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SHARED HISTORY

Two local design masters make themselves at home in a Colonial Revival.

BY RACHEL LEVITT

VISIT LAURA AND JOHN MEYER AT THEIR HOME AND the first thing you'll notice is their door knocker. The cast-brass cannon—unusually militaristic for a home in peaceful Newton—adorns a black walnut door with handblown glass panes. When it opens, prepare for »

Laura and John Meyer relax in the entryway of their Newton home with their black Lab, Ella.



an attack: by exuberant Ella, the Meyers' black Lab.

Laura and John are the husband-and-wife team behind the Boston-based firm Meyer & Meyer Architecture and Interiors. Best known for their classically styled homes, the Meyers live as they work: in comfortable formality, surrounded by family pieces in a restored eight-bedroom Colonial Revival built in 1880.

An interior designer and an architect, respectively, Laura and John quite literally saved the historical Newton property. Before their arrival, the house had been owned by the same family for more than a century and was something of a disaster when it came up for sale in 1995. The two elderly sisters who had lived there last (one of whom died while having tea in the dining room) hadn't upgraded a thing. The roof leaked, the front columns were rotted, and the original coal burner and chute were still in place. But where most prospective buyers saw catastrophe, Laura and John saw an opportunity.

While their friends questioned their decision—the Meyers have six gifted copies of *The Money Pit* to prove it—the couple began their repairs. They restored the original

The Meyers kept as many of the home's period fixtures as possible. "We thought that the crystal of this chandelier was amber-tinted, but when we started cleaning it, the color came right off," Laura recalls. "It turns out that the sisters were chain smokers, and everything in the house was coated in a yellow film."



windows, fixed the leaky skylight, and replaced the asphalt roof with slate. They kept what fixtures they could, like the library's solid-brass sconces and the early-1900s crystal chandelier that hangs in the central hallway.

Family is the unifying theme throughout the home. Oil paintings collected during Laura's grandparents' travels adorn the front parlor and living room. A Civil War-era portrait of one of her ancestors, affectionately referred to as "Uncle Charlie," hangs above the library mantel. The piano is covered with photographs of their three children, ages 19 to 26.

Additional pieces from the Boston Design Center and local antiques stores create a space that's ideal for entertaining. (The mahogany dining room table, a gift from Laura's mother, is illuminated by another chandelier original to the house and is no stranger to dinner parties.) In all, the home is used as it was designed: as a place for family, celebration, and lovely things.

"A house really isn't anything without personal effects," says Laura. "You need to find something or some way to make it yours." ■

A St. Louis native of German descent, John's mother celebrated the city's beer-brewing heritage by collecting steins at flea markets and abroad. "We must have at least 20 steins," says Laura, who, with John, has expanded the collection over the years.

