



# CRUX OF THE MATHER

Restaurateur Rick Doody transformed the Hunting Valley estate of Amasa Stone Mather into an inviting home that balances Old World architecture and modern style.

BY LYNNE THOMPSON • PHOTOGRAPHY BY TRICIA SHAY



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R

ick Doody had always admired the stucco and stone home in Hunting Valley.

Built in 1916 by Amasa Stone Mather, son of shipping magnate Samuel Mather, the three-story Tudor exemplified the height of country house living with indoor plumbing, solid oak woodwork, decorative fireplaces in every room and a gentleman's bar outside the paneled study.

"I loved the architecture," Doody enthuses.

The property had generated interest since going on the market in 2013, but one prospective buyer after another had passed. There were drawbacks to be sure. The 10,000-square-foot estate lacked whole-house air conditioning and badly needed a kitchen update. The maze of discrete rooms, accessed through low, narrow doors common to the era, put off younger homeowners accustomed to open floor plans.

None of that bothered Doody, the founder and chairman of the Columbus-based Bravo Brio Restaurant Group. He enjoyed the home renovation process. Plus, he was going through a divorce and wanted a place near his ex-wife and three teenage children and Bravo Brio's office in Chagrin Falls.

"It needed somebody that fell in love with the history of the home, the architecture and wanted something special, to be a curator throughout their time here and take this house to the next level," says Wendy Berry of W Design in Chagrin Falls.

Doody, who also owns Cedar Creek Grille in Beachwood and Coastal Taco in the Flats, purchased the Mather house for \$2 million in 2013. He hired Berry, who'd worked on some of his restaurants, to transform it into a five bedroom, five bath and two half-bath retreat.

He envisioned an open, light-filled base where he could recharge and his kids could visit comfortably. The result skillfully balances modern style with Old World architectural design and historic details.

"It's not someone's grandmother's house," Berry says. "It's not a country club. It's a livable family house that feels fresh."

When it was built originally, the home was meant to have three

or four bedrooms. Compared to Samuel Mather and Flora Stone Mather's 45-room mansion on Millionaires' Row or their 25-room Shoreby summer retreat in Bratenahl, it was tiny. Some even speculate it was constructed as a gatehouse or hunting lodge, a precursor to a grander showplace that was never built, says Christopher "Kit" Whipple, a Cleveland historian specializing in the Mather family.

Still, Amasa Stone Mather's estate attracted notable guests such as President Theodore Roosevelt ("They were hunting buddies," says Whipple) and indulged his passion for horses. The elaborate stables were made in the same style and with the same high-quality materials as the main house.

When Mather died of pneumonia in 1920 at age 36, his wife and two young children moved back to her native New York. Yet a series of notable owners helped the home retain its luster throughout the 20th century.

Philanthropist Louise Ireland Humphrey, widow of M.A. Hanna Co. president and CEO Gilbert Humphrey, built the pool. Jeffrey A. Cole, former chairman and CEO of eyewear and specialty retailer Cole National Corp., finished the guesthouse and added the pool house. Another resident added a three-bedroom, two-bath west wing.

Berry began the renovation by widening and raising doorways as much as structurally possible to open views throughout the first floor. She created the illusion of height on the remaining doors by adding faux transoms fashioned from paneled doors removed between first-floor rooms.

"You walk in one space, and you *feel* all the rooms," she says.

While new heating, cooling and electrical systems were installed, much was preserved. "It has so much Cleveland history and was beautiful," says Berry.

Original wide-plank oak floors were refinished. Plaster walls and ceilings were painstakingly repaired, then painted a creamy white. "You had to put a surgeon's glove on your hand and keep dipping it in water to make [the plaster] smooth and give it a mottled feel," Berry says of the process.

The billiards room is still finished in paneling Mather sourced from

Built in 1916 by Amasa Stone Mather, the Hunting Valley Tudor was relatively small among the family's homes. An original covered bridge leads to the guest quarters, while a bluestone patio was added off the family room.

a ship, English manor library or pub, depending on the storyteller. She added French doors to provide access to an adjoining screened-in porch.

There Berry leveled the sandstone floor and added an 8-by-13-foot fireplace in stone matching the foundation.

"We didn't touch the paint," she says, eyeing a section of cracked white between the beams of the porch ceiling. "We just cleaned it up."

The kitchen and family room received the biggest makeover with a new foundation, new roofline and dormer windows. The teardown and rebuild doubled the size of the family room, adding a vaulted pine-beamed ceiling and enormous wood-burning fireplace appropriate to the era.

"Each room was a separate destination, where you had to walk out of one door to enter another room," she says. "We married an open floor plan of today's lifestyle with the old, so it feels more authentic."

Creamy white cabinets, topped with Calacatta gold marble and accented with a matching subway tile-sized backsplash, replaced the former dark-wood counterparts. A walnut butcher block now anchors one end of a kitchen island lit by polished-nickel drum fixtures.

Doody, who cooks three to four nights a week, uses it to make dough for pizzas baked in the wood-burning pizza oven he had installed on the bluestone patio off the family room.

A large pantry off the garage hallway became a powder room to augment the one off the hall to the study. "I figured I'd do a lot of entertaining," Doody says. "One little, tiny bathroom on the first floor might be not enough."

