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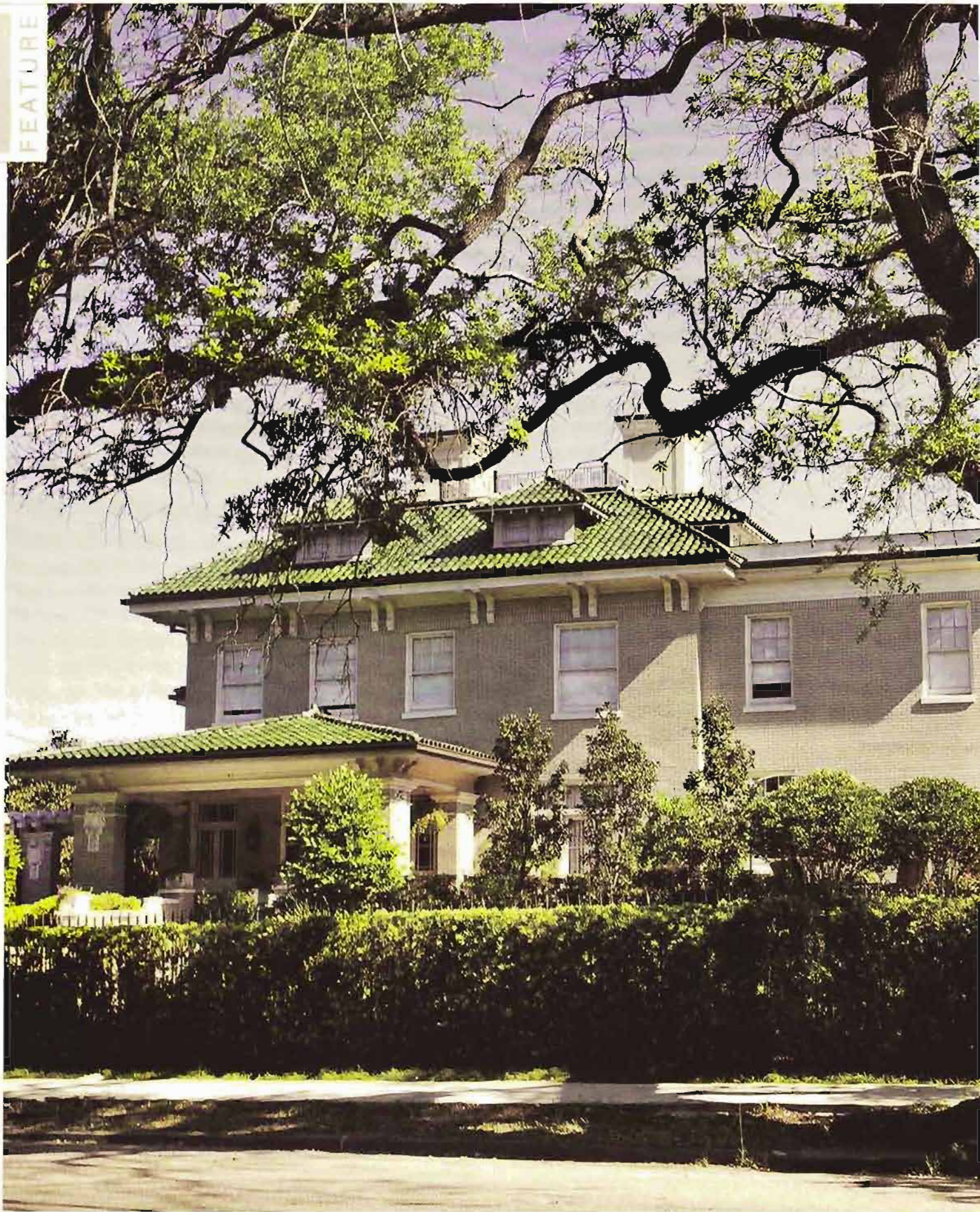
ELEGANCE ON THE AVENUE

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Elegance on the Avenue

THE ART OF LIVING WELL IN A HISTORIC LANDMARK

by Lisa LeBlanc-Berry | photography by Chad Chenier

As you drive along St. Charles Avenue in New Orleans, you are likely to see many interesting homes, and may even catch a glimpse of the lifestyle and personalities of the people who live there. The new owners of a historic landmark residence say that people in streetcars are continuously taking pictures of their home while passing by on the avenue. With its commanding presence, the sprawling house has generated much interest among visitors and locals through the years.

The house sustained considerable damage during hurricane Katrina and was consequently renovated. The current owners moved into the historic residence one year ago. The prior owner, a contractor, had just completed an extensive renovation of the home and gardens. "No renovations were necessary when we purchased the house," says the owner.

The gracious mansion has many interesting features. During its 112-year-old history, it has been expanded several times, resulting in a 16,800-square-foot, six-level home with a spacious pool area, multiple terraces, and "secret" gardens that the new owners created. Some of the shrubs and trees facing St. Charles were installed to hide the pool area from people traversing the avenue. The family worked with landscape architect Patrick Grimley to refashion the grounds.

The family has embraced the history of the house and its storied architecture, yet they have created a home that has a relaxed family atmosphere. "This is not a museum," says one of the homeowners, a youthful grandmother who is very active in the lives of her grandchildren. "It is a house that is well lived in. My husband and I have had as many as 18 kids spending the night on the weekend. Our grandchildren's friends are always here. It was never our intention to make this into an untouchable house," she adds. "We designed the interior with the children in mind. They especially enjoy the pool area and home theatre that we put in as a Christmas present for them."

