

Quintessentially *Classic*

Interior designer Pam Kelley weaves together architecture, interiors, and the garden in a classic American home.





Over the course of her long and prolific career, Dallas interior designer Pam Kelley has worked in every style, but for her own home the choice is simple. “I am a traditionalist at heart and a Southerner,” she says. “My signature style, for me personally, is the classic American house.”

About five years ago she decided it was time to downsize. “My furniture and art dictated the house I could and would buy,” she says. It had to be stylistically sympathetic to her 18th-century antiques, which include a massive early 18th-century English bibliothèque and seven 18th-century English burled-wood chests. The 1931 neoclassical cottage she found in Highland Park was perfect, a miniature version of her old house.

Designed by Dallas architect James Duff, it featured 8½-foot ceilings, hardwood floors, two working fireplaces, and the roofline balustrade typical of Duff’s houses. It also had lots of little closets and small, chopped-up rooms, so Pam took the interior back to the studs to capture every inch of useable space.

In the informal family room, she replaced the original three sets of French doors with energy efficient double-pane thermal glass doors with larger panes. “That opened the room more to the garden,” she says. The center pair of doors folds back flat, so in good weather the family room can be opened to the patio, creating one large entertaining space indoors and out.

Hallmarks of English country homes—18th-century chests, a bamboo coffee table, arm chairs with deeply fringed skirts, and an ornately carved oak chandelier—tap into the historic roots of traditional American style. The soft gray-green Bruntschwig & Fils upholstery on the Baker sofas brings the green of the garden indoors. The original mantel was missing so Pam installed an antique English marble surround to frame the fireplace.



Furnished with English antiques, a Sarouk rug, and blue-and-white porcelain, the formal living room exemplifies traditional style. The massive early 18th-century English bibliothèque was "the first important piece of furniture I ever purchased," says Pam. The coffee table was originally an American-made dining table that Pam cut down. (Below, left) The completely renovated kitchen occupies the same spot as the original kitchen, but has new hardwood floors, glass-front cabinets, and a sleek double oven with a gas range. Bevel-edge tiles manufactured in England for subway stations give the walls depth and dimension. The island work table was left by the previous owner, and Pam updated it with paint and a new marble top.



Pam's eye for design doesn't stop at the threshold. As she cleaned up and renovated the grounds, she created visual connections between the home's interior and the view outside. The spare, symmetrical plantings in the front yard play up the clean, neoclassical architecture. In the back, the tidy geometry of patios, planting beds, and carpet of turf recalls the fenced gardens of the Colonial Revival style that was popular when the house was built. Pam took the visual link between house and garden one step further with a grid of Confederate jasmine trained to the white-stained cedar fence. "The espaliers form squares the same size as the window panes on the French doors—and I'm not a bit OCD!" she laughs. "It's like a mirror image of the French doors."

Pam discovered her interest in interior decorating when she was a teenager, and she has gone on to build a

full-service practice that encompasses everything from design concept and execution to art installation, household management, and event planning. Working with a small staff, she assembles teams of architects, contractors, and craftspeople as needed for each job. "It's a passion, pure and simple," she says. "I live, eat, and breathe design, every aspect of it, from the design of gardens through the house to everything that happens in the house."

Her career has taken her from coast to coast, working on both residential and commercial projects. "You have to really listen and know your client for it to be successful," she says, and since projects usually take more than a year to complete, clients often end up becoming close friends. "I really enjoy the people," Pam says. "The benefits the career has allowed—I consider it a privilege, not a job." □

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