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Graceful additions

Built in 1938, Credenhill gets respect
(and some thoughtful updates)

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Wider view

Get the bigger picture of Credenhill on page 41, where we chat with the homeowners about the existing Gillette garden.



A generous entry hall lets in plenty of natural light. "Stone houses can be dark and dismal," says homeowner Bill Atwood. "This one has a lot of light all day."

In a town with more than its share of notable houses, the home of Bebe Heiner and Bill Atwood is a quiet gem. Hidden at the end of a long driveway in Ivy's Flordon neighborhood, Credenhill—as it was named by its original owners, after their Welsh hometown—embodies a reserved and gracious sensibility. The pleasing proportions and fine workmanship that defined the home from the beginning are now enhanced by thoughtful updates, inside and out.

"The house commands this hill," says Atwood. "It lays well on this property." Original architect Marshall Wells, who designed many houses for wealthy local clients in the early 20th century, placed the bar-shaped home on an east-west axis and sited it on high ground, where bucolic views of nearby farms can be glimpsed through oak trees.

Heiner, who founded local counseling center The Women's Initiative, has seen the house through two major evolutions. She and her first husband, Eric Heiner, first encountered the house when they attended a party there, and bought it in 1997. It was then nearly 60 years old. "The house hadn't been worked on in decades," she says. They embarked on a renovation with the goal of making it more spacious and modernizing the kitchen and bathrooms.

Years later, after Heiner was widowed and remarried to Atwood, the house again was in need of some changes. "Our family was bigger now," Heiner says. "We wanted more privacy when our kids were here." The 2008 renovation converted the garage to a new master suite, carved out space for Atwood's painting studio and changed the feel of the kitchen.

Throughout these processes, Heiner says, "We always wanted to maintain the character of the house." The couple's art collection includes a range of styles—many of them quite contemporary—and the objects found throughout the home are equally eclectic. Yet the prevailing tone is subtle, classic and well in keeping with the nature of the 1938 house.

Preserving rooms

Georgian in style, Credenhill is largely symmetrical, with a somewhat unusual exterior: stone walls and a slate roof, trimmed not with wood but painted brick. "It's a very creative use of two materials that generally don't work well together," says Atwood, himself an architect.

The arched doorway opens onto a generous entry hall which, in turn, leads to the living room. The original opening between these two spaces was smaller, but the 1997 renovation enlarged it to boost the sense of spaciousness.

This is not, however, anything like an open floor plan. The house's formal separation of rooms is a hallmark of its era that remains well-preserved. Living room, dining room and kitchen connect to each other and open onto a long hallway. Being essentially one-room deep allows the house to bring in



An arched doorway (enlarged in 1997 to boost the room's sense of spaciousness) leads from the entry hall to the living room, where visitors get an idea of the homeowners' vast art collection: A group of paintings behind the piano includes work by Lincoln Perry, Charles Smith, Clay Witt, Susan Bacik, Leon Kroll and Elizabeth Huey (on the adjacent wall). Upstairs in a guest bedroom, a Perry painting hangs over the mantel, while in the dining room, visitors will find paintings by Anne Massie (over the mantel) and William Draper (over the sideboard) and a collage by Anne Slaughter (over the door).

daylight. "Stone houses can be dark and dismal," says Atwood. "This one has a lot of light all day."

Kitchens were utilitarian workspaces for employees in the days when Credenhill was built, so Heiner's first renovation enlarged the house's footprint to make room for a bigger kitchen and a breakfast nook. She and Atwood changed it again to make it even brighter.

"A cousin has this light Carrara marble," she says, touching the countertop of the squarish center island. "We thought that would lighten it up." The stone contrasts with a dark wood floor,

while cabinets are painted white and walls are pale blue. The space is complex—L-shaped, with a butler's pantry adjacent, and varied ceiling heights—but the effect of the palette is calming.

"We redid the island to make a barrier," says Atwood, "and to make the island a piece of architecture." The design invites guests to take a seat on a barstool opposite from where the cooks are working.

This end of the house has seen substantial changes. The garage became the couple's master bedroom, a more contemporary room than any other in

the house, with a cathedral ceiling and exposed structural beams. A new laundry room took its place nearby, and a parking pavilion outside provides a covered entry (which the front door lacks).

Interest in objects

Renovations to the other wing of the home have been more subtle. From the entry hall, a long corridor leads to a sitting room, which, says the couple, was uncomfortably dark. Awash in wood-

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work—from the fireplace surround to the crown molding to built-in shelves and cupboards—it needed a brighter mood. Pickling the wood, lightening the window treatments and adding recessed lighting did the trick.

Interior design by KLH Designs includes striking modern light fixtures made of wooden branches. The traditional and symmetrical room balances the contemporary touches, and soft hues make it inviting. “The room is shaped beautifully,” says Atwood. “The proportions make it pleasant. People migrate here.”

Heiner’s office sits at the end of the wing, converted from a onetime garden room, and overlooking the landscape. It’s full of daylight and views of greenery, with a cheerful terracotta tile floor.

Though such private spaces abound—a second floor provides two more bedrooms for guests—the house seems to lead always back to the central fulcrum of its front door and living room. Though comfortable, the space is a showcase for fine objects. High-quality craftsmanship, as in the carved wooden mantel on the fireplace, sets the tone.

French doors flank the fireplace, and a baby grand piano occupies a corner. The collections here and in the next room span the globe and reach through history, from pre-Columbian pottery to Chinese armchairs to paintings by local artists Clay Witt, Judy McLeod and Anne Slaughter. Atwood’s own pieces keep company with a John Singer Sargent oil sketch and an antebellum silver tea service.

Subtle wall colors and window treatments allow the art, and the light fixtures, to take center stage.

While they’ve made the house eminently their own, it’s clear that Atwood and Heiner have a sense of stewardship for it as well. “It has great order as you move off from the door,” says Atwood, gazing at the stone façade with its rhythmic arrangement of windows. “We would never touch this.”

A closer look

The original manor house at **Flordon**, a Georgian colonial built in 1906, still stands on Old Ballard Road, and once included orchards on the property of the current Boar’s Head Inn. But it wasn’t until the late 1950s that it became the community it is today, after Dr. Charles Hurt began developing the Ivy area just west of Charlottesville. The approximately 80 homes in the Flordon neighborhood range in architectural styles from brick and Dutch colonials to ranchers.



Pickling the wood in a sitting room at the end of a long corridor helped brighten the space, which was awash in woodwork; in the couple’s master suite, a converted garage, a cathedral ceiling and exposed beams contemporize the room; a second renovation lightened the breakfast nook.

