

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.



When Heather and Stefan Rumancik purchased this 1930s home from its second owners in 2009 for \$225,000, it hadn't been updated in 30 years.

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Their Home Renovation Was Almost Complete. All That Was Missing Was a Turret.

The circular tower in Louisville, Ky., capped off an update that was long overdue

By Vaishnavi Nayel Talawadekar | Photographs by Wes Battoclette for the Wall Street Journal

Jan. 4, 2023 12:05 pm ET

On a leafy lane in Audubon Park, in Louisville, Ky., sits a house that looks like it could have once belonged to Rapunzel. With a fairy-tale turret and Dutch Colonial Revival architecture, the home stands apart from its neighbors. But when Heather and Stefan Rumancik, both 43, purchased the 1930s home in 2009 for \$225,000, it was a far cry from its present-day version.



Stefan Rumancik, a builder and general contractor, and Heather Rumancik, a competitive intelligence executive at a pharmaceutical company, with their daughter, Adrienne.

“We bought the house from its second owners, who had owned it since the 1940s, but the home itself hadn’t been updated in 30 years,” says Mrs. Rumancik, a competitive intelligence executive at a pharmaceutical company, who shares the home with Mr. Rumancik and their daughter, Adrienne.

Although the Rumanciks renovated the original 3,025-square-foot home in parts over the years, the turret remained an unfulfilled wish for Mrs. Rumancik until 2020, when Mr. Rumancik, a builder and general contractor, was forced to pause his business due to the pandemic.



The Rumanciks' new addition includes a banquette on the first floor, the primary bathroom on the second, and a cocktail tasting room in the basement. They set a budget of \$350,000 for the three-story addition.

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“Our ongoing projects were halted by clients, so it was an ideal time to pivot to working on something that had been kept on the back burner for far too long,” says Mr. Rumancik, adding that the turret addition was appealing both for its aesthetic value and because it challenged him to try something new. For Mrs. Rumancik, the turret was a great way to expand the home’s footprint: She and Mr. Rumancik agreed on having a banquette on the first floor, the primary bathroom shower on the second, and a cocktail tasting room in the basement. They set a budget of \$350,000 for the three-story addition.

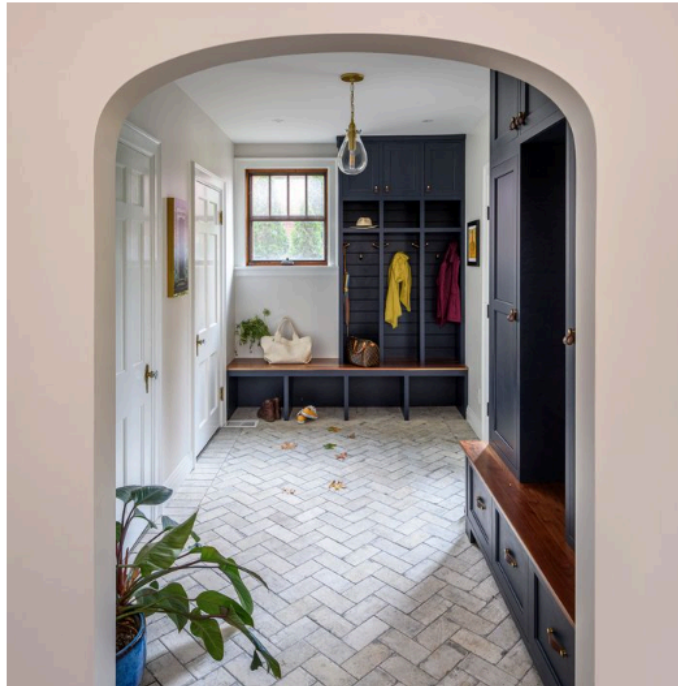
To help with the architecture of the addition, Mr. Rumancik tapped friend and longtime collaborator, architect Mark Foxworth of Foxworth Architecture, for \$35,000. Together, the two sheathed the turret in the same materials as the rest of the house: cedar shakes and Kentucky limestone, the latter removed and repurposed from the home’s exterior. “We made it special by capping it with a copper finial,” says Mr. Rumancik. “I think what’s unique is that you can’t see the turret or the addition from the street. It’s at the back, so the original architecture is really unchanged.” To minimize the extension’s energy consumption, Mr. Foxworth specified insulated concrete forms and high-performance glazing on the windows.



