

Bathroom strategies: create vintage-inspired baths

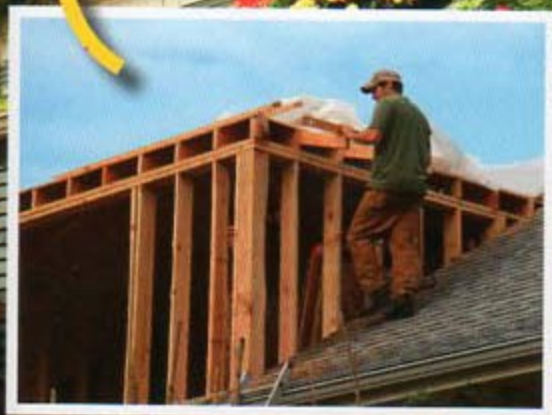
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Vintage Vision

Harkening to the past, using salvaged materials, and finding the right design team to pull it all together lets a Minneapolis couple create bathrooms that will stand the test of time.

STORY BY DEMETRA APOSPOROS ♦ PHOTOS BY JOY WATSON

THIS PAGE: Classic bathrooms get grounded by a few key details, like this statement-making console sink. **OPPOSITE, TOP:** Two leaded glass windows were added; one (at left) admits exterior light, while the other (at right) helps brighten a new walk-in closet.

Master Bath



Creating a new bathroom that works in an old house can be a challenge, but from the outset, Michael Dorneich and Caroline Hayes had a solid strategy. "We wanted to have something relatively authentic to the era, that would match the house," says Caroline. "If you have an old house and renovate in old style, it will never look outdated."

Dated bathrooms were something the couple knew well, having inherited two of them in their 1899 Italianate in St. Paul, Minnesota. "The house was in fairly good shape overall, but the bathrooms had undergone the dreaded 1970s makeover," says Michael. On the second floor, previous owners had squeezed a pink toilet and sink into space



COURTESY MICHAEL DORNEICH & CAROLINE HAYES



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: The floor's floral-patterned hex tiles continue unbroken through the shower, adding to the spacious feel. The tub's finish edge of quarter-round tile hides a visible difference in its support, owing to the floor's extreme pitch. A marble curb ties the dark grout and gray accent tiles together. The tub filler has period style.



PRODUCTS: Master Bath: Kallista Janeway console sinks, Kohler; Lagoon dual pedestal tub and deck-mount tub filler, Strom Plumbing; Supply lines with cross-handle stops, Randolph Morris; Memoirs showerhead and arm, Kohler; Whitney elongated toilet, Toto; Napa double sconces, Pottery Barn; Shower door, Portals Luxury Hardware & Accessories; 3x6 subway tile and inset toilet paper holder, Daltile; 1" hex tile (with Light Smoke accent), American Olean; Tilework (all), Jody McKay; Cement Gray paint, Benjamin Moore. Third-Floor Bath: Whitney elongated toilet, Toto; St. Thomas Creations Nouveau console sink and Somerset series faucet, Grohe; Memoirs showerhead and arm, Kohler; HVAC grate, Reggio Registers; 6x6 cove base, 3x6 field tile, Bradley chair rail cap, and 1" Biscuit hex tile (with Galaxy accent), Daltile; English Hyacinth paint, Benjamin Moore.

that once housed a closet, while the third floor harbored a three-quarter bath. "But not the three-quarter you're used to," says Michael, explaining that it contained a shower, a sink—and a urinal. The couple aimed to reconfigure spaces to create a roomy second-floor master bathroom, add a walk-in closet for Caroline, and make the

third-floor bath more usable.

To help them carry out this vision, they turned to Laura Orfield-Skrivseth of Orfield Design & Construction in Minnetonka, who was recommended by a colleague of Michael's. Working with Laura proved to be a boon for the couple. For starters, she helped mediate their

Third Floor Bath



ABOVE: The third-floor bath includes a border-patterned hex tile floor and a leaded glass transom to help light the adjoining hallway. **RIGHT:** A new sink and vintage medicine cabinet make a statement. The tile baseboard exactly matches the dimensions and profile of wooden baseboard found throughout the third floor.



long-running conversations about how to approach the project.

"They often had opposite opinions of what each room needed to look like," explains Laura. "I took input from each of them and interpreted it through our best design practices and our experience in working with older homes."

"It was almost like homeowners' marriage counseling," Michael says. "Orfield was an honest broker; within a month we had a master plan."

Thoughtful Decisions

The home's second floor would contain

the master bathroom suite, where Caroline and Michael knew they wanted a separate shower and tub. "We thought it would be nice to have a freestanding tub," says Caroline. But she didn't want to have to clean beneath it as she'd done with claw-foots in two prior old houses. "So I chose a pedestal instead. I still have to clean behind it, but hopefully nobody's looking!"

