



## New Views, Old Charm — and a Cherished Oak Tree

INSPIRED BY THE ARCHITECTURE OF NEW ENGLAND, FEATURES OF A CHARMING HORSE BARN AND THE PROXIMITY OF AN OAK TREE, THIS ROCHESTER HOME MELDS MODERN CONVENIENCE WITH TIMELESS AND ENDURING CHARACTER.

BY TRISH AMUNDSON

During a leisurely drive, and as if nature was calling to them, Sean and Jill were completely drawn to a densely wooded lot available for sale. Immediately, they knew the four-acre building site—with plenty of space, dense vegetation and a mixture of mature trees—would be the perfect location for their future home. They purchased the southwest Rochester property within one week, and over the next five years, they planned and dreamed about the place they would build—and call home in 2007.

### Patiently planning

From their small, 1913 residence, Sean and Jill made plans for their new home and growing family, which now includes Gretta,

age 11, and Thatcher, age 7. They carefully considered a combination of old and new home features: architectural elements from homes in New England and from pictures, such as a photo of a charming horse barn.

They hired AB Systems, Inc. to construct the home, and Peter Schuller, president of the company (and Sean and Jill's new neighbor), began work. He partnered with Martha Yunker, owner and principal architect of Yunker Associates Architecture of Minneapolis (also his former high school classmate).

“Our style sounded like the firm's style,” says Jill, while pointing out the value of hiring an architect. “Our home wouldn't be what it is if we hadn't hired Yunker Associates.”

### Blending with the landscape

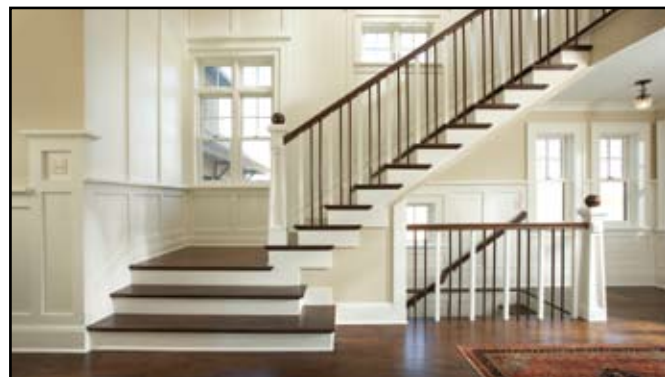
Martha and project architect Mike Burgoyne were included in early meetings to determine the home's site and design. “We chose a site that faced primarily toward the south, with a panoramic view,” says Mike.

The team consulted with an arborist to save an expansive oak tree. This included feeding, fertilizing and protecting the tree and its roots during construction. “The house was structurally built to maintain the health of that tree,” adds Mike.

Exterior materials of the home were chosen to weather with the environment and blend into the landscape. “The house has character with a nice blend of wood, stone and copper—and a unique flare design,” says Peter.



**The kitchen provides character and functionality: earth-toned granite countertops and backsplash, walnut cabinetry, natural-colored floor tiles and a farmhouse sink.**



**The couple wanted practical spaces, such as the comfortable, convenient dining room that is used daily. The crystal chandelier is a focal point, and coordinating antique bronze and crystal lighting are used throughout the home.**

### **A mix of old and new**

The team made interior choices after they reviewed Sean and Jill's wish list and considered the functional relationships of different rooms. "We didn't want a room we weren't going to use on a daily basis," said Jill.

Sean and Jill chose high ceilings on all levels to create a sense of spaciousness and incorporated numerous built-ins, such as cabinetry on each side of the fireplace. A big-banister staircase provides access to the second floor's four bedrooms as well as impressive views, particularly from the

master bedroom balcony which overlooks the Salem Valley. "Michael considered all of our preferences and amalgamated them together," says Sean.

### **Adding charm and warmth**

Interior designer Roxanne Podratz understood the character the couple wanted to incorporate into their home and encouraged them to make bold choices they might not have made otherwise. These choices resulted in interesting rooms with a natural progression of color and décor.

Rich walnut tones are carried throughout the home, including the kitchen, where a combination of modern and traditional elements provides character and functionality, and in the study, where a wood ceiling creates a handsome, warm ambiance.

Natural light spills through tall, transom and double-hung windows without window treatments, bringing the stunning natural landscaping into the home. "From every vantage point, we can see straight through the house," says Sean.



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## Settled in ... forever

The natural landscape is complete with new prairie grasses, thousands of wildflowers and trees. "We didn't want to alter the landscape too much," says Sean, who describes how the home, with walk-out main and lower levels, is carefully settled into the site.

During the entire process, the careful and collaborative plans of the architects, contractor and homeowners were silently guided by the beautiful environment and a majestic oak tree. "It reflects the owners' vision of what they wanted," says Peter.

Yes, the home of Sean, Jill, Gretta and Thatcher is strongly rooted in its environment. It will likely endure far into the future—just like the cherished oak tree.

*Trish Amundson is a Rochester-area freelance writer and full-time employee at Mayo Clinic. Believing all homes (and homeowners) have interesting stories to tell, she enjoys writing about unique renovation and building projects.*



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The home offers several views of the big oak tree.

