

PACIFIC NORTHWEST

The Seattle Times SUNDAY MAGAZINE | MAY 22, 2005

Spring Home Design

NORTH SEATTLE

A box of ideas

CAPITOL HILL

Mediterranean revival

BELLTOWN

Small is big

MADRONA

Singular use of space

RAVENNA

Practiced simplicity

BELLTOWN

Small is big

Islands of Serenity

SPACE WELL USED
CREATES
THE COMFORT
WE CRAVE



BY LAWRENCE KREISMAN |

PHOTOGRAPHED BY

BENJAMIN BENSCHNEIDER



IN THE LIVING ROOM, a Louis XV-style French marble fireplace surround replaces the simpler wood-trimmed original. Above it is "Bird & Mountain," a 1943 painting by Morris Graves. On the left wall is Guy Anderson's 1980 "Around the New Born." William Slater's colorful 2005 work, "Vase," is visible through the doorway.

MEDITERRANEAN REVIVAL

JOHN AND DIAHANN BRASETH spent 11 years improving their Georgian Colonial home. But whenever they passed by a Mediterranean Revival perched on a nearby hillside overlooking Lake Washington, their hearts beat a bit faster.

For them it was a mysterious house. Drawn shades and blacked-out windows meant no one could see in. Finally, in 2003, for-sale signs went up. "All these

people had gone to see it and encouraged me," John recalls. "But I didn't want to go see it. It would break my heart to know how beautiful it was and also know that we couldn't afford it." By the fall, when the house was still on the market, he called the agent.

"Naively, after a 15-minute first-time tour of the home, we knew it was ours. I just looked at my wife and we both nodded." Despite a year of renovation that is far from over, they have no regrets.

The house was built for Roy Corbett, a local Cadillac dealer, in 1926 and designed by the respected local firm of Schack Young & Myers.

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"QUIET MOMENT," by William Cumming, brings bright color into the dramatic lacquered walls of Diahann Braseth's study. Dale Chihuly glass rests on the windowsill; West African sculpture stands at the far right.

Old walls came down, new finishes went up,
and integrity was restored



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< Mediterranean

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In 1938 the house came into the national spotlight when John Boettiger, publisher of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, and his wife, Anna Roosevelt Boettiger, an editor there, moved in with two children, Curtis and Eleanor, from her former marriage. Their son, John Jr., was born in 1939. While no "Franklin and Eleanor slept here" plaques are on display, the proud grandparents, Franklin D. and Eleanor Roosevelt, did visit often.

The Boettigers had Secret Service people living here, primarily to protect the children from kidnapping. The floor plan of the house was ideally suited for this. Off a central hallway was a study, music room, living and dining room, kitchen and breakfast room. But the Corbetts, expecting that their daughter would live with them in her own quarters, had asked their architect to provide for turning the house into a duplex. A side entrance led to a foyer and what the architects labeled staff living room, kitchen and dining. On either end of the central hall were nearly identical

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REFLECTING EACH OTHER at either end of the main hall, the east and west stairs share the same design vocabulary of ornamental iron newel posts and balusters. The painting on the right is "Confrontation at the Bridge" by Jacob Lawrence.