The owners' daughter designed the home theatre, with its playful carpeting depicting movie reels and popcorn, and two rows of electric recliners. Also installed were various electronic systems. "This is a Smart House," says the owner. "It will virtually run itself. It is a very old house that has kept its charm, but has been modernized in some areas. It was a challenge to decorate. I'm still not quite finished," she remarks. ☺



The foyer is appointed with a double set of leaded glass entry doors and marble floors that are original to the historic house.



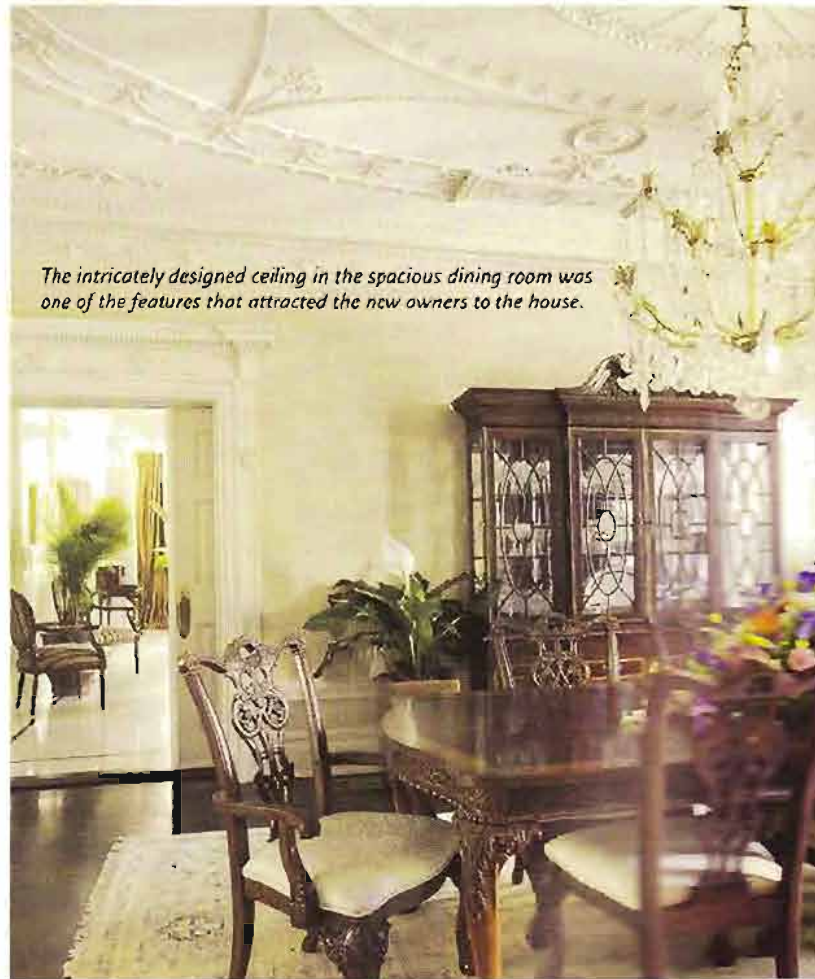
The expansive house has several elevations: the lowest level contains a billiard room and play area for the grandchildren. The second level includes guest quarters with bedrooms, a living room, and kitchenette. The next level up is the main entrance foyer, the formal living and dining rooms, kitchen and great room, and the library, which is the most popular room in the house, aside from the kitchen. Up a flight of stairs is the light-filled garden room overlooking the pool.

The garden room, originally intended as a family room, is now lovingly referred to as the "woman cave." The next set of steps leads up to the grand ballroom. On the opposite end is a spacious master suite, which includes a large sitting room and a kitchen, and several other bedrooms. The sixth level of the house contains the grandchildren's bedrooms, the home theatre, and another kitchen. The top level is the observation deck overlooking the avenue.

An exquisite double set of lead glass doors at the main entrance opens onto the foyer. They are original to the house. The grand, columned foyer is filled with natural light and is appointed with marble floors, also original to the house, and a 19th-century baby grand piano that the owners installed for their grandchildren to play. Bouquets of fresh flowers, replaced weekly, lend a heavenly fragrance as you enter the residence.

Interior motifs echo the historic architecture of the building, including the original period moldings and medallions adorning the dining room ceiling. "The ceiling in the dining room was one of the things that sold us on the house," says the owner. "It is gorgeous."

The stately dining room is appointed with two large portraits. One was a commissioned portrait created from an old photograph of a woman who served as a Carnival queen in the 1930s. The other depicts a young woman in formal attire on the day of her high school graduation, painted in the 1930s. "It was done by the famed New Orleans artist C. Bennett Moore. It was his last portrait," the owner comments. 🌹



The intricately designed ceiling in the spacious dining room was one of the features that attracted the new owners to the house.





The six-level house offers a variety of splendid views of the pool area and grounds, which were redesigned by landscape architect Patrick Grimley.

The two stunning oil paintings add luster to the lovely dining room appointed with custom silk draperies, a handsome dining room set from Ethan Allen that seats 10 people, and various antiques. The living room also contains a number of antiques, including a circa 1812 bookcase filled with family memorabilia and delicate figurines purchased during trips to Europe.

"There are so many wonderful aspects about living in this historic neighborhood," says the owner, who dotes on her grandchildren. "Sitting outside in the morning and drinking coffee, my husband and I can watch the streetcars and joggers going by. It is great for entertaining, and it flows like a charm. The house can be elegant, but it is also comfortable, warm, and inviting. It is such a joy to live here." ♦

