

A salvaged wood bracket takes the edge off a plain drywall corner where the new entry meets the family room in Nicola Manganello-Oliver's home in Maine.



A Fresh Spin on Vintage

BY CARA GREENBERG PHOTOGRAPHS BY KELLER & KELLER PRODUCTION BY SUSAN SALOMON

Removing a wall between the living and dining rooms opened and brightened the original part of the house (below). Old upholstery pieces with new down cushions and fresh white slipcovers stand out against deep brown walls. The side of the original circa 1900 house (right) is at the right. An addition with a gabled roof and porch, a breezeway, and a garage increased the house to about 3,400 square feet.





Growing up in Yarmouth, Maine, gave Nicola Manganello-Oliver an appreciation for historic houses.

One in particular, a century-old Greek Revival, intrigued her. "I walked by it every day as a kid," Nicola says. "I liked its tall, narrow shape. In my high school art class, we had to make a 3-D model of our favorite house, and this was the one I chose."

In 2003, the longtime owner put the then-dilapidated house up for sale. By that time, Nicola was a small-scale real estate developer who specialized in renovating older homes and building new ones with an old-fashioned feel. Having tackled nine whole-house renovations in the past six years, she was confident that she could update the house for herself and her 5-year-old daughter, Maeve. She also knew it would make a good investment. "It had had everything beautiful taken out of it, and I wanted to put it back," she says.

Working with D.E. Neal & Son, a local father and son carpentry team, Nicola expanded the two-bedroom house to include a new entry, kitchen, pantry, family room, master suite, and extra bedroom, all in a two-story farmhouse-style addition of her design. She also designed and built a new garage/studio that resembles a barn. Like many older houses that have been expanded over the years, incorporating changing styles and materials, Nicola's house is an amalgam. "From the front, it's a Greek Revival. From the side, it's a farmhouse," she says. However, a wide porch, running the length of the house, ties it all together.

Moldings, window trim, wainscoting, and other

Just as she blended styles on the exterior, the rooms inside display Nicola's gifts for combining disparate elements—elegant and rustic, formal and casual, vintage and new—and producing high-end effects with bargain finds. "I want my house to seem like a collection of things from near and far—different times, travels, and places brought into one," she says.

As a sculpture major at Maine College of Art in 1994, Nicola had spent a semester in Rome that changed her view on decorating. "I used to be a yard sale junkie, seeing beauty in things that didn't cost a lot of money," she recalls. "In Italy, I began to see the beauty in refined things, and I

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woodwork give the house a look of age and character

All-new construction resulted in a kitchen loaded with vintage charm, from a glass-door hutch detailed in faded green to cabinets trimmed with wood cutouts inspired by old fence posts. A farmhouse table stands in for an island. Open to the kitchen, with snazzy stripes painted freehand and shelving on decorative wrought-iron brackets, the pantry (left below) offers plenty of storage for Nicola's pitchers, vases, and other yard sale finds.





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said, 'I can make a life bringing the two together.'" It's this juxtaposing at work when she pairs a gleaming mahogany dining table with chairs covered in plain-weave cotton muslin. Or when she refinishes salvaged doors and columns for use alongside new factory-made ones.

Not a preservation purist, Nicola let practicality dictate some choices. Her new porch and exterior house trim are wood, and she used hand-split cedar shingles for the "barn," but the original clapboard house and gabled addition are covered in low-maintenance vinyl siding. The same practical mind-set applies to walls. "If an old plaster wall is not insulated, it has to come down," she says. "Sometimes, by the time you're done, you pretty much have a new house."

To emulate old-time craftsmanship, she splurged on moldings, wainscoting, and other wood trim. Although her goal is always a convincing >> on 138

Chairs covered with muslin relax the formality of a 19th-century dining table. The chandelier and wallpaper remind Nicola of time spent in France and Italy.

A mix of floral patterns on throw pillows and an armchair, pink curtains with embroidered valances, and a filigree light fixture (right) are "a little over the top for me," says the homeowner, "but I like that in the bedroom." Slate blue walls, a color repeated on the dining room ceiling, and a striped rug enliven Maeve's playroom (below), furnished—as is the rest of the house—with a mix of old and new.



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approximation of antiquity, whether something is genuinely old or brand spanking new doesn't matter to Nicola.

While her taste in furnishings skews to the 19th century, Nicola is modern in her approach to color. She loves mixing rich color, like the brown walls of her dining and living rooms, with white furniture and airy window treatments, such as the blue-and-white curtains in the dining room. She is drawn to muted hues that look aged. Recently, she found a hooked rug at a yard sale and put it in her living room right away. "It's faded to perfection," she says. "The red is now pink; the brown is now taupe. Even the greens of my kitchen cabinets are in this rug."

Although Nicola has succeeded in bringing new life to this old gem, she isn't likely to stay rooted for long. "It's a business for me, but I get to do what I love," she says. "I get to live in these old houses, and each is very different from the other. I'd be crazy to say I love to move, but I have been moving every couple of years and it's like starting life over each time." ☀

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