfort. The new master suite is lordly, with noble proportions, a dream-size closet, and a posh bath with a Euro-spa feel.

The transformation from American colonial conventionality to French *joie de vivre* better suits the house in its ridgetop location, commanding a baronial prospect of natural beauty. And with the interior now tailored to their lifestyle, the owners have a renewed love of their longtime home.

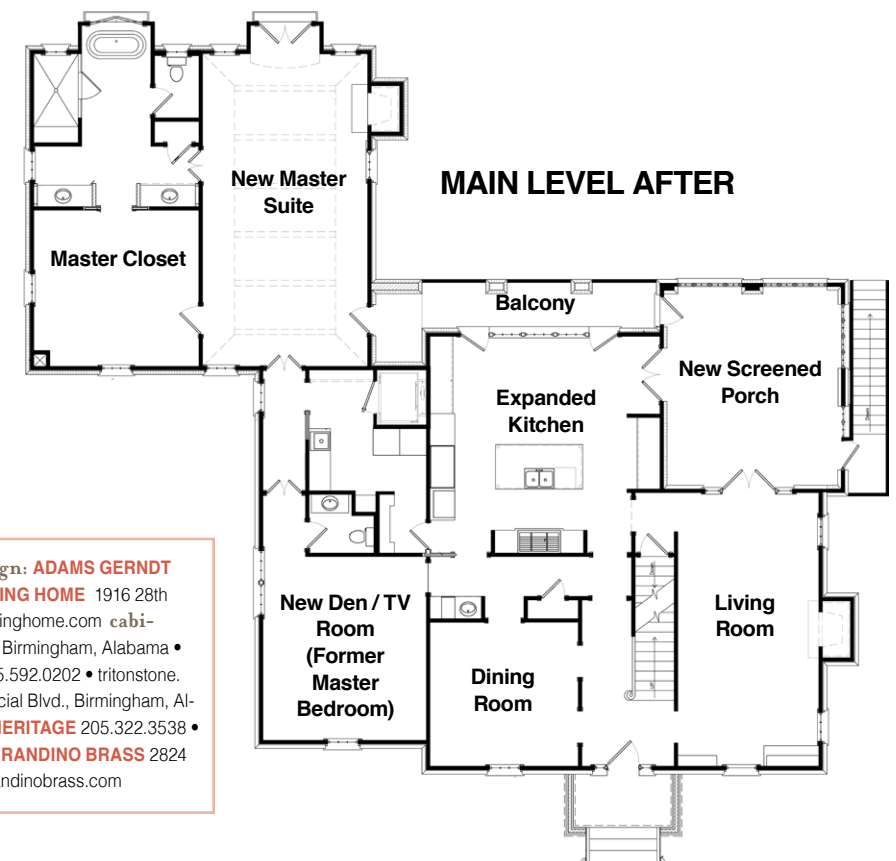
Architect's Challenge

The challenge in this renovation was how to build an addition without interfering with the view at the rear of the house that was the main reason for renovating rather than relocating. The solution was to add the new master suite to the left of the house rather than pushing out the back. This not only maximized the view but also made space for a ground-floor exercise room on the sloping lot.

MAIN LEVEL BEFORE



MAIN LEVEL AFTER



resources: architecture and interior design: **ADAMS GERNDT DESIGN GROUP** 205.939.1113 • adams-gerndt.com **DEFINING HOME** 1916 28th Avenue South Homewood / Alabama • 205.803.3662 • defininghome.com **cabinets:** **CANTLEY & COMPANY** 2821 Second Avenue South, Birmingham, Alabama • 205.324.2400 **countertops and tile:** **TRITON STONE** 205.592.0202 • tritonstone.com **pool:** **SHOEMAKER POOLS** 2811 Greystone Commercial Blvd., Birmingham, Alabama • 205.967.1644 **gas lanterns:** **ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE** 205.322.3538 • architecturalheritage.com **door and cabinet hardware:** **BRANDINO BRASS** 2824 Central Avenue, Birmingham, Alabama • 205.978.8900 • brandinobrass.com