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CHARMED LIFE

A FAMILY BUILDS THEIR DREAM HOME FROM THE GROUND UP TO EVOKE
TRADITIONAL OLD-WORLD BEAUTY MODERNIZED FOR COMFORT AND EASE.

WRITTEN BY **KIMBERLY OLSON** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **TONY SOLURI**

INTERIOR DESIGN Melanie Elston, Melanie Elston Interiors | **ARCHITECTURE** Orren Pickell and Jeff Eichhorn, Orren Pickell Design Group
HOME BUILDER Orren Pickell and Jeff Eichhorn, Orren Pickell Building Group | **BEDROOMS** 6 | **BATHROOMS** 8 | **SQUARE FEET** 8,500

When a husband and wife who had been living in a contemporary home in Chicago's Highland Park began longing for traditional charm, they were naturally drawn to the village of Bannockburn—a nearby community with residences that suggest historic country estates. Imagining a home with classic European elements that would also suit their modern lifestyle, the couple quickly purchased four bucolic acres. “We wanted a romantic feel—brick that looked as if it had been weathered, winding driveways and large landscapes,” says the wife. “The goal for this space was for it to be livable and comfortable,” adds designer Melanie Elston, “yet with the idyllic look they so desired.”

With two boys, ages 8 and 11, the couple needed a home that would suit the entire family, particularly their older son, whose special needs include the use of both a wheelchair and a walker. To that end, architect Orren Pickell, along with project architect Jeff Eichhorn, put nearly all of the living space on the main floor, which is entirely wheelchair-accessible and features flush thresholds. He then incorporated an elevator for access to the smaller second floor and the home's lower level.



In the oval-shaped dining room, designer Melanie Elston incorporated a Holly Hunt Studio table, which features bowed legs that mimic the room's gracious curves. The chairs are by Artistic Frame from Design Atelier. A floral-patterned wallcovering by Stark adds elegance.



Natural sunlight illuminates the hallway's vibrant artwork, purchased from a dealer in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The rich flooring, here and throughout, is wide-plank, hand-scraped walnut; a spindle-back chair by ACM Furniture Collection is from Holland & Sherry.



A tufted sectional from A. Rudin joins a wingback chair by Dennis & Leen to provide lounging comfort in the living room. The Hunt coffee table by Ralph Lauren Home from Henredon placed over a rug from the Stephanie Odegard Collection grounds the vignette.

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In addition, other features to accommodate their son's needs were cleverly incorporated into the design. "We built handrails into the wainscoting and installed wider doorways that were in scale with the rest of the house," says Pickell, whose firm also built the home. And instead of wheelchair ramps leading to the exterior doors, there are gently sloping paved walkways. "What's really nice is that our son can be included in every single thing we do," the husband says. "There's not a room in this house that he doesn't have access to."

Pickell responded to the couple's affinity for unusual interior spaces as well. "We made the floor plan unpredictable, with lots of angles and curves," he says. The interior also features elegant moldings and trim. "Our previous home was more contemporary, and I wanted to go in a



The lofty light-filled kitchen features a vaulted ceiling and true mortise-and-tenon beams. White Christopher Peacock cabinetry contrasts nicely with dark wood flooring. Barstools by Vanguard Furniture covered in Kravet fabric sit poised under stylish hanging pendant lights by Vaughan, purchased at John Rosselli & Associates.

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different direction the second time around,” the wife says. “I felt that we should include as much cabinetry and beautiful trimwork as we could.”

To complement the millwork, Elston incorporated a subtle palette. “We wanted to see color, but we didn’t want it to be overbearing,” she explains. “We really wanted the interior architecture to stand out.” Elston also brought in character with antiques, such as the table in the entry. “I love that piece,” she says. “The homeowner makes gorgeous flower arrangements, and that’s a great area for them to be seen. Also, a lot of the lighting in the house is antique, because vintage fixtures make a big statement.”

Gabled roofs and textured materials that conjure the past help heighten the home’s storybook style. “The rough bricks are clinkers,” says Pickell. “We also used rubble stone and plaster and threw in timbers and a little copper in there, too. All of that builds on the rustic flavor.” Adds Elston: “We applied hand-scraped floors and made the home a little more traditional, which inherently brings in a lot more warmth.”

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The homeowners desired a much more extensive porch for this house. In the colder months, screens are replaced with storm windows, making the space usable year-round. The floor has radiant heating and an antique English chandelier hangs from the vaulted ceiling.

Swathed in a silvery blue wallcovering from Brunswick & Fils, the powder room features a white vanity and gleaming fixtures from Kallista. The mirror, by Vaughan, gets an ambient glow from sconces by Chameleon Fine Lighting in New York.



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The homeowners worked closely with Pickell and Elston to design the ideal layout and interiors. The wife’s office, for example, has a view of the backyard, so she can watch the kids playing outside. And, in determining the scale of the rooms, they gave serious thought to furniture layout. This can be seen in the most important space of the home: the living room. “It’s the central nervous system of the home and we wanted it to be elegant and refined, yet comfortable and usable for the entire family,” Elston says. “The A. Rudin sectional was an integral part of achieving this goal.”

After all, function, as much as style, was a driving force behind the design. “I just had a party here with people running in and out, and our son was able to fully participate,” the wife says. “And that was just a really nice feeling.” **L**

The master suite, which includes a sitting area with a fireplace made of antique brick, offers restful sleep on luxurious custom bedding. The custom window treatments are by Baird’s Drapery Services.