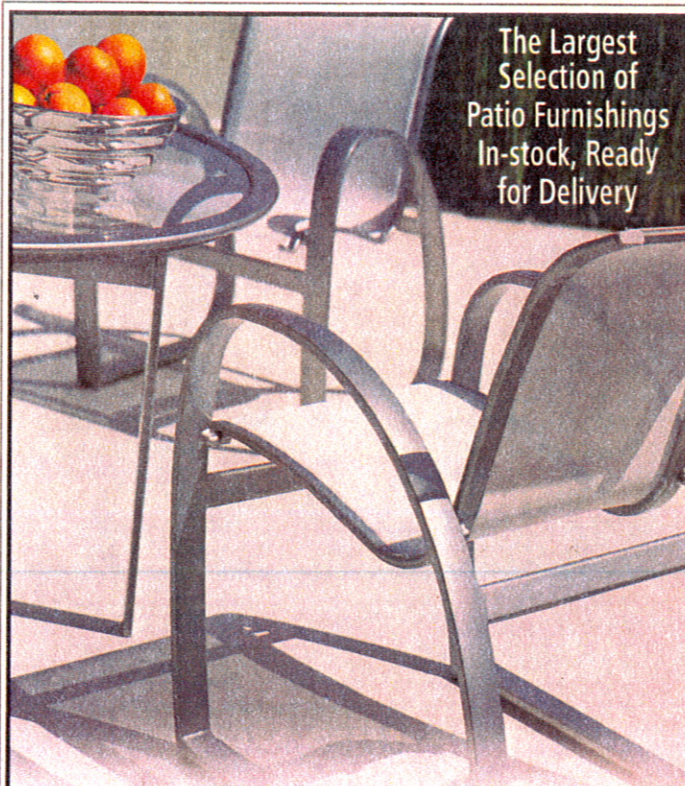
A lesson in honoring original elegance

JOHN AND DIAHANN BRASETH say the biggest challenge they faced in remodeling this home was how to bring it into the 21st century and still preserve its original architectural formality and elegance. "We have a serious sense of stewardship when it comes to this kind of home," John Braseeth says. Joe Schneider was the architect in charge of the project. The interior had oak flooring, mahogany doors, rope-trimmed plaster arches and beautiful wrought-iron railings and newel posts. The work included refinishing the doors, replicating plaster moldings in wood for rooms that did not have moldings, and building traditional enclosures for bare radiators. Other changes:


- Hallway partitions were demolished to make what had been two separate houses one again.
- Two plywood bookcases on either side of the living-room fireplace and wall behind them were taken out to create two arched doorways that connect the living and music rooms.
- Rough-laid plaster walls were smoothed and trim molding applied to the living room to give it a more formal ambience.



CIRCUS-THEMED MURALS in the second-floor nursery were painted for the delight of John Boettiger Jr. and remain untouched since that time.



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THE KITCHEN combines traditional painted wood cabinets with white marble counters. It opens to the arch-windowed breakfast room.

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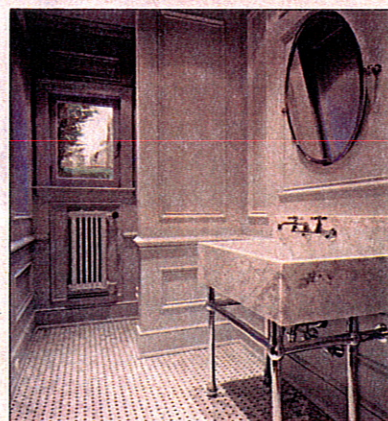
staircases with ornamental balusters leading to a second-floor hall with connecting bedrooms, dressing and sitting rooms, and baths. It didn't take long before walls were put up separating the two sides of the house.

With the nation at war, the Roosevelts moved back to Washington, D.C., selling the house in 1941 to A.W. and Genevieve Brindle, who owned it until 2002.

The Braseths have furnished the living, dining and breakfast rooms with mid-19th-century European pieces. They also display the work of Northwest artists, including William Ivey, Morris Graves and Guy Anderson. "People assume that because I'm a contemporary art dealer I'd have a contemporary home," John says. "But that's not what I'd want."

