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# DESIGN

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# Cambridge Evolution

History lays the groundwork for a discreetly Modern addition to a Greek Revival classic

WRITTEN BY MARIA KARAGIANIS • PHOTOGRAPHED BY ERIC ROTH





**THE ADDITION HAS** an exterior spiral staircase that connects the new second-story terrace and master suite above the stucco-clad music room to the ground-level terrace. The flat roof and squared-off lines of the new space mesh beautifully with the gabled 1845 house.



**W**illa Chamberlain of Cambridge, Massachusetts, qualifies as a warrior, not a wimp, when it comes to taking on ambitious architectural projects.

In 2000, when she and her husband purchased their circa 1845 Greek Revival-style house near Harvard Square, “there were trees growing into the front roof and trees that had fallen onto the music room in the back, and the greenhouse was broken,” says Chamberlain. “But it was very New England, very romantic.”

In the last 13 years, the historic property, which began life as a simple saltbox on a street once called Windmill Lane that winds down to the Charles River, has undergone three major renovation projects. A few blocks off Brattle Street, the house seems to have evolved organically and holistically from its birth as a simple New England wood-framed house to its current splendor as a Greek Revival grande dame set into a magnificent garden in the middle of the city. Once you are behind the brick wall and hedge of hinoki cypresses, which the owners planted to





form



comfort



craft



DESIGN FOCUS



**BEFORE THE ADDITION**, the music room, circa 1920s, and a second floor add-on set the tone for architect David Hacin's flat-roof design. "I like our projects to have a good flow that is ideally circular (eliminating dead ends)," says Hacin. As the elevation (BELOW LEFT) and floor plan (BELOW RIGHT) show, "The rooms and spaces flow into one another and generally have more than one access point."

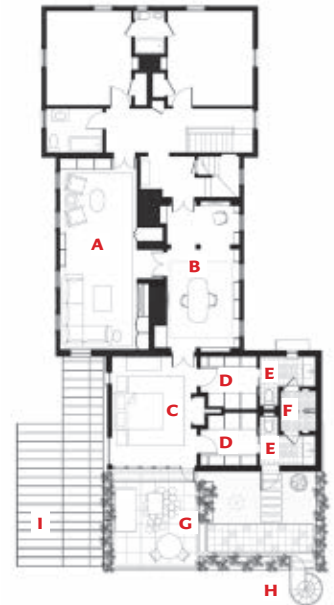


**NEW ELEVATION**

- 1 MUSIC ROOM
- 2 ENTRY HALL
- 3 KITCHEN
- 4 STUDY/OFFICE
- 5 MASTER SUITE
- 6 ROOF DECK
- 7 STAIR TO YARD

**NEW SECOND FLOOR**

- A STUDY
- B OFFICE
- C MASTER BEDROOM
- D CLOSET
- E BATH
- F SHOWER
- G ROOF DECK
- H STAIR TO YARD
- I GREENHOUSE



**CONSTRUCTION** F.H. Perry Builder

separate the front of the house from the sidewalk, you feel as if you are in another, more magical country.

The first project restored the living room, library, dining room, and kitchen, as well as other core parts of the 14-room house. A few years later, they tackled the restoration of the music room, a single-story 1920s addition to the back of the house with elegant French doors that open to the garden and the adjacent greenhouse, which was also brought back to life — along with its cherished collection of antique camellias ("The Darling of

the Greenhouse," *Design New England*, January/February 2007). The most recent project, arguably the most interesting, given the age and history of the property, is a second-floor deck and master suite built over the music room.

"We were having dinner together one night about three years ago, in their wonderful dining room with murals painted all over the walls," says architect David Hacin, president of Hacin + Associates Inc. in Boston and a friend of the owners, "and they said they wanted to show me something on the second





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floor. We climbed out of the window and stood on the roof of the music room. They said they wanted to build something there. It was a spectacular vantage point — an oasis, really. They said they wanted a beautiful deck in the sky.”

They also needed a proper master suite. “Our bedroom was a sleeping porch,” says Chamberlain. “Our bathroom was makeshift, and our study only fit books. We had focused on the five bedrooms needed for the children. Dessert came

**THE MASTER BEDROOM (ABOVE LEFT) IS** a modern light- and sun-filled space connected to the deck. **One of two identical closets (ABOVE RIGHT),** this one the wife’s, leads into her side of the master bathroom.



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THE LUXURIOUS MARBLE SHOWER (ABOVE LEFT) is accessible from both the his and her bathrooms. Planters filled with flowering annuals line the rooftop terrace (ABOVE RIGHT), where a retractable awning provides shade.

last. We conjured a nest that was beautiful yet up-to-date, cozy yet streamlined, intricate but uncluttered. And David was our answer. The ‘deck in the sky’ takes the original Georgian style to new heights.”

The design and building process took two years. “There was a lot of prior work before we struck ground. We ordered everything,” says Chamberlain. “David is all about the details.” With contractor F.H. Perry Builder of Hopkin-



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## DESIGN FOCUS

ton, Massachusetts, on the job, she adds, “they started on time and finished on time. It was the best experience possible. It was really awesome. Fun.”

“The shape and design of the addition,” says Hacin, “was intended to integrate with the music room but not overwhelm either it or the main house. The original music room addition was clad in a fairly unadorned stucco finish and attached to the clapboard main house. Our design intended to weave those two materials together, refine the detailing of the stucco and clapboards, and blend contemporary and traditional design influences that would reveal the aggregated quality of the house over time.”

Today, the beautiful deck they envisioned overlooks a swimming pool, an ancient tree canopy that provides privacy, and a beautiful historic garden designed by Fletcher Steele, the famous American landscape architect of the 1920s and 1930s. It adjoins an up-to-date

A still life arrangement featuring a vase of yellow tulips, a lit candle, and a ceramic jar on a white surface against a green wall. The scene is set against a green wall with a gold-colored decorative border. The Dayton Home logo is visible in the upper right corner.

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**WILLA CHAMBERLAIN EMERGES** from the new back entry (FACING PAGE), part of Hacin's renovation. Inside the modern door, a mudroom (FAR RIGHT) leads to the music room. Off the mudroom is the impeccably restored butler's pantry (NEAR RIGHT), which doubles as a potting room for the garden and greenhouse and as a service space when Chamberlain and her husband entertain in the music room.



FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES

master suite with a study, giant closets, and his-and-her bathrooms connected by a luxurious marble steam shower.

Inside, the addition is modern, sleek, and light-filled, yet outside it is difficult to see where old ends and new begins. The historic nature of the house is undisturbed by Hacin's design, architecture that could

be described as evolution, rather than revolution.

"It was a challenge. How could we honor the past yet provide the amenities of modern life and the freshness my clients desired?" Hacin asks. Ultimately, it was the eclectic history and culture of the house that inspired him and his clients "to honor the past yet create the present and future." ■



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