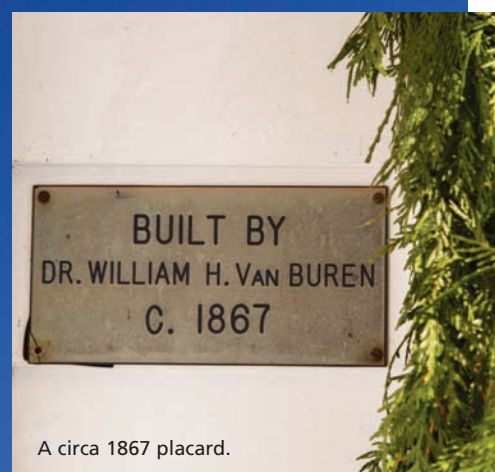


Home for the Holidays

A Monmouth County couple pay homage to tradition — on Christmas and every day

WRITER MEG FOX PHOTOGRAPHER MARCO RICCA INTERIOR DESIGNER BETSY BERNER
FLORAL DESIGNS AND GREENERY NANCY BURTON AND EILEEN RICCO-BAUER



Built circa 1867, Laura and Marc Feaster's historic country home in Shrewsbury once served as the carriage house and stable for Dr. William H. Van Buren, a prominent New York City surgeon. Contemporary additions flank the sides of the original structure.



Soon after closing on their historic property in Shrewsbury —

one that came with all its charms, perks and quirks — Laura and Marc Feaster found a kindred spirit in designer Betsy Berner, now principal of Betsy Berner Interiors in Red Bank.

“I grew up in a prerevolutionary home,” Berner says. That made her sensitive to the Feaster home’s place in history: circa 1867, it was originally a carriage house and stable built by Dr. William H. Van Buren. A surgeon and founder of several New York City hospitals, Van Buren used it as a country weekend retreat. Subsequent owners added contemporary additions on both sides.

The Feasters initially hired Berner to help with the design of the living room, but her influence quickly spread throughout the interior, a project she started from scratch. “There were no existing pieces,” she says, because the fami-

Far left: Christmas spirit at the Feaster home starts at the front door, decked out in double-width West Coast cedar roping and ponderosa pinecones. Urns overflow with the same mix of materials.

Left: Wallpaper in the original foyer has the “feel of a document print,” designer Betsy Berner says. She and homeowner Laura Feaster came up with the idea of dressing up the Roman bust in greenery and pearls, a concept beautifully executed by floral designers Nancy Burton and Eileen Ricco-Bauer, co-owners of In the Garden in Highlands. Finishing touches include fragrant flowering white stock, red berries and ribbon loops.



ly of five “lost their previous home and all of its contents to an electrical fire.”

Aside from creating a warm, family-friendly haven that honored the integrity of the home and the couple’s classic design preferences, the goal was to “make it look like none of it just got decorated,” Berner says, rather that it evolved over time.

PAST FORWARD

Last Christmas, *Design NJ* found the Feaster home decorated in all its finery with the family celebrating a joyous holiday season, sharing their well-loved home with hundreds of visitors as part of the Visiting Nurse Association Health Group’s Holiday House Tour.

Walking the long tree-lined path and brick courtyard heightened guests’ interests in the light-filled interior, decorated with time-honored touches that share a sense of history. In the foyer, for instance,

The homeowner “loves the classicism” of the blue and white palette in the living room, the designer says. It’s a timeless backdrop for traditional-inspired patterns and a mix of wood and painted finishes. “If I could put a monogram in everybody’s home I would,” Berner says of the needlepoint pillows — many sewn by the homeowner — that accent the home. “It personalizes everything.” Floral designers from In the Garden used risers to position the mantel’s grand garland — made of cedar, local magnolia leaf, fresh eucalyptus and ponderosa pinecones.

LOCAL LORE *The Feasters removed a pulpit that once occupied space in the living area where the piano is now located. Legend has it a Catholic priest came to Shrewsbury to start a congregation and gave masses from that pulpit, Berner says. “Apparently there was more of a draw to the local Presbyterian and Episcopal churches, and he eventually moved on,” she quips.*



Above: White Shaker-style cabinets, Carrera marble surfaces and a classic subway tile backsplash honor the home's traditional roots. Reclaimed wide plank floors and a thick cherry-topped island serve up contrast.

Opposite: A wreath of cedar, magnolia, eucalyptus and red berries adds color and fragrance.

wallpaper “has the feel of a document print,” Berner says, and “Country Life” decorative plates from Juliska flank an antiqued mirror. Stealing the spotlight was a female Roman bust perched atop a reproduction chest. The goddess turned heads with a “skirt” made of West Coast cedar, ribbon-looped waist, faux mink stole and pearls, a collaborative effort of Laura Feaster, Berner and floral designers Nancy Burton and Eileen Ricco-Bauer, co-owners of In the Garden in Highlands.

Says Nancy Burton: “We all had such a great time designing the skirt [with about 35 pounds of material], wiring each piece in exactly the right place to

mimic the movement of a ball gown.” She and Ricco-Bauer executed this and all the festive arrangements starting at the garland-draped entryway and throughout the interior. “It’s a pleasure to be involved in the traditions of so many local families and to support the Visiting Nurse Association, Burton says. “It’s a great organization that does so much for our area.”

