



CHURCH *Revival*

A meticulous exterior renovation and master suite remodel transform this historic church-turned-private-residence into a personal sanctuary for its new owners.

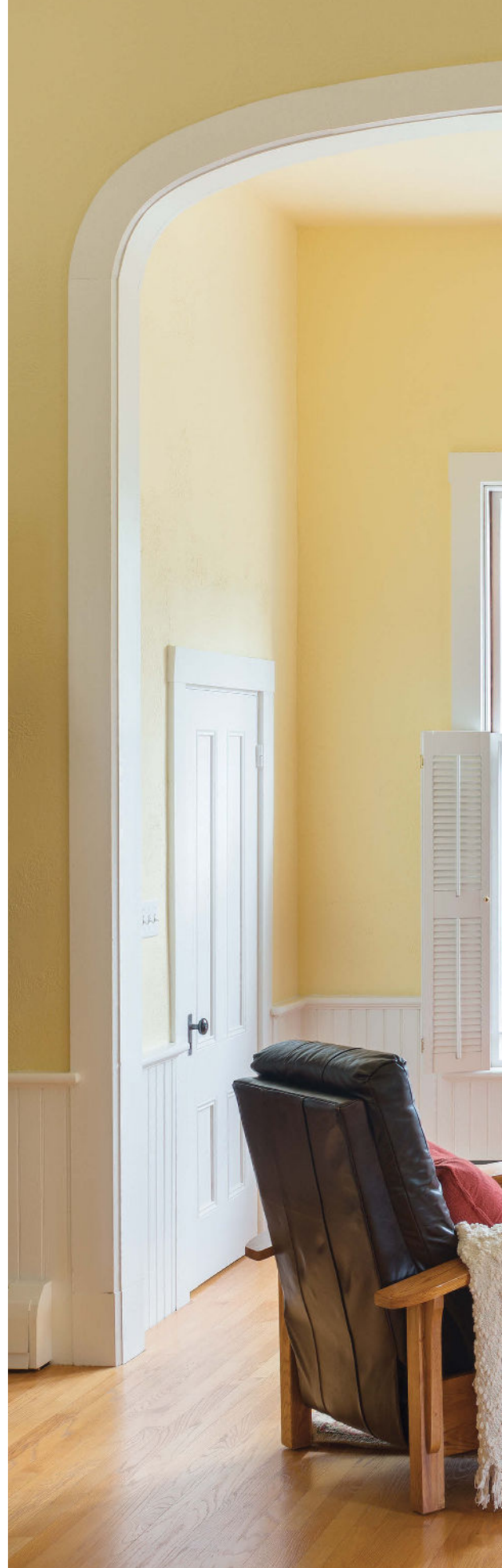
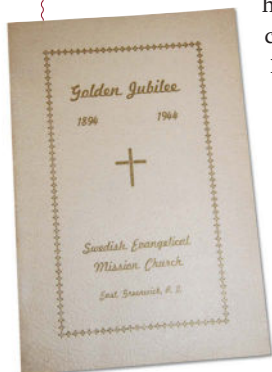
BY **JENNIFER STEFFY SWANSON** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **NAT REA** STYLING BY **KEP DESIGNS**



RED DOOR MEANS “WELCOME,” BUT THESE DOORS, newly restored and finished in high-gloss Rembrandt Red, seem to say much more. Striking as they are, the beauty of this house goes far beyond its front doors: note the subtle “1894” carved above the steeple shutter, the copper downspouts and how the octagonal cedar shingles follow the gentle curve of the roof. And that’s only the outside.

Built in 1894, the Swedish Evangelical Congregational Church of East Greenwich went from being a house of worship to being the “church house” in the late-1980s when it was first purchased for use as a private residence. The architect who bought the house opened the upstairs and converted it into a comfortable living area. An addition built in the 1950s for Sunday school classes and office space was converted into a master suite, but the exterior remained untouched. By the time its current owners purchased it in July 2012, the brown clapboard desperately needed restoration, as did the peeling painted shingles on the steeple and gable ends.

