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## The Classical Residence

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PROJECT: Exterior Renovations & Interiors of Colonial Revival Home, Riverside, Conn.  
 ARCHITECT: Hilton-VanderHorn Architects, Greenwich, Conn.  
 INTERIORS: Katherine Cowdin, Inc., Greenwich, Conn.  
 LANDSCAPE DESIGN: GroPro Landscaping, Greenwich, Conn.  
 CONTRACTOR FOR PHASE II: KITCHEN, FAMILY ROOM: O'Neil Construction, Greenwich, Conn.

When looking for a new family home, the clients were searching for a distinctive residence in an established neighborhood, near the waterfront of Long Island Sound. However, given the scarcity of land available in the Greenwich area and the exorbitant cost of the finest real estate, the clients



Front elevation before (left). The clients were looking for a house with stature and classical details, but when they came up short, they refocused their quest for an existing home with potential. This Riverside, Conn., 1960s spec house with its unseemly stick-columned front, lonely front door, and undefined roof inspired Hilton-VanderHorn Architects and their clients to re-create a house with real presence.

After (above). The renovated elevation provides a very different scene. The majority of the project scope was to re-create the exterior beginning with the roof, which was removed and raised to make room for a cornice. The pitch was also increased to create a more substantial third floor that was further defined by the addition of dormer windows and an extended brick chimney. The windows were repositioned and the classically referenced portico completed the new face. Landscaping by Peter Grunow of GroPro Landscaping, Greenwich, Conn., complements the new elevation with a welcoming stone walkway and new plantings.

The entrance portico (right), scaled in proportion to the facade, features columns by Somerset Door and Column Company, which support an entablature that reflects the main exterior cornice. Inspiration for the exterior cornices were based on classical precedents found in the *American Vignola* and the *Architectural Treasures of America* series. Though the cornice is custom, the portico windows and dormer cornices are primarily composed of stock mouldings by Brockway-Smith Company (Brosco), Interstate/Lakeland Lumber, and Center Lumber Company.



— All photos courtesy of Hilton-VanderHorn Architects



This oval window at the front entry is an accent feature that provides light into the stair hall beyond and allows for viewing of arriving guests. The asymmetrical use of the one window aligns with the off-center stair hall inside.

decided to explore buying and renovating an existing home. After locating a 1960s builder house, but before bidding on it, the clients consulted with Greenwich-based Hilton-VanderHorn Architects to determine whether the house had the potential to become the home they desired.

Known for designing fine traditional residences that seamlessly integrate the modern amenities required by their clients, Hilton-VanderHorn concluded that the basic volumes of the existing house would accommodate a traditional Colonial design. To transform the house into a refined and elegant home, the exterior was re-proportioned and detailed to recall the typical Colonial houses found in New England. The low-pitched roof was removed, the attic plates raised, and a new, higher-pitched wood roof was installed, all of which allowed for re-proportioning of the facades and development of a classical cornice.

The exterior cornices were based on classical precedents using the *Architectural Treasures of America* series and the *American Vignola* as references. For the facade, a five-bay scheme was chosen featuring a new portico with a triple window above, which is flanked by two



Before (above). This view shows the existing cornice, as Chuck Hilton says, "simply trimmed out, lacking both depth and detail."

After (right). He continues, "The new cornice is proportioned to the scale of the house. The cornice mouldings are based on classical precedents. They add scale, detail, and depth to the facade. The new half-round copper gutter is installed to maximize the view of the cornice mouldings."

pairs of windows to either side. Three new dormers and an extended new brick chimney accent the roof. As a focal point, the portico's columns support an entablature with a modillioned cornice topped by a decorative railing. The new windows with custom casings, head cornices, and paneled shutters further enliven the front elevation.

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On the interior, to organize the plan of the original rooms, a three-story center stair hall, complete with custom-designed mahogany handrails and turned balusters, was cut through the center of the house. All the rooms have been renovated and two large third-floor bedrooms and a bath were added beneath the new roof. ♦



*Kitchen before (inset) and after (above). The Kitchen/Breakfast room was rearranged in order to free up the outside back-elevation wall that houses the new breakfast bay. The kitchen work area is directly across from the bay with a work island in between. Custom-made cabinets are traditionally styled with exposed-binge doors and drawers framed by fixed stiles. Granite countertops and glazed upper cabinets complete the cabinetry as built-in furniture.*



*This mantel surround is richly designed and ornamented to become the focus of a long living room. The eared architrave that frames the new marble surround includes an egg-and-dart moulding by Decorators Supply Corporation. The collection frieze above and the denticulated cornice that it supports add further interest and detail.*



*The new three-story interior stair serves to unify the original plan. Says project architect Chuck Hilton, "Colonial and Georgian precedents inspired the custom-designed stair. The turned corner and base newel posts, like the handrail, are of mahogany, and are designed like a column similar to those of the portico. Intricately turned balusters are three to a tread and have tall bases that correspond to the height of the adjacent riser."*



*Dining room before (above) and after (right). The Before shot shows the existing room that featured a bay oddly placed to one side of the space. The renovated and decorated room now features two double-hung windows that replace the bay on the front facade and evenly distribute and modulate incoming light, as well as allow for a more-comfortable furniture plan. A new cornice, paneled wainscot, and base provide the details needed to add scale and intimacy to the room.*

