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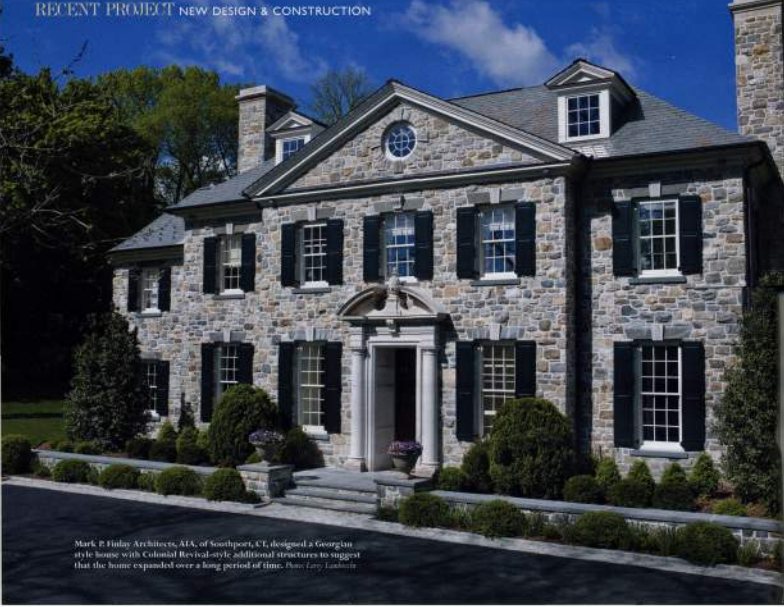
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Interiors

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Mark P. Finlay Architects, AIA, of Southport, CT, designed a Georgian-style house with Colonial Revival-style additional structures to suggest that the home expanded over a long period of time. Photo: Larry Landwehr

Georgian Character

A new residence in Connecticut appears to have grown over many years.

PROJECT: RESIDENCE, NEW CANAAN, CT

ARCHITECT: MARK P. FINLAY ARCHITECTS, AIA, SOUTHPORT, CT;
MARK P. FINLAY, AIA, PRESIDENT

New Canaan, CT, is a treasure trove of traditionally styled homes. From small-scale castles to quaint cottages, the varieties are endless—including spec houses built by developers with the goal of gaining the maximum square footage allowable. The results are often overscaled houses that loom over the streets, which was just what a young couple recently building a five-bedroom house on their 2.7-acre property wanted to avoid.

The clients approached Mark P. Finlay, AIA, president of Southport, CT-based Mark P. Finlay Architects, AIA, in the winter of 2004. Their expectations were rather contradictory—they wanted to tear down the existing house to build another that was smaller in scale and located farther from the main road; however, they also needed plenty of interior space and enough room in the backyard for their four elementary-school-aged children.

Finlay's solution was to disguise 11,000 sq. ft. of space within a visually modest building. He started off his design scheme with a small-scale main structure and added larger structures at the rear. "The main body of the house is classic Georgian in character," says Finlay. "I wanted to make that piece look like it was the original body of the house and then other pieces were added over the years as the family grew. That's how most of these Connecticut houses evolved."

Finlay defined the house's Georgian character in terms of symmetry and proportions. "The accent of the front entry needs to be very clear and strong," he says. "The articulated limestone entry is very important to the whole composition." On either side of the main entry are Tuscan columns topped with a broken pediment Georgian-style lintel. Also on the front façade, a white cornice wraps around the main structure and keystones are placed above windows by Boscawen, NH-based KSD Custom Wood Products.

The additional structures were designed in the Colonial Revival style to differentiate them slightly from the main structure. "There were stone buildings in the area that were adapted over the years and the infills were all wood," says Finlay. "In the old days, homeowners tended to spend less money on additions and that's what I was alluding to with the composition of this house." A three-car garage wing was connected to the north side of the main body; it would have been the next logical structure to be built according to Finlay's theoretical timeline. The wall spaces between the main structure and garage are clad in white cedar clapboard. At the rear west side of the main structure, a single-story family room completes the collection of additive structures. The family room is completely clad in white cedar clapboard to emphasize the use of wood for add-on structures, in contrast to the stone exterior of the remainder of the house.

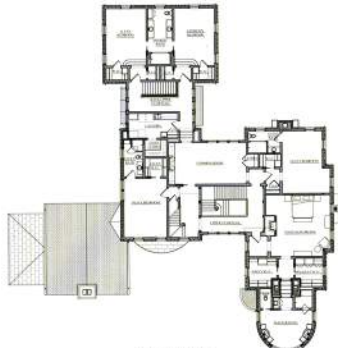
The imported Pennsylvania granite has a high iron content that results in a brown color. "Connecticut stones tend to be a bit grayer and we wanted to introduce brown tones," says Finlay. "We exposed a lot of the mortar joints and it's a bit different and unique from other houses."

