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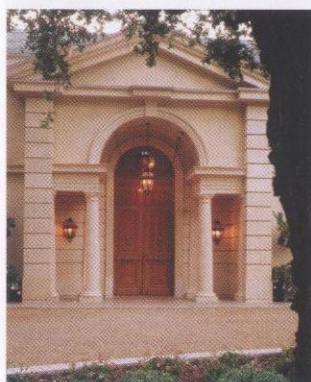
PREMIERE
ISSUE



Skurman added curved walls and a series of columns to the dining room exterior to give it the look of an 18th-century French pavilion. This graceful feature also creates a sunny terrace for the family room on the second floor.

EN FRANÇAIS

Architect Andrew Skurman perfected a superbly detailed French-style house in Atherton for a family of five.



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ARCHITECTURE: ANDREW SKURMAN OF ANDREW SKURMAN ARCHITECTS, SAN FRANCISCO – PARIS

INTERIORS: DIANE CHAPMAN

CONTRACTOR: LENCIONI CONSTRUCTION

LANDSCAPE DESIGN: LOU MARANO

“THE CONCEPT FOR THIS HOUSE WAS TO BE SIMPLE AND UNPRETENTIOUS IN THE OVERALL PLAN—BUT TO CREATE A FEELING OF RICHNESS AND ELEGANCE.”

—Architect Andrew Skurman

For the French, the description “classique” represents the highest praise—for fashion, cuisine, or architecture. It signifies a creation that transcends momentary whims and offers refinement and timeless elegance.

Classique is the perfect description for the French-style Atherton residence recently completed by San Francisco architect Andrew Skurman for an investment banker, his wife, and their three children. The architecture was inspired by elegant 18th-century Parisian residences designed with gracious, comfortable rooms for family living.

“My clients wanted a truly custom-designed house in the French style,” said Skurman, who studied architecture in France as a student and now maintains an office and an apartment in Paris. “Their dream was a spacious, beautifully detailed house where they would celebrate holidays, raise their children, and eventually welcome their grandchildren.”

The family has enjoyed a long connection with France and often enjoys holidays in Paris, visiting Versailles. The parents came to love the integrity and timelessness of 18th-century houses.

“My clients are successful in the modern business world, but they like Old-World architecture,” says Skurman. “And they wanted their home to have California openness.”


The 10,500-square-foot, five-bedroom home, has custom features, including studies for the parents and the children, ensuite bathrooms, an exercise room, and an upstairs laundry room. Skurman also added a basement level, with a playroom and wine cave. The two-and-a-half acre site has a swimming pool and a pool house.

Traditional family houses in the Ile-de-France region surrounding Paris offered direct inspiration. “There is harmony and grace that typify Parisian architecture,” notes Skurman. “It is not overly embellished, never flamboyant. Typically, a house is very symmetrical, with windows downstairs balanced by the same number on the second level. The front door is perfectly placed in the center. The roofline is straight, and the exterior plaster is often painted cream or pale grey. Handcrafted iron balconies and iron railings add a graphic counterpoint. My clients liked this understated style, with its light-filled rooms and practicality.”

Skurman, who founded Andrew Skurman Architects in 1992, specializes in classical architecture for custom homes. He interprets its authentic forms in French, Georgian, and Mediterranean styles.

“We began the process of designing the Atherton house by viewing our extensive architectural library of French design





Architect Andrew Skurman created a circular driveway and set the house back on the site to protect centuries-old oak trees. The exterior of the classic French-style house is hand-troweled plaster the color of limestone. Lencioni Construction worked on the project.

The front entry is a classic 18th-century Parisian composition of massive French oak doors, and a Greek-style pediment. Plaster-finished columns stand on marble bases to give them a more substantial feeling. The pendant light and sconces are by Paul Ferrante, Los Angeles.



Diane Chapman decorated the dining room with French-style handcrafted wallpaper by de Gournay and voluminous curtains of Cowtan & Tout silk taffeta. The 18th-century Régence table was acquired in Paris.

Walls in the living room were glazed in a pale wheat color to give the room a welcoming glow. Diane Chapman devised a color scheme of pale sage jacquard for the sofas, as well as butterscotch leather for the cane-back chair. The arched doorway to the left leads to the dining room.





A grand two-story entry hall welcomes guests to the home. The floor is a classical French pattern of limestone with black marble cabochons. The custom-made iron balustrades and railings were inspired by an 18th-century railing Skurman saw at a private home in Paris. They were hand-crafted in California.

Plaid silk curtains add graphic contrast to the floral motifs of the Colefax & Fowler wallpaper in the master bedroom (opposite). The room overlooks the quiet garden at the back of the house.

“TRENDS COME AND GO, BUT CLASSIC, APPROACHABLE, COMFORTABLE DESIGN NEVER GOES OUT OF STYLE.” —Interior Designer Diane Chapman

with our clients,” says Skurman. “We created a file of historical styles that would meet their needs, tastes, and lifestyle.”

A circular pavilion at Versailles provided a model for the columned dining room exterior. A grand Paris hall and stairs offered inspiration for the entry hall.

As Skurman planned the interiors, San Francisco interior designer Diane Chapman was selecting fabrics, antiques, wall-coverings, and furniture to achieve the updated classic décor. She chose a pale palette of sage, butterscotch, wheat, pale golden cream, and pale aqua that suggests the essence of relaxed French style. “The architecture is clearly delineated and I did not want the décor to compete with it,” said Chapman, known for her devotion to décor that is traditional with a sense of modernity and freshness.

Chapman believes that each room should be an integral part of a total concept for the house, with color schemes that blend effortlessly from one room to another. For true elegance, each room should express the same vision and never look disjointed or unconnected. “There is a smooth flow throughout the house, and the dining room, for example, is decorated with pale sage green colors similar to the adjacent living room,” said Chapman. “I planned a cohesive design with some subtle variations on

the basic color theme—the whole house feels calm and relaxed.”

Chapman selected Cowtan & Tout sage green silk taffeta for the dining room curtains, and a coordinating Cowtan & Tout silk with gold stripes alternating with sage green for the living room. A pale sage-colored jacquard upholstered sofa in the living room ties in smoothly with the pale sage green wallpaper in the adjacent dining room.

On the second floor, the decoration is turned down a notch. For the master suite, Chapman orchestrated graceful decor utilizing a leaf-patterned Colefax & Fowler wallpaper in the bedroom and the adjacent bathroom, and following through with the same pale green and cream color scheme for curtains and upholstery fabrics.

For all the chic French airs of its architecture, the Atherton house maintains a very California casual feeling. Even the antiques Chapman selected—a handsome carved French chest for the entry, a French neoclassical table for the hallway—feel light.

Today, the owners enjoy the best of both worlds—French tradition and California freshness. “My goal with this house was to realize my clients’ dreams,” said Skurman. “The family is very happy there.” ■

