

# SOPHISTICATED LIVING

{20 Years of Louisville's Finest}





The Italianate mansion was built in 1870 for Presbyterian minister John J. Cooke.







# KEEP CALM AND RENOVATE ON

After living across the pond for a decade, a Louisville native returns home and puts down roots in an Old Louisville mansion.

*Written by Bridget Williams / Photography by Jeremy Blum*



After one foot inside the door of this circa 1870 Victorian Italianate home, Ellen Archer knew it was "the one." Having spent a decade living in London, where she met her husband, Elliot Bright, the couple returned to the Bluegrass State seeking a better quality of life, which included more square feet than was possible in one of the world's priciest real estate markets. "We were like, 'We can get all of this for *that*!'" Ellen said as she recalled their search for a home. They were drawn to the Old Louisville neighborhood for its architectural similarities with London's East End and Ellen's nostalgia, as she played piano during the neighborhood's Christmas home tour as a child.





The chandelier was procured from an antique shop in Dallas via 1stdibs.com.



An antique Zuber mural in the foyer.



The kitchen was expanded as part of the renovation so it flows directly into the dining area.



A Julie Neill for Visual Comfort Talia chandelier illuminates the living room.



When the project commenced, they were childless. Today, they have two, and Ellen, who founded Luxury Rentals Louisville, recalls the challenge of bringing home a baby without a functional kitchen, which quickly took the shine out of the DIY project. The home's previous owner had updated the mechanicals, but when what Ellen referred to as the "make pretty" aspects ended up being a more extensive project than they anticipated, particularly concerning the reworking of the kitchen and dining area, it prompted them to call in a professional, specifically friend and neighbor Bethany Adams

of Bethany Adams Interiors. "We were taking so much time because we knew what we wanted but not how to get there, and Bethany helped move us along," remarked Ellen, who joked that Bethany also had to be an occasional referee when she and her "form over function" husband didn't see eye-to-eye. Ellen said that one thing that has stayed the same is leaning on her mom as a general contractor, painter, drywall skimmer, and occasional scaffolding builder. With a long history of volunteering with Habitat for Humanity, Ellen jokes that as a mother of six, her mom says that her children's habitats are now her hobby.

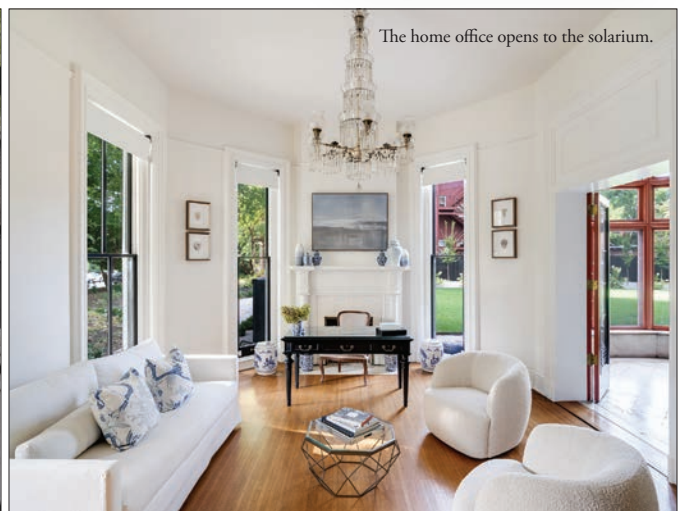




A former parking lot next to the home is now a verdant greenspace ringed with landscaping.



The windows and doors in the dining area were custom-made by Fitz Schultz of Stanley & Schultz.



The home office opens to the solarium.

The home is endowed with the bone structure of a supermodel, complete with arched doors, stained glass windows, and soaring ceilings. It reveals its charm from the get-go in a foyer graced with an original Zuber mural. Taking cues from Frank Lloyd Wright's design principle of "compression and release," Bethany chose a matte black paint for the walls and trim in the space so that when you progress into the three-story stair hall, the arrival is even more dramatic. When they purchased the home, the lathe and plaster on the ceiling was crumbling; today, suspended high overhead is a massive crystal chandelier procured from an antique shop in Dallas via 1stdibs.com.

A native of the Northeast, Bethany is a global citizen who has lived and studied in Japan and Paris; her philomath ways have contributed to a diverse design dossier with a particular emphasis on historic homes. "I love making them more livable and modern," she said. On the first floor of this home, this design ethos expresses itself via blonde wood narrow plank hardwood floors (perfect for a home with two large yellow Labs), white walls, monochromatic furnishings, judicious use of black

and a smattering of contemporary art that creates a youthful vibe within the historical framework.

Ellen said Bethany's guidance was a "savior" concerning the kitchen. The renovated and expanded space is bright and airy, with a range inset into a white subway-tiled alcove and open shelving with brushed brass brackets. The natural white quartzite tile extends into the adjacent dining area and outdoor terrace. The former is enveloped on two sides by windows and doors custom-made by Fitz Schultz of Stanley & Schultz to mimic the look of the beloved steel Crittall windows in their London residence. The couple bought the adjacent lot, formerly a paved parking area, and transformed it into an urban oasis with an enviable green lawn ringed by Limelight hydrangeas and specimen trees that will eventually grow into a natural privacy screen.

Anyone who has lived in and loved an old house knows that the work is never done, and nearly a decade in, Ellen and Elliot continue to tweak their living spaces, with the primary suite the next on the list for a makeover. And, as the home evolves to meet the needs of their family, one thing that hasn't changed is their commitment to the neighborhood. "We absolutely love living here," Ellen effused. **sl**