On the second floor, Berry created a small vestibule inside the master suite to provide some separation from the hall and added moldings and a new fireplace mantle. Doody suggested converting a small space off the bedroom that the previous owners used as a craft room — something he didn't need or want — into a kitchenette for making morning coffee.



Work on a bedroom over the kitchen revealed a brick wall with a pair of large arched openings — perhaps windows that overlooked the former family room roof and backyard — that had been blocked off.

"I called it 'the hallway bedroom,'" Doody says.

When a previous owner added the west wing, the original bedroom also served as an entry into that part of the house. "That always weirded me out a little bit," he says.

So walls between bedroom and hall were removed and the arches exposed, turning the space into a sitting area with a curved balcony overlooking the vaulted family room.

"We tried to preserve everything that was quirky, original and helped tell the story of the house," Berry says.

So, for example, an original third-floor hall storage closet lined with white beadboard cabinetry taken from a ship remained untouched. Even the old commercial firehoses, encased in glass-fronted wall compartments in the second-floor hall and a first-floor closet





The study features charcoal gray paneling and a rich hand-knotted wool rug. The once-dark kitchen got a white-and-bright makeover, while the master suite is warmed by an inviting fireplace.



under the main staircase, were preserved.

During an earlier renovation, a previous owner had outfitted the five full baths upstairs with new fixtures and finishes appropriate to the early 20th century. The master bath was particularly impressive with its mosaic floor medallion and free-standing oval soaking tub under an original stained-glass window.

Berry raised its ceiling, then replaced the wall of wardrobes on one side of the room and the his-and-hers pedestal sinks on the other with flanking his-and-hers vanities. An expansive walk-in closet off the bedroom is being expanded into a neighboring area furnished as a study.

The three bedrooms in the newer wing were decorated to suit Doody's children. But Berry finished the rest of the house in a "very calm, very creamy palette."

Inspired by magazine photos Doody provided, the blend of neutrals balance the abundance of dark wood. An original travertine marble fireplace and antique mirrored wall added by the previous owner highlight the living room, where comfy velvet-chenille and corduroy-linen sofas share space with damask-patterned linen armchairs on a suede-trimmed needlepoint rug.

Their creams, grays and camels mingle in a grass cloth edged in chevron-patterned fabric tape, a trick Berry employed to create a finished line on rounded outside-wall corners.

In the dining room, cream-linen chairs sporting skirts trimmed in a trellised navy border surround a long dark wood table, all lit by an antique nickel chandelier that might have been at home in an Old World castle.

A contemporary cream-lacquered Asian buffet topped by two huge 1920s ceramic eagles purchased at a Paris flea market and a display of antique crystal candlesticks occupies a niche covered in a navy horsehair weave. The arrangement calls to mind the eclectic treasures Mather's contemporaries may have picked up during their travels.

"It doesn't feel antique-y," Berry says of the casement piece. "But it could feel like an Asian antique revived."

In the family room, a cream-colored sectional provides a canvas for pops of color from overstuffed rolled-arm chairs upholstered in a blue linen-cotton.

The existing powder room is a tiny gem wrapped in blue-and-gray Hermes chain-link-patterned paper, a choice that complements the slate on the floor and the silver leather on the ceiling. And the gentleman's bar, with its walls and ceiling covered in caramel croc-embossed leather, has the appeal of 50-year-old single malt scotch.

The most striking room, however, is the study. Berry painted the forest-green paneling a lacquered charcoal gray and replaced the deer-print draperies with airy reed blinds.

She then furnished the room with a tight-back English arm sofa upholstered in camel suede, a choice used to cover the tufted desk chair and trim the gray mohair ottoman and gray-and-cream wool-plaid track armchairs flanking the fireplace.

"[Rick] doesn't like the color gray," Berry says with some amusement. "But I said, 'You will.'"

She was right. The study has become one of Doody's favorite spots in the house. "When I'm in there in the winter and the fireplace is going, it's very cozy," he says.

After the main-house renovation was completed in mid-2015, Berry turned her attention to the guesthouse.

A heavy, 3-inch-thick arched door, original to the house, leads from the billiards room to a covered walkway elevated by stone arches.

Berry removed walls and opened up the ceiling on the two-bedroom first floor to create a vaulted loft space, kitchen and powder room. Beams and siding culled from a nearby barn add interior interest to walls that house a pingpong table on one side and a pair of brown-leather sofas flanking the fireplace on the other.

The sitting room downstairs was redecorated as two distinct bed-



The formal living room features an antique mirrored wall set in a Harlequin-pattern, while French doors in the billiards room open onto a screened-in porch with a large fireplace.

rooms. One, dubbed "the blue room," is rustic with all wood walls and a leather bed, while the other, "the gray room," has charcoal drapes, cream-suede headboard, an antique writing desk and a Ralph Lauren wool chair.

"We created the finest hotel guest suites," she says. "I wanted people to fall in love with the room, so when you had repeated guests, they could say, 'I want the blue room' or 'I want the gray room.'"

Doody entertains friends and family as frequently as he anticipated. "It's been sort of the go-to hangout house for my kids," he says.

Business associates regularly stay in the guesthouse instead of checking into a hotel. His next project is renovating the pool house. Someday he may decide to downsize, put the house up for sale and give someone else the opportunity to live like Amasa Stone Mather.

"I'm happy, and my kids are happy here," he says. "As long as they enjoy it, I'm going to stay."