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Happy Returns

After two decades away, a couple comes home to Beacon Hill and a gracious apartment newly restored to its nineteenth-century glory.

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INTERIOR DESIGN: HEATHER WELLS, HEATHER G. WELLS, LTD.
CONTRACTOR: F.H. PERRY BUILDER | PRODUCED BY KYLE HOEPNER



OVERLOOKING ONE OF BEACON HILL'S MOST STORIED STREETS, THE LIVING ROOM HAS BEEN RETURNED TO ITS ORIGINAL GRANDEUR. FACING PAGE: POCKET DOORS OF RICH WALNUT SLIDE BETWEEN THE ENTRYWAY AND THE LIVING AND DINING ROOMS.





TWIN FIREPLACES TOPPED WITH GILT-FRAMED MIRRORS FACE EACH OTHER ACROSS THE LIVING ROOM, WHICH WAS ONCE DIVIDED IN TWO. *RIGHT:* SUBTLE GREEN AND BLUE ACCENTS PUNCTUATE THE WARM BEIGE PALETTE. *BELOW:* HOMEOWNER PEGGY CAMBRIDGE ACQUIRED HER TASTE FOR TRADITIONAL FURNISHINGS WHILE LIVING IN LONDON.



GENTLY DISTRESSED WALNUT FLOORS RUN THROUGHOUT THE APARTMENT, INCLUDING THE KITCHEN, WHICH IS LIT BY THE BUILDING'S CENTER COURTYARD. FACING PAGE: A CLOSET JUST OFF THE LIVING ROOM BECAME A COMPACT BAR.



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eacon Hill's stately brownstones and narrow, gas-lit streets have a way of transporting people back in time, to the gentility of nineteenth-century Boston. For Peggy Cambridge, the neighborhood conjures a not-so-distant, but no less romantic, past. Twenty years ago, fresh out of college and newly married, she lived with her husband and two dogs in a cozy studio apartment on Beacon Street, right next door to the Bull and Finch Pub, otherwise known as Cheers.

Flash forward to the present, and the second act of Cambridge's Beacon Hill story unfolds, this time in a luxurious, 3,000-square-foot pied-à-terre on one of the neighborhood's most distinguished streets. Rich with paneling and gilt-framed paintings, lush draperies and twinkling chandeliers, the recently remodeled apartment serves as a second home for the Cambridges, both New England natives, and Coco, their Yorkshire terrier.

Since their early days in Boston, Cambridge and her husband had followed their careers around the world—living in London, Hong Kong and, finally, Los Angeles—but their hearts never left Beacon Hill. "We always wanted to stay connected to this very unique village," she says.

With the help of Brewster & Berkowitz, experts in Beacon Hill real estate, the globetrotting couple nabbed the perfect East Coast nest. Their spacious floor-through apartment, which stretches the width of an entire block, was a rare find. "It was an exciting thing for our client to find this place," says Cambridge's architect, Robert "Guy" Dixon of the Nantucket-based firm Botticelli & Pohl. "The building has a courtyard in the center, which is really



fantastic. Typically your Beacon Hill brownstone gets just a little sliver of light."

After several decades without an update, the apartment was also ripe for transformation on a large scale. "We wanted a property we could enhance with our own vision, instead of buying something already renovated," Cambridge says. "We enjoy ripping things apart and putting them back together again."

Wisely, Cambridge enlisted Dixon and the master craftsmen of F.H. Perry Builder to handle the actual ripping and reassembling. "When you have a building that's 150 years old, you have to work around the existing framing," Dixon says. "It really is a little bit of wizardry."

With a few flourishes of the architect's pencil, four bedrooms became two, plus a study and sitting room; the kitchen grew to accommodate a dining nook; and two small living rooms merged to create a grand salon.

The renovation has returned the apartment to what it

DESIGNER HEATHER WELLS MIXED REPRODUCTION FURNITURE WITH ANTIQUE TOUCHES, LIKE THE COLLECTION OF PLATES ON THE WALL, TO BRING AN OLD BOSTON AMBIENCE TO THE DINING ROOM. *FACING PAGE:* WELLS INDULGED HER CLIENTS' LOVE OF TOILE IN THE STUDY, COVERING THE WALLS WITH A DUSTY RED FABRIC.

