

Two Baths for a Vintage Home

With a nod to classic style,
a pair of bathrooms is transformed
for a modern family

BY ANN McCULLOCH

Taking on a remodeling project in an old house requires a careful balancing act. Ideally, the remodel will improve the way the house looks and functions but won't sacrifice its old-house charm. I recently had the chance to work with great clients in Portland, Ore., who understand that there's more to remodeling than simply swapping old for new.

The Schulers' home is an exemplary Tudor revival. Such homes, which had their heyday in the 1920s and '30s, have distinctive steep roofs, stucco exteriors, and attention-grabbing Arts and Crafts-inspired interiors.

The Schulers, who bought the house three years ago, contacted me about a comprehensive update of their home that included remodeling the two upstairs bathrooms. The Schulers were excited about the prospect of remodeling to make their home more functional, and were particularly concerned about getting the details right. They had good reason for concern; a past remodel wasn't kind to this house.

Specifically, the master bathroom is where the greatest remodeling atrocities had occurred. Redone in the 1980s, the master bath had brown fixtures and mauve wall-to-wall carpeting that clashed with the house's period details. Even worse, the previous contractor created structural problems when he removed load-bearing walls while changing the original floor plan.

The Schulers asked me to update and expand their master bath and to undo the damage done during the past remodel. Also on their list was a fun and functional bath for their three kids. The Schulers were clear that

Timeless Tudor.
With its steep roof,
massive chimney,
and stucco exterior,
this home is typical
of American Tudor-
revival architecture.
The inside of the
house has lots of
built-ins, decorative
mosaic tile, and
ornamental plaster.



A NEW MASTER BATH THAT LOOKS OLD



Calming, not boring

Often dominated by shades of white, period baths can be boring and have an institutional feel that's not relaxing. The cool colors on display in this bath are soothing without being boring. Paint is from Miller Paint (millerpaint.com).

Wall: Evolution, Marseilles flat

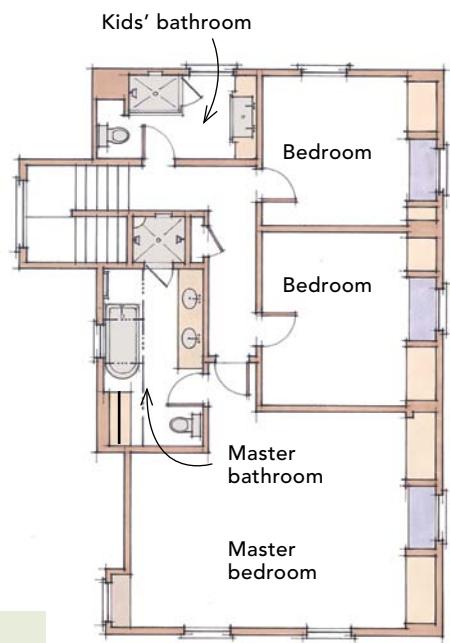
Ceiling: Acro Pure, Sugar Dust flat

Vanity: Acro Pure, London Road semigloss

The recently remodeled bathrooms in this vintage home combine modern amenities such as walk-in showers and large vanities with period-appropriate fixtures and finishes such as a claw-foot tub and faucets with cross-handle valves. The result is baths that look old but that work for today's lifestyles.



Before



After

0 2 4 8 ft.

FUN FOR THE KIDS

Larger than most vanity sinks, the farmhouse sink in the kids' bathroom keeps water contained and provides enough room for sharing. The glass pulls on the vanity help to maintain a period look.



Kid-friendly and bright

Light-green walls and a darker-green vanity are examples of fun and playful colors that kids like. Paint is from Miller Paint (millerpaint.com).

Wall: Evolution, Saw Grass Cottage flat

Ceiling: Acro Pure, Sugar Dust flat

Vanity: Acro Pure, French Pear semigloss

they didn't want alterations made to the exterior of the house, so any space added to the bathrooms would have to be carved from the existing floor plan. They also requested that the baths be styled appropriately and not clash with the house's traditional roots.

Choose finishes and fixtures wisely

It's likely that the previous owner of the Schulers' house loved the new master bath. The fixtures and color palette would have been at the height of fashion. However, not many years later, these once-trendy selections were showing their age.

Rather than choose the latest and greatest materials, I encourage my remodeling clients to go with a simpler style and more timeless fixtures. This prevents the design from looking outdated before its time.

In the Schulers' baths, we used classic white subway tile on the walls and porcelain mosaic tile on the floor. Both types would have been common when the house was built. To make the otherwise plain white floor more interesting, we added a decorative border and accents with contrasting colors, an idea inspired by a floor I once saw in a beautiful old hotel.

In the master bath, we opted for a cast-iron, freestanding claw-foot tub and a white-marble vanity top with undermount sinks. Once again, we chose fixtures that would have been common in the 1920s and '30s.

In the kids' bath, I designed a vanity that looked like an old piece of furniture, but we gave it a fun twist by installing a farmhouse sink with two faucets. With a pair of faucets, two kids can get cleaned up or ready for

bed together, and the huge sink means less water on the countertop. Of course, a farmhouse sink would have been relegated to the kitchen when the house was built. Because the sink is appropriate to the period and highly functional in this bath, however, we considered it to be an acceptable departure from the norm.

Mixing old and new

The remodeled baths in this house are a good example of mixing old and new styles. For example, the Schulers wanted tiled showers, but a modern, glass-enclosed shower can look really out of place in a period-inspired bath. For the kids' bath, we chose a simple rectangular design with basic door and mounting hardware. Keeping the shower simple and unobtrusive helps it to blend in



Keep it simple. The glass shower's clean lines and simple hardware don't compete with the period-style fixtures nearby. The white subway tile and mosaic floor were features common to many Tudor homes of the time.

with the period-appropriate bath fixtures nearby. We also used inexpensive industrial-looking light fixtures over the more period-looking vanity. The pairing works because the lights and the vanity have simple lines and similar finishes. In the master bath, we installed the shower in a separate space, so only the shower door is visible from the rest of the bath. This provides extra privacy and allows the more period-appropriate bath fixtures nearby to define the dominant style of the space.

Making more space

By modern standards, both bathrooms were cramped, so we used a variety of strategies to gain space. For the kids' bathroom, we took over a closet in the adjoining bedroom, which became the new shower. We replaced

the lost storage with built-ins that include a window seat for reading and relaxing. The shower is 3 ft. 6 in. by 3 ft. 10 in. Compared to a code-minimum shower (3 ft. by 3 ft.), it feels spacious.

In the master bath, we added a new tiled shower and a toilet alcove. The alcove was created by stealing space from the master bedroom (floor plan, p. 81). This required moving a bedroom wall. The lost space wasn't used much, so making the room a little smaller was a sensible compromise.

The whole family loves the new baths, and I'm pleased with how well they fit in with this wonderful old house. □

Ann McCulloch is a designer in Portland, Ore. Photos courtesy of David Hiser, except where noted.

DETAILS

The right finishes can help a contemporary bath to fit better in an older house. Even though they're brand new, these three products contribute to the look and feel of an original bathroom.



Mosaic floor tile:
Daltile mosaic tile in
Arctic White, Garden Spot,
and Cityline Kohl (daltile.com)



Master-bath faucet: Belle Foret N315 02, cross handle, chrome (belleforet.com)



Master-bath light switches:
Rejuvenation,
push-button
switch with
brass wall plate
(rejuvenation.com)