

Hyde Park Living

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On top of it all

by Lynn Narlesky

The neighborhood of Golden Avenue, above Columbia Parkway and overlooking the Ohio River, has undergone extensive renovation, thanks in great part to one couple's desire to locate in a riverview area and incorporate the river's ambience into the architecture of their new home.

Dr. and Mrs. Douglas Gebbie are originally from Scotland. After some years in Toronto, they made their way to Cincinnati about a dozen years ago so Dr. Gebbie could teach at the University of Cincinnati. Anne owns the Carriage Trade on Hyde Park Square and in the Hyatt Regency. When their children left the nest, the two felt free to "do their own thing" with a new house. They looked for a place smaller than their former home (a colonial style in the Rookwood area of Hyde Park), but they wanted room for all their hobbies, including gardening.

The Mediterranean via Scotland? The Gebbie house invites a lesson in eclecticism. The house and its furnishings offer a singular impression, yet each piece in the decorative scheme is a separate entity. Two factors unify: the Ohio River and home.

Because the Gebbies wanted to take advantage of their river view, they asked architect Tom Warner to rebuild the house in a Mediterranean style bringing a panoramic view into almost every room. The open atmosphere draws attention to the water. Ob-

viously, Mr. Warner's aim was reached: shortly after the Gebbies moved, they found their proximity to the river so compelling that they bought a boat. Anne says she feels the excitement of all the activity in and around the water. "We call this our 'townhouse' because the lights of the city sparkle like gems—after a home run at Riverfront Stadium, we can even see fireworks go off. We're on top of it all."

The effect begins with white stucco and wrought iron outside. Inside, wrought iron is repeated on railings and light fixtures. Shades of peach and green carry the color theme throughout the opened-out structure. Windows rather than wall dominate.

As for interior design, Anne sums up her approach: "This place is an accumulation of places we've been—including America." But it's not just a hodgepodge. "The old of every country seems to blend in." One notices antiques or antique styling in an Italian highboy, a French bedroom suite, a British military chest, a Queen Anne dining set and a Chinese lacquered cabinet.

Another theme which unifies is the sentiment of pieces which have been in their family for years or reflect their heritage. Perhaps because the Gebbies have traveled so much, "family items mean more." Though Anne describes her family as "completely Americanized," she values things she may have taken for granted had she not left Scotland 29 years ago. Each room reminds them of their national origin in many ways. In the study is a sampler sewn by one of Anne's ancestors. Some of its initials are now those of her children. One cabinet in the dining area displays china hand-painted by Anne's artist mother. Prints and



Inside and outside with Anne Gebbie at home. (Photos by Higgins)

paintings depict Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Scottish country scenes. Scottish flowers — thistle, heather, and gorse — decorate the bed-sitting room above.

Not only does the different furniture blend, it has a comfortable feel. Terra cotta pots and tile on the terrace warm up the rooms and keep them from becoming too formal. Painted baskets serve as towel holders. Plants soften lines. The layout itself makes it easy to feel unconfined.

On the first floor, only one room, the kitchen, is ever closed off. Though rooms are not all walled off from one another, activities define different areas of the house. A baby grand piano states that this is the music room. A desk provides a study area which Dr. Douglas enjoys even more with a fire blazing nearby under a huge brass-hood. Velvety peach sofas line up conversation areas with the living area and set it apart from the dining space. European cabinetry provides a functional and tidy kitchen from which the front garden can be seen over the coffee cups.

Gebbie portraits document recent history in a gallery at the top of the stairs. A real bedsitting room, in addition to its country French bedroom suite, has lots of space to sit and enjoy Anne's collection of figurines or a favorite passage from a leatherbound volume of Robert Louis Stevenson. A downstairs family/guest room, still in progress, contains everything for self-contained privacy—even a place for the grandchildren.

Anne Gebbie says it herself. "I like drama. But I like it to be subtle. Wallpaper has to be lived with." All the rooms share Anne's subtle drama; so it's no wonder the Gebbie house has inspired other creative efforts in their neighborhood.

