



Clockwise from above: Reconfiguration of the kitchen and a blend of cherry wood with stainless steel resulted in a seamless mix of old and new. For the master bedroom, Hollie Holt had a swooning sofa, situated near a faux-painted fireplace of carved slate, reupholstered to match the décor and her love of the color green. A collection of antique tools attests to Jamie Holt's love of history. The couple created two seating areas in the formal living room.

Peeling Back the Layers

The Holt family's Federal-era farmhouse has been added to many times since 1782. What a great excuse to mix furniture and accessories from different periods.

JAMIE HOLT SHOWS off the back door of his Wayne farmhouse. "This is called an Indian door," says Jamie. It's twice the thickness of a regular door because the bottom half conceals a wooden panel that slides up to shield glass windows on the upper half. Such doors, originating during the Federal period (1776-1820), were needed to protect the glass, expensive at that time, from harsh weather or attack. It's not likely that Jamie or his wife, Hollie,

will ever have to use the door for protection. It is just one example of the many ways they have preserved their home's history.

The original structure of the Holts' farmhouse dates to 1782. Since then the building has been added onto several times, most recently by the Holts. Says Richard Buchanan of Archer and Buchanan architects in West Chester, who worked with the couple, "This house has layers" *see habitat page 140*



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of history. It didn't exist in one moment of time." The Holts understood the fact well, so instead of stripping the house back to its 18th-century ideal, they let the layers show. Buchanan believes their decision was a wise one. "This choice gives the house a vitality that a straight repro house wouldn't get," he says. "I don't think the Holts would even want to live the way they did during that time period, anyway."

The original owners, the Matlack family, were prominent Quakers who owned and operated a tannery on the property. (Two of the brick tanning vats are still under what is now the Holts' family room.) The Matlacks raised 12 children in four rooms—two downstairs and two up. When the Matlack family patriarch died, he divided his estate the way people did in those days: by leaving individual rooms to individual children. The children then raised their own families in their inherited rooms. The estate stayed in the Matlack family until 1920. When the Holts brought the property in 1993, they were only the second family outside the Matlacks to live there.

A house with such history would natu-

rally appeal to a couple who have a fine appreciation of things from the past. "Often when we're faced with an old house project, the addition to meet the contemporary living needs winds up overwhelming the old part of the house," says Buchanan. "The old part starts to feel like an addition to a bigger house. The mandate from the Holts from the beginning was to let the original house always lead as the main component. That was accomplished."

Jamie, who is in the insurance business, has been fascinated by wrought iron since high school, when he worked with a blacksmith. Under the guidance of Tim Cauldron, a blacksmith in West Chester, he made a reproduction box lock for the front door. Hollie, an antiques dealer, specializes in prints, maps and paintings. The house is perfect for displaying all the items of their interests.

Unlike the Matlacks, who lived with the less-is-more philosophy, the Holts needed space for the house to fit their lifestyle. Buchanan's addition to the kitchen had two stories. The first included a foyer and mud room (with another mud room for their dogs) and a family room. Stairs in the foyer lead to Hollie's office

and a generously sized master bedroom. Buchanan also reconfigured the kitchen. He re-pointed the house's stone exterior to match the addition and, near the rear entrance, added a courtyard with garden walls in the same stone.

"The trick to this project was the degree to which Jamie and Hollie really retained the character and history of the place while keeping the old building intact," says Buchanan. "Jamie put a lot of sweat equity in the house. He was tireless in his effort to find old hardware, doors and glass." Jamie replaced 27 doors with antiques he found mainly through salvage dealers. All exterior doors are original Indian doors or reproductions of other doors from the Federal period. Hollie dedicated countless hours to unearthing records on the house's evolution. "We wanted the addition to have the feeling like it was something that grew over time," says Hollie. During the Victorian age, for example, the house was remodeled significantly, as evidenced by such elements as diamond-paned windows. The Holts wanted to preserve such touches while blending them with those from the Colonial and Federal eras.

"We have a joke that the addition car-

bon dates correctly to the Federal period,” says Jamie. Proof abounds in the family room. “This is what they used to remove bark,” he explains, lifting a barking spud from a display hook on the wall. “This is a log caliper, which was used for measuring the diameter of a log.” The items are part of a collection of 19th-century tools displayed in the family room. “These tools are significant because they are primarily what would have been used for post-and-beam construction, which is how the original part of this house was made,” Jamie says.

