



This architectural gem, perched right on Front Street in the village of Greenport, New York, is getting much needed love thanks to owners and a design team that respect its heritage as they turn it into a happy place.

STORY BY SANDRA S. SORIA

INTERIOR DESIGN BY MCKENZIE MILHOUSEN,

BY GEORGE COLLECTIVE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADAM KANE MACCHIA

LANDSCAPE DESIGN BY SOLSTICE GARDEN CO.

GREENPORT

PASTELLE



NO ONE

was more surprised than McKenzie Milhousen to be working on this grand, Victorian beauty on the North Fork of Long Island. She is half of the By George Collective, a boutique design and real estate development business she founded with her mother. “I am actually surprised that they chose me as a designer,” she says, “because most of my work is a lot more on, I would say, the minimalist side with desaturated colors and not a ton of pattern. So, this was a step outside of the box for me, working with them on this historical beauty right on Front Street in the heart of Greenport. It was like a gift to be able to work on it.”

A finance pro and natural gas trader by training and profession, McKenzie is now trading on her natural design talents, which she attributes to the decorating passions of her mother and grandmother.

“This is something that I’ve just started to do on the side—a kind of lucrative hobby,” she says, “and I’m just totally obsessed with it.”

For the young couple who owns this historic place, it’s easy to see the connection between McKenzie’s design enthusiasm and their own. They wanted to turn their home—previously divided into two separate units and stripped of much of its original architectural character—into a place that reflects their taste but respects its authenticity. “They are just the happiest, loveliest couple,” McKenzie says. “They’re very attracted to color and pattern. So, the challenge with this project became finding a design that would still look timeless and respect the integrity of the home and its historical time period, but feels like something that’s modern, unfussy, and theirs.”

This Victorian farmhouse dates back to 1880. Its owners tapped Katherine Wilcenski of Solstice Garden Co. to landscape the once-neglected yard. She only uses plants suited to the home and climate.



The entry floor had to be stripped of layers and layers of paint. Then a fun white check was painted over the natural hardwood for a visual punch. A 1950s Swedish light fixture drops from an original ceiling medallion.



A plunge pool offers an inviting spot to cool down. The border garden features fragrant blooms to enhance the experience.

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European antiques gather in the foyer to create an elegant first impression. Moldings were added to the space for vintage character.

Placed under a shade tree in a quiet area of the yard, a wicker wingback chair adds a sculptural element in the garden and the perfect spot to enjoy a good book or simply take in the fresh air.



It's a fine line to walk, and so the clients and designer started slowly. "We began with their bedroom," McKenzie says. "At the time they said, 'Why don't we start with the primary bedroom, see how it goes, and if the relationship is good and we like working together, let's keep going.'"

Things clicked. They began with the redesign of the bedroom in 2022, and the scope grew to include the foyer and parlor/bar area. The bedroom definitely turned out to be a stunner—a serene, modern expression with curvaceous details that hint at the home's past. Color was the starting point here. "They had chosen a color of blue on the walls that they really enjoyed," McKenzie says. "And we created a calming effect by layering that sort of muddy blue with warm neutrals to still keep it feeling very soft."

Most of the room's original architectural embellishments had been removed save for the door trim, so that jam became the inspiration for rebuilding its character. "We added the crowns and all of the paneling," McKenzie says. Another original element was the hardwood floor, but it needed help. "We actually lac-

quered it in white, which felt like a nice modern take, but they're the same floorboards that have been there for ages. That that was a cool way to repurpose it."

McKenzie took a similar approach when the foyer was added to the project: preserving original details, such as the original newel post and banister, and layering on what might have been. In this space, they sanded off coats and coats of paint—including a baby-blue topcoat—to reveal the original wood floor. "Then, we painted on the checks to give it some punch," she says. "The ceilings are so tall, we needed something to distract from all the space."

A sprinkling of antiques throughout the rooms were chosen to add more historic character—but only if they also functioned for the young couple's modern lifestyle. This personal mix of old and new is especially effective in the parlor and bar area, which was once a second kitchen in the divided home. "They are restaurant owners. And that's their side gig because they also have full-time jobs and she travels all the time for work," McKenzie says. "So, this house is their paradise. And when they come here, it's to relax and enjoy their time with family and friends. It's truly their happy place."

In a space that hosts game-day parties and the couple's movie nights, comfortable seating (a linen sofa by Sixpenny and Amber Interiors chairs) and a pro-level bar needed to live together. Curves established by the original mantel and arched doors were elements McKenzie built upon when designing a bar area that had commercial beer taps and a wine fridge. The columns from the fireplace are repeated in the bar and, to make the liquor shelves homier, a touch of Lulie Wallace wallpaper steps in. An antique pine table was cut down to size as a sturdy coffee table. And shelves and paneling create a library look, constructed of white oak to keep the feeling light.

The door in the bar leads to the thoughtfully landscaped yard, more paradise found for the couple. They worked with Katherine Wilcenski of Solstice Garden Co. to convert the property into a lush, inviting oasis, complete with a plunge pool and billowing hydrangeas that flourish on Long Island. Katherine specializes in livable landscapes that are designed to thrive naturally and invite people to connect with them.

Surprised as she is to have been chosen to work on this special project, clearly these homeowners know how to pick design partners. Inside and out, the mutual goal was to respect the originality of both home and homeowners as well as the greater environment. "I get so much joy out of working on homes in these very unique communities," McKenzie says, "because I pride myself on trying to maintain the historical integrity of these homes and really adding to the community."



In the corner of the primary bedroom (above), Zuzu enjoys a nap in a custom trundle bed. The room features Soho Home chairs and a Maiden Home bed.



Wide porches are now ready to entertain thanks to classic French bistro chairs and a modern take on a farmhouse table.