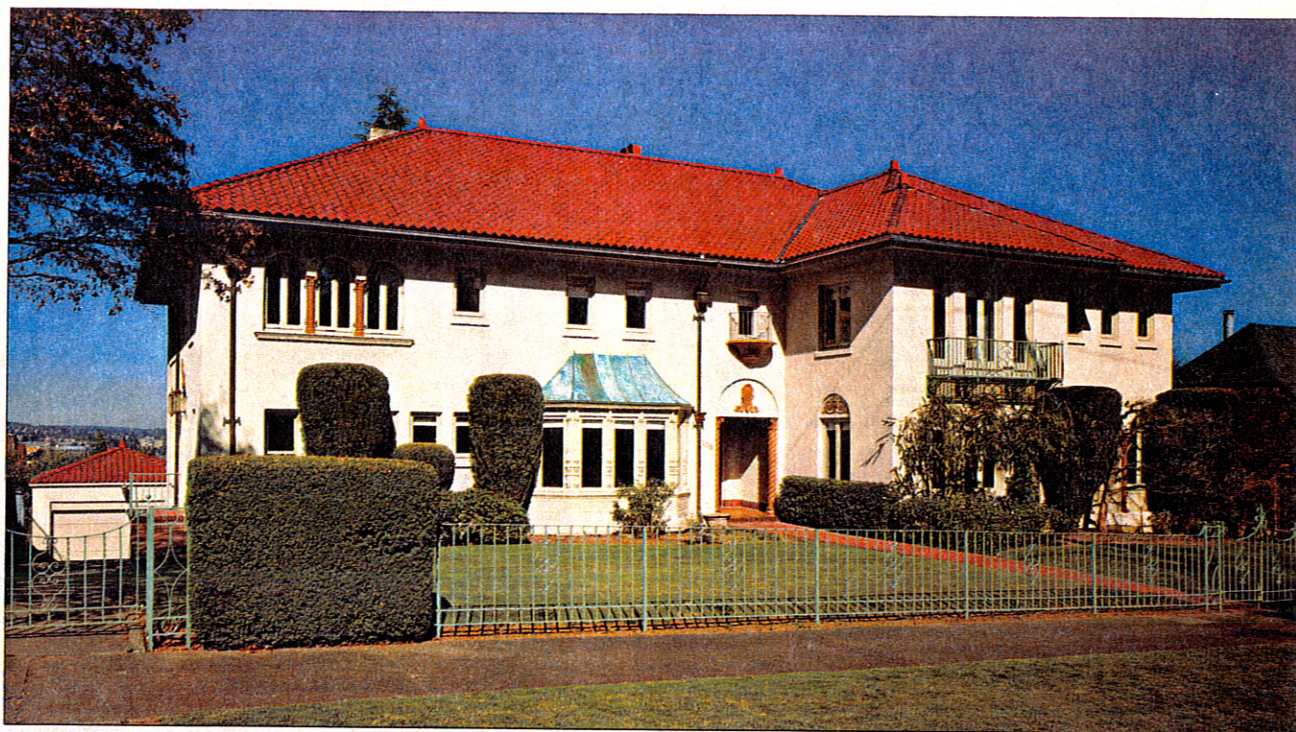
John has made the study his home office; across the hall, Diahann's library was

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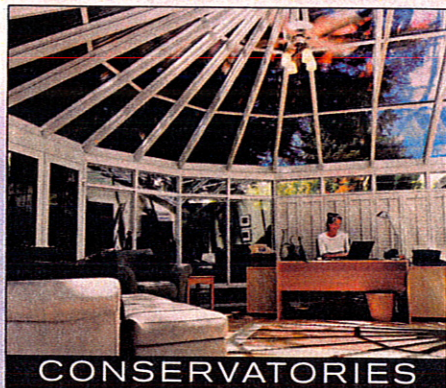
A STONE SINK adds a modern touch to the main-floor powder room while tile from Ann Sacks reflects the period of the home.

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is little changed
from the way it
looked when it
was completed.
The red-tiled roof
is the original
from 1926.



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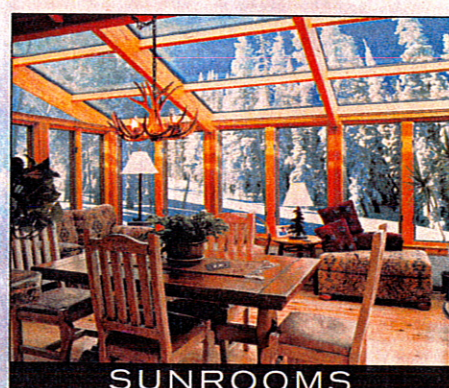
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Continued from page 24

shaped from the former staff kitchen and dining room.

But the most dramatic change has been in the former kitchen and breakfast room. Doors between the hall, kitchen, breakfast and dining rooms were pulled out, along with walls and cabinetry, to make the kitchen feel more a part of the house. White marble counters and sinks make for clean, elegant lines. But the floor is really the focal point. The pattern was computer generated, then laid in black-and-white stone in a Greco-Roman pattern.

While the entire project was complicated, the good will between contractor Kevin Price of JAS Design Build and the clients had already been established in remodeling the couple's former house.

"Our contractor is not the standard builder," Braseth says. "He employs architects, artists and other master craftsmen from many disciplines. We consider him a restorer because he has one foot firmly rooted in the past and the other in the future, which frankly sums up our philosophy of living." 

Lawrence Kreisman is program director of Historic Seattle. Benjamin Ben-schneider is a Pacific Northwest magazine staff photographer.

Tea and Tour

HISTORIC SEATTLE welcomes members and guests to tour the Corbett/Braseth residence from 1 to 4 p.m., Sunday, July 31, and enjoy refreshments. Pre-registration is required; tickets are \$20. Call 206-622-6952. Proceeds support Historic Seattle's educational programs.

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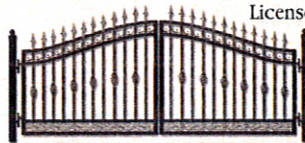
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