He could go on about the tools, but the focus shifts. The room’s floor is made of rare chestnut, which, after intensive searching, Jamie bought from a seller of old barn timbers. There was enough to cover both floors of the addition and panel the family room walls. The discovery of a Federal-style paneled door, also of chestnut, enabled Jamie to figure proportions of the paneling. After being re-sawn and finished, the wood looked like new. Shelving behind some of the paneling disguises the electronics for the room. Chestnut bookshelves and a window seat cover another wall. The fireplace (there is one in every room) has a wooden mantel from

Lancaster County, circa 1820—with original paint. Above the fireplace hangs an example of the prints Hollie sells, a botanical from the 1830s, “The Temple of Flora” by Robert Thorton.

All doors in the house have a mix of antique and reproduction wrought iron, as well as cast-iron box locks. Jamie demonstrates how, instead of locking the door with a key, past homeowners would unscrew the knob and take it with them. All round knobs in the house are made of original mineral glass.

Reconfiguration of the kitchen resulted in a seamless blend of old and new. “We wanted to have a period feel, but we didn’t want an 18th-century kitchen,” says Hollie. “People have done that and have done it fantastically, but we wanted to do something we could live with and use.” The new comes from a stainless steel refrigerator and stainless steel hood surrounded by lightly stained cherry cabinets. Cabinet hardware is also silver metal. A center island has a counter of honed granite, which has a matte-like finish. The old comes from a working hearth decorated with 18th- and 19th-century cooking equipment. “We have cooked in the fireplace,” says Hollie.

“It makes the kitchen quite warm.”

Hanging over the 1820s mantel from Berks County is an antique iron rifle. The space over French doors to the patio features pieces from the Holts’ collection of wrought and cast iron trivets, like muffin pans, food choppers and egg beaters. Snakes in cast iron are reproductions of a blacksmith’s whimsies. “These are things a blacksmith would do in his spare time to show off his ability,” says Jamie.

Hollie did all the decorating in the house. She followed a feeling of formality in the dining room. The walls were painted terra cotta and crowned with white molding, which blends well with the white frame of the coal-burning fireplace and black cast-iron surround. Above the mantel is another print from Hollie’s collection, a fish by Martin Katesby from 1820.

The formal look carries into the living room, which has a slight V-shape, for which the Holts designed two separate seating areas. A red love seat and red wing chair with a white floral pattern chair complement walls of lemon yellow in one area. The other area features a cream settee and a blue wing chair. A Knobe Walnut baby grand piano occupies one corner of the

room. The diamond-paned windows needed no treatments, so Hollie stenciled a floral pattern on the border of the hardwood floors for a special touch.

To create a family history wall in the second-floor hallway, Hollie set old black-and-white photos of the couple's families in her collection of old picture frames.

Most, but not all, furnishings and details in the house could be traced to the Victorian or Federal periods. "We went for a vintage look in the things that we did," says Hollie. In the master bathroom stands two white porcelain sinks from the Barclay Hotel in Philadelphia. A clawfoot tub in another bathroom is an antique Hollie had bought and refinished years ago. A Pennsylvania antique rope bed in a guest room hails from the days when stretch rope was used to support the mattress. "That's where the expression 'sleep tight' comes from," says Jamie. "A person would have to tighten the ropes every night before they went to bed."

In the master bedroom Hollie indulged her love of the color green. She used subtle sage in the window treatments and the bedding of her half-canopy bed. Antique night stands on either side of the bed are heirlooms from Hollie's mother. A wooden chest from the 1830s, with original strap hinges and hardware, rests at the foot of the bed. An antique tribal rug attracted Jamie and Hollie's eye because of the unusual use of bright reds, pinks and greens. An antique swooning sofa that Hollie had reupholstered to match the décor sits elegantly in a corner. The room's focal point is the carved slate, faux-painted fireplace. "We had the fireplace raised from the floor so we could see it from the bed," says Hollie.

Linked to the family room is a commercial-size Burnham greenhouse. The Holts maintained it until two years ago. (Their plants died after the furnace quit while they were away.) "We didn't start the greenhouse again because it literally was a full-time job to keep up with it," says Hollie. Instead of razing it, they removed the glass and used the valance as a trellis for outdoor entertaining. They plan to maintain one small area as a greenhouse.

"Jamie and Hollie worked hard to preserve the house's farm roots, and even though it suits the way they live today, it carries on the spirit and tradition of the house it once was," Buchanan says.

One more project to go: addition of an antique barn. Rest assured, the Holts are in search of a good one. ◆