Mr. Rumancik and architect Mark Foxworth of Foxworth Architecture worked together to ensure that the turret looked like an extension of the existing architecture. They sheathed it in the same materials as the rest of the house: cedar shakes and Kentucky limestone, the latter removed and repurposed from the home’s exterior.
FROM LEFT: BETHANY ADAMS; WES BATTOCLETTE FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (2)

For the interior design of the addition, including the turret and the surrounding spaces, the Rumanciks enlisted Bethany Adams, founder and principal of her eponymous Louisville-based interior design studio, who had previously engaged Mr. Rumancik and his company, Designer Builders Inc., to help renovate her 1897 Victorian home. They agreed on a fee of \$35,000, excluding material costs. “We told Ms. Adams to take our ideas and make them better,” says Mrs. Rumancik.

“She proposed layout ideas that we hadn’t thought of, and also simplified some of the structural changes I thought we’d need, which ended up saving us quite a lot of money,” Mr. Rumancik says.



The mudroom is accessible from the central vestibule via a large arched opening. It was introduced by interior designer Bethany Adams to optimize the flow between the turret and the main house.

It was important for the Rumanciks that the home's heritage be honored. "Audubon Park was developed at the height of the Arts and Crafts movement when there was a true appreciation for the beauty of natural materials," says Ms. Adams, who introduced a lot of walnut wood, stone, and decorative glass to pay homage to the craftsmanship of that period. To optimize the flow between the addition and the main house, she designed a large vestibule with arched openings leading into the various spokes: namely, the mudroom, the kitchen, the living room, and the hallway.



Interior designer Bethany Adams mirrored the turret architecture in the main home by using curved handles and circular mirrors in the bathroom and powder room.

Additionally, Ms. Adams mirrored the turret architecture in the main home by using curved handles in the bathroom and powder room. "I also used circular mirrors and light fixtures, and there's a circular motif on the marble bathroom floor too. It's a subtle reminder of the geometry of the addition," she says. In the same vein, the original foyer and hallway were painted the same color as the new kitchen and mudroom. For the floor, Mr. Rumancik installed white oak planks that perfectly matched the rest of the house.

In the kitchen, the turret was built to accommodate a banquette. Mr. Rumancik made the breakfast table himself as a Christmas gift for his wife using walnut wood from his father's farm in Danville, Ky., and leftover quartzite from the kitchen counters. Ms. Adams arranged for custom navy blue cabinetry, a walnut island, and a bar top, which collectively cost \$58,000. She also upholstered the banquette in the same chartreuse fabric as the West Elm bar stools, which cost \$500 apiece. The banquette cost a total of \$10,000.



In the kitchen, the banquette was built to accommodate a breakfast table. Mr. Rumancik made the breakfast table himself as a Christmas gift for his wife using walnut wood from his father's farm in Danville, Ky, and a flower quartet from the kitchen counters.



For Mr. Rumancik, the tiling of the circular shower walls was an exercise in both mathematical proficiency and patience. "Even though the shower tile came on a mesh backing, many pieces had to be cut and placed individually in order to follow the curve of the walls and afford uniform grout joints. We spent four weeks tiling that shower," he says.



The kitchen has custom-made blue cabinetry, a walnut island, and a blue top, which collectively cost \$24,000.



Mr. Rumancik and his wife enjoy a backyard bonfire.

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All in all, the Rumanciks say the 2021 renovation—completed just before the holidays to the tune of \$425,000—was compensation for a year gone awry. "Despite the challenges of the previous year, it was quite possibly the best Christmas of all," says Mrs. Rumancik.