Led by owner Justin Zeller, **Red House Custom Building** began the project in October of 2012. By spring, the church house was rejuvenated, ready for its next 100 years. ➤➤



The historic building was constructed as a church in 1894, and maintaining its architectural integrity was a priority during the renovation. **PREVIOUS PAGE:** A complete exterior overhaul by Red House Custom Building gave the so-called church house a striking new appearance. Landscape architect Anjali Joshi created the illusion of a larger front yard with deep planting beds; layered plantings, chosen for their textures and colors, will complement the scale of the building as they grow.



Whether by fate or coincidence, the homeowners uncovered a significant moisture problem in the master bathroom just as the exterior work began. The discovery left them with a choice: Fix one problem and leave many others, or roll up their sleeves and do it right. Not much of a choice, really, so the Red House team dug in.

In truth, the addition had been poorly designed and insulated from the time it was first constructed. The ceiling was low and the area between it and the roof was inaccessible, creating a wasteland of unusable space. The suite, which consisted of a bathroom, closet and bedroom, was stripped to the studs.

The very basic closet was replaced with a custom designed walk-in, which was outfitted with a system of hanging racks and shelves. Red House also built a cherry bench with drawers — a dual-purpose inclusion to provide both seating and storage for bulky items. A pull-down ladder in the closet provides access to the formerly inaccessible attic, which was insulated with spray foam to improve the addition's efficiency.

A cathedral ceiling was engineered in the bedroom and accented with bead-board. Two sets of built-in bookshelves balance one another on both ends of the gable wall.

New cabinetry was installed in the bathroom, as was a luxury steam shower with a rain-head fixture, built-in shelves, a stone bench and linear drain. ➤➤



OPPOSITE: Kim Elliott Peterson, owner of KEP Designs, says the clients' affinity for texture inspired the interior design. Indoor/outdoor fabric was used on the bench cushion in the closet to help prevent fading and wear. Although the palette in the suite is mostly neutral, textural elements — such as grasscloth wallpaper, woven Roman blinds and linen shades — add interest and depth. **THIS PAGE, FROM TOP LEFT:** Custom window treatments were fabricated to fit the windows Red House installed in the bathroom and bedroom; a tile mural on the floor in the bathroom was left intact, and it inspired Peterson's color choices for the stone counter and shower. A linear drain in the shower floor eliminated the need for a threshold, and a vent in the custom glass door will help prevent moisture issues from reoccurring. Pocket doors were installed in the bedroom to save space; light trays along the edge of the room give the ceiling a soft glow at night, and glass panel doors, which lead to a private patio in front, flood the room with natural light during the day.



Although the back of the house gets far less attention from passersby, no corners were cut, especially where drainage was concerned. A previous owner had hung aluminum gutters from the roof, which hid and helped rot the classic crown molding around the eaves. Red House rebuilt the eaves on the addition and incorporated wooden gutters built into the soffit, which match the original wooden gutters they uncovered and restored on the sanctuary. New copper downspouts were cut into the soffit, EPDM rubber lines the wooden gutters and copper edging dresses up the leading edge of what appears to be a traditional crown molding.

Exterior Renovation and Master Suite Remodel:

Red House Custom Building, LLC, 337-5634, redhouse.cb.com, see ad page 87

Interior Design: KEP Designs, 451-8922, kepetersondesigns.com, see ad page 101

Landscape Architecture:

Anjali Joshi Design, 744-9903, see ad page 101

The new master suite windows were selected for their look and function. The Kolbe push-out casements are slightly taller

than the ones they replaced, but their size is more consistent with historic proportions for the church and sanctuary.

The finishing touch: A new landscape design by Anjali Joshi that transformed the backyard into the retreat the homeowners wanted. A blend of summersweet and lilacs will perfume the air near the master bedroom come the spring, and other plantings chosen for their texture and extended seasons will carry color through the early winter.

But, says Zeller, this project — like every project — is about more than just aesthetics.

“It isn’t just about finishes,” he says. “A building is a group of systems, whether it’s the steam shower or insulation or built-ins. Our job is to make sure all those systems work well together for our clients and the next generation.” **HD**

Red House made a steam box to bend the octagonal shingles into the curve of the roof. The western red cedar shingles pop against the white trim and the Benjamin Moore Whitall Brown chosen for the clapboard. In addition to providing year-round color and texture, Joshi’s new architectural design for the landscape will improve drainage around the foundation.





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