

PAPER CITY

HOUSTON
JUNE 2021

SUMMER



0 74470 29711 6

The living room takes cues from chic Paris apartments, with a custom French 1940s-style sofa, Milo Baughman travertine table from 1stdibs, linen-covered bucket chairs from The Guild Shop, and light pendant from Charles Edwards. Rug from Round Top.

Opposite page:
The Courtlandt Place house was designed by Sanguinet & Staats in 1913.



OLD HOUSE DREAMS

A GRAND 1913 HOUSE IN HISTORIC COURTLANDT PLACE, BUILT FOR ANOTHER ERA, IS GENTLY RESTORED BY OWNERS ASHLEY AND STEVE PUTMAN.

BY REBECCA SHERMAN. RENOVATIONS ARCHITECT GORDON PARTNERS DESIGN. PHOTOGRAPHY LISA PETROLE. ART DIRECTION MICHELLE AVIÑA.

As the saying goes, when one door closes, another one opens. Such was the case for Ashley and Steve Putman, who had their hearts set on an old house in Houston's historic Courtlandt Place, only to lose their bid to a competing buyer. "I cried for a week," Ashley says. Soon after, their real estate agent phoned and told them the house across the street from it had just become available in a

private sale. Ashley remembered gazing at it across the boulevard, its palatial, columned façade as splendid as it must have been a century earlier. Fearing a repeat of their last experience, the Putmans immediately rushed over. Stepping inside, they were greeted by a massive oak entry hall, reception area, and grand staircase. "I was, like, *wow!* We fell for it quickly and put a bid in the next day. With a little negotiating, we got it."

The 1913 Neoclassical Revival-style house is one of 18 remaining original

houses in Courtlandt Place, established in 1906 as an exclusive neighborhood southwest of downtown for Houston's wealthy businessmen and their families. This house, along with many others on the street, was designed by Fort Worth architects Sanguinet & Staats. The firm was prolific in the '20s and '30s with such noteworthy structures as the San Jacinto Monument and the Gulf Building in Houston, said to be the tallest building in Texas at the time. Houses in Courtlandt Place were designed to impress, and the house





Clockwise from top left:
The dining room's antique crystal chandelier is original to the house. Antique Chinese library table and French armchairs from 1stdibs. Orange-lacquered chairs from Jardin de France.
A view into the original fernery from the living room. The millwork, floors, and coffered ceilings are original.
The fernery's antique and vintage rattan furniture was restored by the previous homeowner.

Opposite page:
Olive-green linen draperies offer a peek into the fernery, with antique rattan sofa in Brunswig & Fils fabric. Fernery painted in Farrow & Ball Yeabridge Green. Bust on cabinet is from Paris.

built on lot number 5 — the Putmans' new house — was no exception. It was originally built for James L. Autry, who co-founded The Texas Company (later known as Texaco), and once included a large greenhouse and tennis court. Inspired by the era's popular Mission architecture movement, the interiors are as majestic as Autry's stature in the community would have required. Broad oak wainscoting is found throughout, including Autry's private office, library, and the family dining room, which also has a massive floor-to-ceiling oak

fireplace.

"The house is so grandiose. We wanted to make it feel less daunting and more like a family home," says Ashley, a graphic designer who has also created interiors for restaurants such as Emmaline. She and Steve, a corporate general counsel, have two teenage boys. The couple spent two years renovating the house, including restoring an upstairs sleeping porch that spans the south end of the house. They opened up the kitchen and created a casual dining area, along

with a separate breakfast nook behind antique beveled-glass doors. A century earlier, the Autrys would have never set foot in the back service areas, but this family loves to hang out in the kitchen — especially when Steve cooks. Even when guests stop by, the family prefers to take visitors up the service stairs. "The kids who lived in this house originally didn't even know there *were* back stairs," Ashley says. "We're lucky — we get to use the whole house."

Ashley and Steve Putman love old houses. They previously lived in a 1930s house on Sunset Boulevard, and until recently, they owned an old farmhouse near Round Top. "Old houses just have soul," Ashley says. At 108 years old, their Courtlandt Place residence is their oldest yet, and it came with a few welcome surprises. "The woman who owned the house before us collected antique wicker furniture that she repaired," Ashley recalls. "When we came through the house to look at it, she had a ton of it. The sleeping porch was full of wicker furniture, and the basement was full of intricate Victorian wicker furniture. I love wicker and bamboo, so she let me buy some of it." A downstairs enclosed porch — or fernery, as it would have been known in 1913 — is now furnished with many of the previous owner's wicker pieces. And Ashley inherited another gem: the formal dining room's original crystal chandelier, which had been neglected on the basement floor for decades. "It had been passed down with every new owner, but was just left there gathering dust, broken, with missing crystals." They had it restored, and it now presides in all its glory over the table.

