



Things Past

Their love for anything with age led this Houston couple to move from the suburbs to the city and a charming 1920s Country French house

BY JENNIFER LAWRENCE PHOTOGRAPHS BY HICKEY-ROBERTSON



Oriental, red-lacquered paneling and a Chesterfield sofa, resting on the original porcelain casters, give the Watsons' library a clubby atmosphere, while a reading alcove (below) gives the living room an elegant feel.

this house immediately because of the 'old,' " says Kay. "We love 'old' and really fell in love with the interior of the house."

For Max, it was a relief that the previous owners had renovated the 1926 residence, originally designed by Eugene Werlin and restored by William Furbush, both Houston architects.

"The house had a lot of character and personality," he says. "When you start looking at houses, after a while, they all start looking alike, and this house had history. The prior owners did a great



job on the renovation, so we didn't have to do the heavy work."

And the parts that escaped renovation only seemed to add character to the house, including the wonderful "creaky" floors that 12-year-old daughter Kendall couldn't stop talking about and her bedroom suite upstairs. Kay was drawn to the large reception hall with three pairs of arched French doors leading to the English-style garden.

"When I first came to the house, I loved the entrance, which was open





Kay and Max Watson, with daughter Kendall and golden retriever Tejas, relish the outdoor feeling of the breakfast room, which opens onto a brick-paved loggia just right for entertaining. Of the predominantly beige living room, Kay says, "Neutral is a wonderful way to live, but you need a flash of red here and there."

and airy," recalls Kay. "And I absolutely loved the backyard and the kitchen. Those three things did it."

Only cosmetic changes were in order. The Watsons wanted to emphasize "that really old look," so they opted for faux finishes to make the walls look like plaster. The beiges on the walls complement the antique rugs and furniture.

Kay and the designer embarked on a collecting spree that began in Houston and led to London. Their finds included a



17th-century Spanish chest and a Chesterfield sofa that only whetted the Watsons' appetite for antiques. The mission: to put together a look that did not look "decorated," says Barber, who encouraged them to start with rugs and then move on to fabrics.

"I love using a small pattern on large pieces and then building emphasis in art and antiques," Barber says. "You don't get tired of small prints on things."

Such was the case in the family room, nicknamed

