Cotswold-style cottage calls the design shots

by Nancy McLaughlin
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The Bodine house was built in 1926. Credit: Michael McLaughlin

It wasn't the biggest house on the block, or the most imposing, but there was a distinctive Englishness in the steeply pitched roofline, arched entryway and weeping mortar that spoke to her inner Anglophile.

Anne Bodine, the RoundTable's former community events editor, recalled admiring the residence at 2229 Central Park for years before it finally came on the market.

"For some reason, every time I drove down Central Park my eye would go to it," she said, "and I would think, 'That is the cutest little house.'"

She and her husband, Sam, were living at the time with their three small children in a compact colonial on McDaniel Street and were beginning to feel pinched in the tight quarters.

While on vacation in 2014 the couple learned that the longtime object of Bodine's affection had suddenly become available. They arranged to see the four-bedroom, two-and-a-half-bath home as soon as they returned and immediately submitted an offer.

Designer Jodi Morton (left) and Anne Bodine. Credit: Nancy McLaughlin

After moving in, Bodine spent two years letting her vision for the house steep before contacting her friend, Evanston-based designer Jodi Morton, whom she has known since middle school. Their creative collaboration, a process they both reportedly savored, spanned the next eight years and continues to this day.

"We've been in no rush," said Bodine, "and that's been really nice. It's so much more organic."

"And things reveal themselves as you start," added Morton. "If you make all the decisions ahead of time, you leave no room for serendipity."

The designer took her cues not only from Bodine, but also from the house itself, which she identified as a third partner in the collaboration.

"This house knows exactly what it wants, and Anne knows exactly what she wants. It has been like that from the get-go," said Morton.

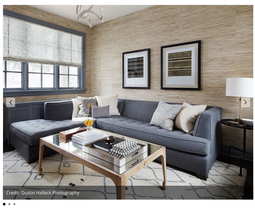
Bodine was charmed by the Cotswold-style architecture of the home and wanted to maximize trademark elements, including arched doorways, wood floors and modestly proportioned rooms. The resulting design emphasizes timelessness over trendiness and comfort over opulence. The house never shouts, "Look at me!" Instead, it gently inquires, "How do you take your tea?"

Credit: Dustin Hallock Photography

That ethos of restraint is epitomized in the kitchen, where glossy blue cabinetry, Carrera marble countertops and an apron-front sink strike a balance between homey and aspirational. Handcrafted burnished brass pulls, latches, shelf brackets and light fixtures from devOL are among Bodine's favorite finishes: "It's all imperfect, hand done, wonky, and I love it."

The commercial-grade refrigerator, which one can only assume holds wheels of Double Gloucester cheese and pots of clotted cream, is tastefully disguised as cabinetry. The island is painted in Farrow & Ball Cola, a warm brown with red undertones. A scrubbed pine table from Old Plank Antiques occupies the corner eating nook. Custom bench cushions upholstered in a stripy Zak+Fox fabric encourage diners to linger.

Just off the kitchen is a cozy family room or "snug," as Morton calls it, applying the British term. A single sectional sofa facing the TV provides the only seating in the diminutive space, which seems to exist in defiance of great rooms.

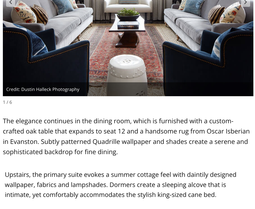


Credit: Dustin Hallock Photography

"This is such a funny little room," said Bodine, "but we are in it all the time. I love that this house doesn't have a big open kitchen and TV room. I love that this room is not connected to the kitchen. The TV is not the focal point of our house."

The more generously proportioned living room is a spot for larger groups to gather. A pair of gray velvet sofas from Jayson Home anchor the room and provide abundant seating. The fireplace, flanked by arched built-ins, adds warmth on chilly days. The palette is primarily neutral but punctuated with colorful accessories like the quartet of turntable drawings created by Darren Oberto, co-owner of Alley Gallery in Evanston.

"We kept it layered and eclectic," said Morton. "Added lighting, great textiles. The rooms are so pretty on their own; they just need to be layered. They don't need a lot. We just painted the walls and the trim the same color and let it be a background for elegant pieces."



Credit: Dustin Hallock Photography

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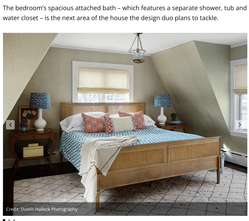
The elegance continues in the dining room, which is furnished with a custom-crafted oak table that expands to seat 12 and a handsome rug from Oscar Isberian in Evanston. Subtly patterned Quadrille wallpaper and shades create a serene and sophisticated backdrop for fine dining.

Upstairs, the primary suite evokes a summer cottage feel with daintily designed wallpaper, fabrics and lampshades. Dormers create a sleeping alcove that is intimate, yet comfortably accommodates the stylish king-sized cane bed.

The bedroom's spacious attached bath – which features a separate shower, tub and water closet – is the next area of the house the design duo plans to tackle.



Credit: Dustin Hallock Photography

Bodine said her project wish list also includes converting the attic room above the detached garage into a usable studio space and landscaping the backyard. Morton has urged her to establish a cutting garden, which no self-respecting Cotswold cottage would do without, and Bodine agrees that the scheme is a good one.

It is evident that part of the magic formula is the duo's easy rapport and enduring friendship.

"Working with Jodi is fun and light," said Bodine. "It's not ever stressful. I'm never going to be done."