TIME TESTED

Inspiration for the living room came from a magazine photo Feaster admired. “Laura loves the classicism” of a blue and white palette, Berner says. Timeless and fresh, it became the perfect backdrop for traditional





Cheery blue and apple green chairs in cotton and linen blends extend an invitation to relax in the family room. Minimal window treatments keep the focus on the beautiful landscape. Painting the window mullions deep green enhances the view, Berner says.



The den, in space that dates to the home's origin, has a curated mix of antiques and new pieces that come together as expected: collected over time. Vintage prints and collectibles pop on bookshelves painted in Farrow & Ball's Rectory Red, a color that plays off the antique Persian rug.

patterns, a sprinkling of antiques, a collection of Chinese ginger jars and a mix of woods and painted finishes—elements that evoke a gathered-over-time appeal.

To preserve the home's character, "We left exposed radiators and the narrow water pipes associated with the radiators where they were," Berner explains. Hardwood floors were refinished, but we did not fill in gaps between the wide planks. "Crazy as it sounds," she says, "these are the charms of a historic home."

Sea-grass floor coverings are layered with area rugs in the living room and designed with custom borders elsewhere. Versatile enough for casual or formal settings, "I

often use sea grass because it's timeless" Berner says. Not only is it static-free and easy to keep clean and maintain, "I love the way it looks and smells. Its natural texture also works beautifully with linens."

HINT OF HABERDASHERY

The den takes on a cozy Old World atmosphere befitting its stature as one of the original rooms in the home. An antique Windsor chair, vintage Persian rug and other thoughtfully collected antiques mix it up with newer furnishings upholstered in tufted houndstooth and blue herringbone. Walls are covered in paper that Berner says resembles old tweed, which she accented in



wool plaid welt/piping to "give it an upholstered look."

The laid-back but refined vibe is echoed in the original dining room, where faux barn-wood wall covering sets the stage for a casual country dining space. Charming check-upholstered chairs with soft Nubuck leather seats pull up to a reproduction table; the French buffet and hutch are antique. "Nothing is too precious," formal or intimidating, Berner says, noting she designed it for frequent use, not just special occasions.

SEASONED BY THE PAST

The modern kitchen, designed by Laura Feaster, is classic at its core with white Shaker-style cabinetry,



Above: Faux wood-grain wall covering, check-upholstered seating and a pine reproduction table set the stage for a casual country dining experience layered with French antiques.

Inset: Printed menus take design cues from the plum tea towel, used as a dinner napkin. A simple linen runner allowed for placement of fall fruits in tones that tie in with the fresh floral arrangement.



Left: The square wreath in the hallway was constructed with fresh bay leaves and bows, a complement to the draped cedar garland. “The bay dries beautifully with a slight twist to each leaf,” Nancy Burton says.

Opposite: Take inventory of what you have around the house and try combining it in new ways, Berner says. She pulled together a festive outdoor table setting using a tartan plaid throw as a tablecloth, lanterns to set the mood, and blue and white vases filled with pine branches and sprigs of berries. Some pieces were elevated with blocks of wood for a rustic feel.

lights the wood-burning fireplace almost daily, loving the ambience and the smoky aroma of Irish peat burning. [DNI](#)

For more photos from this home and holiday and other design tips from Betsy Berner, see the web version of this article at designnewjersey.com/features.

SOURCES Overall: interior design, Betsy Berner Interiors in Red Bank; holiday florals and greenery, Nancy Burton and Eileen Ricco-Bauer of In the Garden in Highlands; builder, C.B. Hembling & Son in Shrewsbury. **Foyer:** wallpaper, Nina Campbell through Osborne & Little (discontinued); chest, custom through Minton Spidell (T); mirror, “Julian” from Niermann Weeks; wall plates, Juliska. **Living Room:** coffee table, wing chairs and sofa, Byford & Mills in Little Silver; antique trumeau mirror, John Rosselli Antiques in New York City. **Kitchen:** cabinetry, Hagerstown Kitchens Inc. in Hagerstown, Maryland. **Family Room:** green chair, Charles Stewart Co. (T); blue chairs, Ethan Allen reupholstered in a Pierre Frey cotton woven fabric. **Den:** wing chair, Hickory Chair; antique table, Ambiance in Red Bank; Windsor chair, antique; horse painting, Trevor James. **Dining Room:** chair check fabric, Pierre Frey; wallpaper, Osborne & Little; buffet and buffet deux corps, antique; printed menus, Pauline’s Paperie in Fair Haven. **Hallway:** strié wall covering, Farrow & Ball; antique sign, Ambiance. T=To the trade.

a glazed subway tile backsplash and marble countertops. “Laura knew exactly what she wanted in terms of the materials and how the kitchen would function for her family,” Berner says. Wide plank floors, reclaimed from an old barn, complement the original flooring nearby. And double islands—one covered in Carrera marble, the other in thick cherry—provide ample space for food prep, storage and casual family meals. The open plan fosters an ease of communication and relaxed feel between the kitchen and adjacent family room, where views of the mature landscape are ever changing. “We kept window treatments to a minimum, because we like the feeling of openness and the backyard views,” Berner says. It is here, she says, where Marc Feaster

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