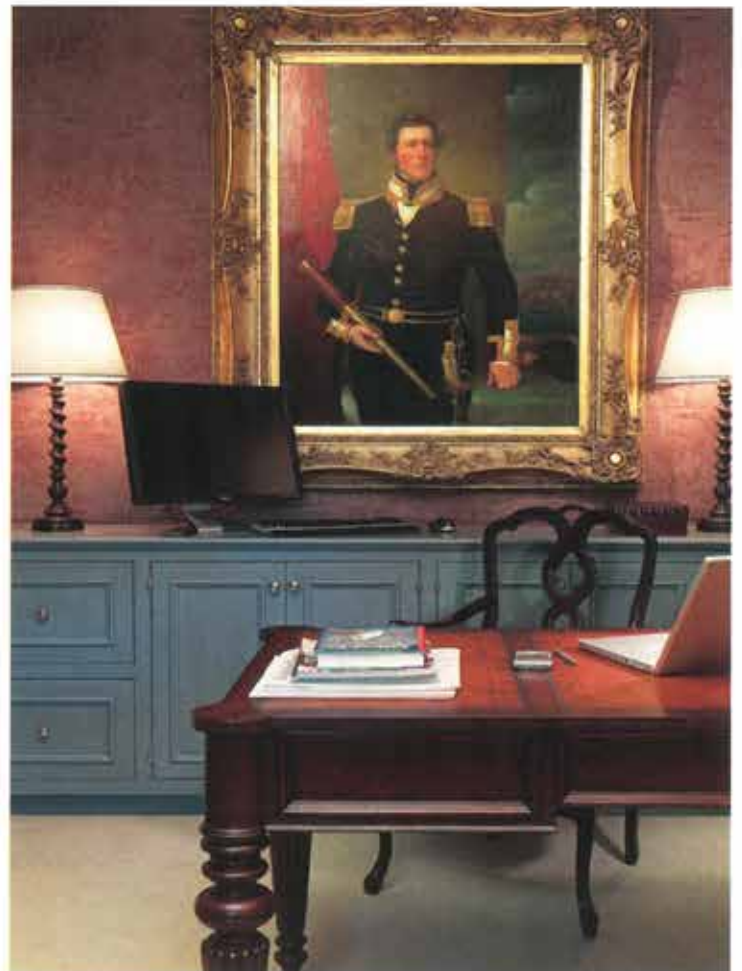




might have looked like in its heyday, in the mid-1800s. The graciously proportioned rooms are full of classic touches, like dark walnut floors and doors, and paneling finished with strié painting. “The clients were adamant about how much they like detailing,” Dixon says. “I took cues from the existing detailing and turned it up a notch. It was paramount to maintain the old Boston feel.”

Traditional but hardly stodgy, the apartment gets a dose of glamour from a contemporary color scheme devised by interior designer Heather Wells. “They’re sophisticated and formal people,” Wells says of the couple. “I suggested that they do more of a city palette: gold, silver, gray, sage, more muted tones. We wanted to have it feel of shiny and glamorous, give it more of an evening feel.”

Though Cambridge typically favors bold primary colors, she trusted her designer’s instincts. “We wanted to be a little more adventurous, be open to Heather’s ideas and suggestions,” she says. “She was very good at conceptualizing our tastes.” (So good, in





spans the width of the apartment, anchored by a fireplace on either end. Wells divided the ballroom-size space into two seating areas defined by a pair of sisal rugs. Sunlight filters in through damask-draped windows, dappling the smartly tailored furniture, while touches of turquoise and teal enliven the neutral palette.

Off a handsome dining room paneled in mossy green, the bright kitchen—freshly done up with a coffered ceiling, marble countertops and classic white cabinetry—can handle serious entertaining as easily as a weekend breakfast for two. A long passageway lit by glass globe lanterns leads to the private rooms at the rear of the apartment.

The feeling of quiet glamour Wells infused in the formal entertaining spaces continues in the master bedroom. There, she swathed the walls in pearl-colored silk and created a comfortable reading corner near the fireplace, one of five in the apartment. Opulent in white paneling and Calcutta gold marble, the spacious master bath stars a silver-nickled tub fit for a queen (or a pint-sized canine).

fact, that Wells was able to consult with her long-distance clients primarily via e-mail and the occasional FedEx box of swatches.)

To dress up the understated palette, Wells incorporated silver, crystal and nickel accents throughout the apartment, as well as eye-catching light fixtures that appeal to her clients' love of detail. "They're interested in the 'jewelry' and the 'accessories' of the outfit," says Wells, who has offices in Boston and Chicago. Entering the apartment feels a bit like stepping inside a lady's jewelry box. Lit by an antique chandelier, the entryway gleams with a floor of Carrara marble and mirrored panels hand-embellished with silver leaf. "The mirror is more sparkly than reflective, so it feels very rich," Wells says.

No less refined, the beige-paneled living room now

For all its elegant trappings, Cambridge's pied-à-terre lacks one standard convenience: not a single clock adorns its mantels and paneled walls. "We live in a fast-paced world of travel, meetings and conference calls," she explains. "When we come here, we spend time with family and enjoy the simple pleasures of Beacon Hill."

Fittingly, the first gathering Cambridge hosted in her new home honored the designers and craftsmen who made it possible. "What a great team we had," she says. "They created an environment that's really pleasant and joyful." And, one might add, timeless. **NEH**

RESOURCES For more information about this home see page 219.

To see more of this home tune in to NECN's *New England Dream House* Sunday January 25 at 10 a.m. Host Beth Shelburne and Kyle Hoepner, editor-in-chief of *New England Home*, will take viewers on a tour of this beautiful home. The show will also air January 25 at 7 p.m. and at 3 p.m. on January 26 and 29 as well as February 3, 6 and 11. You can also see the story online on www.nedreamhouse.com starting January 25.



THE COUPLE'S OIL PAINTINGS REFLECT THE MUTED TONES OF THE DECOR; THE WINTRY SCENE IN THE MASTER BEDROOM IS NO EXCEPTION. *FACING PAGE:* ARCHITECT ROBERT DIXON CALLS THE LUXURIOUS MASTER BATH "THE PUNCTUATION MARK ON THE PROJECT."