As a graphic designer, Ashley is skilled at creating striking and harmonious compositions. It's a talent that easily translates to interiors, she says. "They are so closely related; with graphic design, it's just a different type of arranging. I can spend days or weeks just fiddling and rearranging every vignette and wall in the house. It's an obsession — I can't help it." The entryway's grand proportions



and dark oak called for contrast, and Ashley obliged. "It can feel rather fusty — it needed an injection of youth and freshness. That black-and-white vignette as you walk in started with a modern, octagonal white console that I bought at Round Top years ago." The abstract painting was a gift from Steve (she told him what to buy, she notes), and the mid-20th-century geometric lamp was a New York flea-market find.

The house is a mix of repurposed vintage, thrift-store finds, and, where needed, custom-designed furnishings. Like many designers, Ashley haunts The Guild Shop, a consignment store that benefits St. John the Divine, where's she snagged remarkable pieces for the parlor, including a sofa "that came alive when I recovered in it green velvet," she says, along with an Art Deco burl-wood coffee

table, baskets, and pottery. Back in the day, the parlor would have been an impressive room for entertaining visitors, and Ashley interpreted it for modern times. "I wanted it to feel cozy and dark — a nighttime room for having after-dinner drinks," she says. The space is cocooned in green, from lagoon-green walls and velvet-draped windows to the sofa, flanked by a pair of moss velvet chairs from France.

Opposite the parlor, a light-filled living room is where they entertain during the day. "The first time I saw this room, I thought it could be like a Paris apartment — all white, and a little more modern than the parlor, but with drama," she says. She designed the 1940s-French-inspired sofa for the space and found the large Milo Baughman-designed travertine coffee table on 1stdibs. A pair of linen-covered bucket chairs was snagged at The Guild Shop, and they go perfectly with the vintage Saarinen table she found. Near a window, there's a very special antique Steinway & Sons grand piano that had belonged to the previous homeowners, who offered it to the Putmans. No one in their family plays, but it's beautiful to look at. In a way, they see themselves as merely caretakers of the piano — and of the house. "There will be a lot of people over the years who live in this house, and we are here to bring it along and take very good care of it," Ashley says. "We wonder, as we get older: Will it be reasonable to stay in a house of this size, with the stairs? But we can't imagine not living here — it's become an emotional attachment."

(continued)

The parlor fireplace is from 1stdibs. Rug is an old African Tuareg mat from Etsy. Pair of leather club chairs from England.

Opposite page:
In the parlor, the sofa and burl-wood coffee table are vintage Guild Shop finds. Kristopher Benedict painting. Wall color, Farrow & Ball Inchyra Blue. Table lamps from The Guild Shop. Schumacher pillows.



"I CAN SPEND DAYS OR WEEKS JUST FIDDLING AND REARRANGING EVERY VIGNETTE AND WALL IN THE HOUSE. IT'S AN OBSESSION — I CAN'T HELP IT."

— Ashley Putman

A modern vignette in the entry includes a mid-20th-century geometric console from Round Top and other refreshed flea-market finds.





In the entryway, a vintage McGuire Cane and antique pendants from the Paris flea market. Walls painted in Parrot & Ball Manor House Gray. Jute rug from Creative Flooring Resources.



The main-bedroom bed is by Courtney Barton, with Olatz bedding. Draperies in Schumacher Oiseaux et Fleurs fabric. Bedside chest from Heights Antiques. Walls painted in Benjamin Moore Laurentian Red. Collected vintage art.



A cozy, coral-hued room across from the parlor is where the family watches TV and reads. The sofa is covered in Chelsea Textiles Tree of Life pattern.



The main-bathroom tub is from Victoria + Albert. Antique lantern pendant from the Paris flea market. Antique Oushak from Round Top. Vintage artwork from ebth.com.



A sitting area in the main bedroom includes an antique chandelier purchased from the previous owner. Vintage table and chairs from The Guild Shop. Oriental rug from Sotheby's. Walls painted in Benjamin Moore Tissue Pink.



Above: On the stair landing are a Noguchi pendant, antique console from the Paris flea market, RH sofa and chair, and kilim rug from Etsy. Walls painted in Farrow & Ball Manor House Gray. Left: Ashley Putman.

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: The upstairs sleeping porch was restored and furnished with antique and vintage rattan pieces. The pool area's teak furniture is from Pottery Barn with cushions in Sunbrella stripes. Builders West gently refreshed the kitchen with custom cabinets and center island to retain a period feel.

