

# GOOD FELLOWS

words by JULIET JOHNSON // images by AGNES LOPEZ

Kay and Michael Fellows tried the luxury of space in suburbia and found it wasn't for them. They're a close-knit family. They like to walk places. They prefer to have only what they need and will use all the time. This trim, brick home in Avondale suits them perfectly.

They were already living in Avondale when the two-story home came on the market. They had seen it on walks, admiring its character, and its position on a circle around a small park. Built in 1925 just as the Art Deco period was gaining popularity, this essentially arts and crafts home posing as a brick-front colonial is full of period detail and charm.

The house was built by the seller's great-grandfather, Wesley Robert Tischendorf, a local lumberyard owner and architect, as a wedding present for his daughter. The Fellows would be the first non-Tischendorf in residence.

Once moved in, however, the Fellows family worried they weren't making the best use of the home's space and character. The large open room at the front was, for sure, "open concept," but with the fireplace at the larger end and the stairs cramping the other, which end should be the formal living room versus the TV space? The formal dining room was nice, with its swinging door to the kitchen, but the kitchen was not good and the cabinetry was horrible. "I felt I couldn't even put food in the old cabinets. So it started with us needing to replace them. We knew there had to be creative ways to organize smaller spaces. After all, look at all the great apartments in New York," Kay and Michael discussed, lounging uncomfortably on their old college furniture, never having allowed themselves to have "nice things" before. It was time, and they needed help.

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No sooner had they permitted themselves a proper interior designer, they saw an ad for Troy Spurlin while out at the movies... at Sun-Ray Cinema, of course. Troy came over with his lead designer Alex Gebicke and they listened. They hung out with the Fellows and got to know them, all the while watching how the house fit and didn't. "Give us what we ask for, and then give us what we need," the Fellows told the designers. A plan was hatched, a budget formulated and one floor at a time, with a year in between, renovation began.

Troy developed a vernacular for the home—the zigzag trim around the doors and windows, the ogee-half quatrefoil shape around the stair railing were already there. As was an ordinary, (as in Home Depot in stock item ordinary) but completely appropriate leaded glass inset of the back door. The team then played those notes throughout the home to create a cohesive whole.

"We wanted to honor the historical era with period detail while creating a home for a 21st century family," recalls Alex.

Where once had been French doors were substantial mulioned windows—five rows by seven columns of thick glass panes, crystal clear with beveled edges. They are a stunning architectural feature. Troy and Alex swapped the dining room with the family room, so that the front of the house would be the more formal pair of rooms and the back would be for every day. They replaced the dividing wall between the dining room and the kitchen with a bar, and created a kitchen in which two can cook comfortably. They added a larder and open shelves with white subway tile and thick dark grout for a rich, graphic look that ties in to the leaded glass door. "It stands out so much better than with a thin grout line," says Kay. "It just pops and makes the window look so much more dramatic." The window is dramatic—a custom piece made to match the back door from Mary at The Glass Station. In fact, the couple liked the window so much they asked Mary for two larger ones for the Master bathroom.



With the dining room in the front of the house, a round table adds counterpoint to the strong rectangular lines of the original staircase and a set of barn door sliders to hide a powder room under the stairs and a storage closet. The seating area over by the stairs is set up with four club chairs around a circular, leather ottoman. Rather than be a formal living room, it is used all the time; the family gathers to read, play games, use laptops, etc. the ottoman supporting feet, game boards, (chess mostly, lately) books and magazines in equal measure. Aubrey, aged eight, has his Queen ruling every board. Already.

The living and dining room was painted in a beige-yellow color but is now a dark, pine needle green. Kay loves sage green. The Fellows, as a family, are outdoorsy folks, so earth tones is their natural default setting.

Upstairs, three bedrooms were reconfig-

ured so as to accommodate Kay's precise request: a master suite that feels like a fancy hotel suite, with a separate sitting room that could be used as an office, a large, spa-like bathroom, an upstairs laundry room and linen cupboard and, of course, windows.

No problem for Spurlin's team. Now two bedrooms and two baths feel spacious, with even the flooring reconfigured to retain the home's original emblem—a five-pointed star medallion inlay—each point was to represent a member of the new family, the husband, the wife and three children. The decorative inlay was disassembled and position in the center of the new upstairs hallway as was the banding on the wood floor's perimeter.

The master bedroom is covered in luxurious grasscloth wallpaper and features a sizable industrial light fixture over the bed. A

blend of industrial chic and steampunk, the sculpturally arresting fixture preempts the need for art over the bed. Another barn door slider sections off the closets, bathroom and sitting room. The sitting room is clad in two walls of drapery. The windows are still there, but the addition of drapes, inspired by a trip to the Peabody Hotel in Orlando, makes the space cozy and intimate. A wall of travel posters recall fun excursions.

The master bath features large, custom art glass windows from The Glass Station, in the same pattern as downstairs. They provide privacy while allowing in plenty of daylight. Hanging in pride of place is a commissioned canvas of the Fourth Street Shrimp Shop, where Michael and Kay met through mountain biking friends 18 years ago. The "All-You-Can-Eat Crab Legs" night. They shared a cracker, and the rest is...





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History matters to this family. Acutely mindful of humble, working class origins, both Fellows feel at home in this modest, sturdily comfortable home. Perhaps that’s why they love Jacksonville, too? For them, it is “the largest small town” that has grown, as opposed to having been built specifically to support an amusement park, or a retirement community, for example.

“We love Jacksonville so much we tell people it’s awful,” Michael laughs.

Now, ensconced in a neighborhood where they park the car on Friday and often don’t see it again until Monday morning, Kay and Michael Fellows enjoy the serenity of lush green foliage outside every window, and a house of which they fully occupy—every square-inch. Character and provenance; their Avondale home, their philosophy and their intended legacy.