The cast iron pedestal tub sits in the far corner to maximize floor space. Installing it proved tricky, since the floor—as in many old houses—was quite uneven, leaving a visibly different line at the bottom of the tub from one side to the

other. "We had to install a trim tile, like a little lip around the bottom, because the floor pitched so much," explains Laura. "It looks like it's part of the tub, but it's hiding an old-house ailment."

The floor pitch made tile installation a challenge as well, especially on the second floor. "Because that room has a tile wainscot that goes in and out of the shower as well, we had to find that right line so it could go completely around without pitching," says Laura.

Tiler Jody McKay flawlessly executed the tricky installation, and also carried the decorative hex tile floor patterns into



the shower stalls, a technique Laura has used in other houses, too. A floating floral hex motif grounds the master bath, but on the third floor, Caroline wanted something different. "We chose to have the pattern around just the edge there, something we'd seen as an original example at a friend's house," she says.

Found Objects

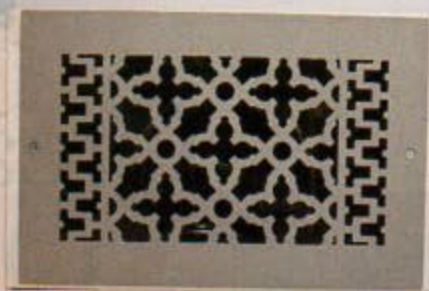
As part of their quest to keep the bathrooms looking old, Michael and Caroline found several items at local salvage stores, including medicine cabinets and lighting.

"I wanted plain, ordinary medicine cabinets of the era, but it was hard to find them in decent condition," says Caroline. "The salvaged medicine cabinets were authentic and of better quality," says Michael. "Of course, we had to restore them." (The couple scraped away the old lead paint themselves, wearing protective gear.)

They also found a host of leaded glass windows, which required some creative problem-solving from the design team. "They brought us panes of leaded glass, and we had to assemble them into frames and jambs and casings and make them into

something," explains Laura. The company's master carpenter, Ron Orfield, was critical in pulling it all together.

On the third floor, a leaded glass window became a transom above the bathroom door to help light flow into the adjacent hallway. In the second-floor master bath, a leaded window was added inside the bay, positioned between two double-hungs to mimic the exact placement of an original leaded pane on the first floor, which is flanked by two tall windows. "We mirrored the pattern so it would be consistent in the house," says Caroline. Owing to the



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:
 The gable defines the bathroom, adding instant charm. A detail of the hex tile border turning a corner. The vintage-inspired new HVAC grate. The view from the door.



severity of Minnesota winters, Laura's team also insulated the window by adding a layer of tempered glass on the home's exterior.

Getting materials into the third-floor bath required more creative problem-solving. The third floor was accessible only by a narrow, winding staircase, which meant the Orfield team had to remove a third-floor attic window to boom in drywall and lumber. But here, the design just fell into place. "There were only so many straight walls where you could put a full-height shower and have a sink with a usable mirror," says Laura.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- American Olean: americanolean.com
- Benjamin Moore: benjaminmoore.com
- Daltile: daltile.com
- Grohe: grohe.com
- Jody McKay: jodymckay@msn.com
- Kohler: kohler.com
- Orfield Design: orfelddesign.com

- Portals Luxury Hardware & Accessories: portalshardware.com
- Pottery Barn: potterybarn.com
- Randolph Morris: vintagetub.com
- Reggio Registers: reggioregister.com
- Strom Plumbing: signofthecrab.com
- Toto: totousa.com

The bath, with bird's-mouth ceiling details thanks to the gable, makes quite an impression, packing a lot of period details into a small space. "We thought that if either of our parents need to move in at some point, we'd give them the master suite and move upstairs, and still have a nice, usable bathroom there," says Michael.

Both he and Caroline are pleased with the finished project, which won a Chrysalis Award for the design. "Just having a bath-

room that nice makes it fun to get up in the morning," says Michael. Laura shares their enjoyment: "I had a lot of fun with their openness to using salvaged materials," she says. "They created beautiful features in their home." 🏠

Check out our photo gallery of other top-floor bathrooms in old houses.

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Bathing Beauties

Top-floor bathrooms tend to present some unique space challenges, but as the homeowners in both "Through the Roof" (page 34) and Old-House Insider (above and page 44) prove, their limitations don't have to be a deterrent to period style. See how other handy homeowners tackled this design conundrum in an online photo gallery of some of our favorite top-floor bathrooms.

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