To complement the brown granite, a tan buff color mortar was used instead of the standard white and a semi-weathering gray slate tile was installed on the roof. "The semi-weathering slate tile turns from gray to a brown due to its iron content once it is exposed to the elements," says Finlay. "This mottled brown-gray color picks up on the exterior stone shades making the color appear more natural and in harmony with the surroundings."

In keeping with the Georgian style, Finlay refrained from using too many windows on the front façade. "With old houses, single windows in the front clearly make them Georgian buildings," he says. To increase the flow of natural light in the interior, Finlay installed windows on the sides of the house that aren't visible from the main road; some almost fill entire walls. The wall of the breakfast room, for example, includes a large bow window that floods the kitchen with natural light. "When people come in the front door they expect to walk into a dark house, but that is clearly not the case here," says Finlay, noting that the family room's west windows are visible immediately through the front door. "The family room is a big, high-ceilinged, bright room at the end of the procession into the house and there are a lot of windows leading up to that room."



First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan

The Georgian-style main structure houses the formal living area while the casual family living areas are located in the Colonial Revival-style additional structures toward the rear of the house. On the second floor, a common room separates the master suite from the children's bedrooms. *Floor plans courtesy of Hank P. Finley Architects, AIA*

In a departure from traditional Georgian style, Finlay added a painted white mahogany paneled foyer to disrupt the smooth flow of entry into the living and dining rooms. "I didn't want this to be like a typical center hall Colonial where you come in and there's the living or dining room," he says. The living room, which leads to the library, is south of the foyer while the dining room, north of the foyer, is raised four steps to create an unexpected entry. This "second level" carries throughout the rest of the first floor. Beyond the foyer, Finlay designed a two-story stair hall that serves as a steady transition from the formal living spaces of the house to the casual rooms of the added structures; the kitchen and breakfast room, family room, butler's pantry and mudroom are through the west opening of the stair hall. Finlay also incorporated a wall of windows on the south side to create an open and airy stairwell.

In addition to the main stair hall, Finlay added two sets of stairs to define the space in the basement, which is divided into two distinct areas — a wine room and den, and a playroom for the children. Located in the library, the spiral stairs to the clients' "grown-up" spaces complement the circular library. The stairs leading to the playroom are located in the back end of the house, close to the yard and the children's bedrooms on the second floor.



The limestone entry features iuscan columns topped with a broken pediment. *Photo: Larry Landwehr*



The two-story stair hall at the heart of the home connects the formal dining and living room to the family areas. *Photo: Nancy Hill*

Right: A wood island is the main focus of the kitchen, and complements the ceiling beams and antique-oak wood floors. Photo: Nancy Hill

Below right: The single-story family room, located at the rear of the house, is clad with windows on three sides to allow natural light in the interior. Photo: Nancy Hill

In the kitchen, the island is the main focus. "It had to be big enough for all the family members to eat at," says Finlay. "It became a big piece of furniture in the large space and it's the main aesthetic element in the room." The island also conceals most of the kitchen's modern appliances. "The idea for this kitchen was to hide the equipment in the lower cabinets," says Finlay. "I tried to make it feel like an old kitchen." The wine cooler, dishwasher and additional storage space are all housed in the island. The wood top of the island also complements the antique oak wood floors and ceiling beams; wood tones were chosen for the kitchen to bring down the scale of the large room.

To encourage the smooth procession from the kitchen to the connected family room, Finlay used the same exposed mahogany wood beams on both ceilings. In the dark mahogany wood-paneled dining room, the cross beams on the ceiling emphasize the splash of color painted in the background to brighten the room. Off the dining room, the butler's pantry has a copper ceiling with complementary dark mahogany trim used in both rooms. The library's round wood-paneled ceiling draws attention to the room's circular shape.

Completed in the spring of 2008, Finlay is satisfied that the project addressed all of the clients' specifications. "This house has become a little icon," he says. "We designed a brand new old house that fits effortlessly with the local vernacular. The homeowners are happy and the house enhanced their lives, which is really the ultimate goal." In the near future, Finlay will begin renovating an existing barn on the property. He plans to restore it to look like the historical barns of the region. — Annabel Hein

WEB ONLY: For additional photographs of this project, go to www.period-homes.com/extras/march09finlay.htm



A wood-paneled ceiling complements the circular library room. Photo: Nancy Hill



The same semi-weathering slate roof tile and wood windows were used to tie the structures together. Photo: Larry Landwehr