

Delightful CONTRASTS

MARY AND RUSSELL STILL'S HISTORIC HOME

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Photos by Deanna Dikeman

Looks can be deceiving, especially when it comes to the home of Mary and Russell Still at 2000 S. Country Club Drive.

From the outside, this stone historic house, built in 1910, looks austere, nearly foreboding, but inside it is alive with warmth and welcome, furnished in a comforting mix of wicker, antiques and family heirlooms and literally lighted and warmed by a roaring fireplace and a cozy sunroom.

Even the solid appearance of this four-square house could fool you. It actually started out across the street. Columbia architect and builder Berry McAlester moved the home in 1924 so he could use its original location for another grander house for himself.

The home's historical ties go beyond Berry McALESTER. His father was A.W. (Andrew Walker) McALESTER, who in 1890 was considered the father of the University of Missouri's School of Medicine, a connection Mary Still, who worked for the MU News Bureau for eight years, is particularly happy about. After A.W. McALESTER's death in 1920, the Medical Building was renamed McALESTER Hall in his honor, according to the MU website. And this isn't the home's only historic connection. Bruce Maier, the creator of Discwasher, a renowned cleaning system for vinyl records, lived in the home from 1975 to 1984.

These days, Mary Still, Missouri representative for District 25 since 2008, and her husband, Russell Still, a local attorney, make their home there. Mary says their house is proof that a historic home can be a family-friendly place. The couple moved there in January of 1984; though Allie, 30, lives in Philadelphia, and Susannah, 26, makes her home in Washington, D.C., the two girls grew up there.







Their family photos sparkle from the walls, along with other photos of Mary's family from Arkansas and Russell's from St. Louis. Throughout the home, friends and family are the thread that runs through all furnishings. Upstairs is a 10-foot-tall mirror from Mary's home in Arkansas that reputedly came from a bordello in Memphis. In the living room is a bookcase from Mary's family, and the secretary on the other wall hails from Russell's family. The rest of the furniture includes antiques mixed with comfy upholstered pieces and wicker.

Mary also says her home proves a historic home can be work friendly.

Her desk and computer are tucked away in the corner of a room that might have originally been a dining room and now serves as a library. Today, the formal dining room adjoins the living room and is used for traditional family dinners and entertaining, including political gatherings or parties such as the recent celebration of the 100th anniversary of the house, to which they invited all their neighbors.

The Stills also enjoy gathering around a blazing fire in the stone fireplace in the living room. But their favorite room all year round is the sunroom, which features French doors that open completely to bring the outside in. They're also energy-efficient and keep the room cozy no matter what the weather. The heated tile floor doesn't hurt either.

It is in this room that the Stills celebrate their own Christmas Eve tradition with family, friends and neighbors that involves lighting the Christmas tree — with real candles.

Although the tree and candles are authentic, the sunroom began life as a portico; Mary has a historic photo that shows a horse and carriage under it. It was later transformed into a screened-in porch, and in 2005 the Stills replaced it with the present sunroom on nearly the same footprint.

Now the family almost lives there; they eat at the wooden table in front of the French doors that face the backyard. "We sacrificed the screened-in porch, but we got this," Mary says as she indicates the light-drenched room. The room retains the historic feel of the rest of the house, with dark woodwork, a bead-board ceiling and aged-looking tile.

To make sure the room is always light and bright, in addition to French doors, the room features transoms above the windows, says Tim Brockmeier of Designs by Brockmeier, who has been aiding and abetting Mary in keeping the home comfy yet up-to-date





since the Stills moved there. Constructed by Ragland Construction, the room retains the historic feel of the home while including modern features such as disappearing screens, whimsical light fixtures and a heated tile floor.

"We've been working on the house for 25 years a room at a time," Mary says. This summer, she and Brockmeier tackled the kitchen. The kitchen features cabinets of knotty alder with a natural finish in an elegant design created by Brockmeier and built by Dimensions in Wood, again reflecting a delightful contrast of historic and modern. The contrast is heightened by dark suede finished granite counters around the perimeter of the room that play off the light cabinets as well as with the white and gray veining CaesarStone counter, which resembles Cararra marble, on a distressed black island cabinet.

All these contrasts make sense. The rugged stone exterior has stood the test of time since 1910. Despite a move across the street, several windows still sparkle with wavy handmade glass, and the roof tiles with their life span of 100 to 150 years are still good. And inside, once again the Still family will gather on Christmas Eve to light their candles.

Truly, a historic home can be family friendly. **CHL**

