

renovating the ranch





WRITTEN BY
REBECCA JURETIC

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
LANCE KINNEY

Living within a stone's throw of work may not be everyone's dream, but for Clint and Connie Pearce – whose home, work and family lives are intricately intertwined – nothing could be more natural.

Connie is the daughter of Phyllis Madonna and the late Alex Madonna, and is general manager of the Madonna Inn. Clint is the real estate manager of Madonna Enterprises.

The remodeled 1912 home they share with their two children, Audrey and Dalton, sits at the base of Cerro San Luis, just across a field from the renowned hotel.

When the Madonnas purchased the structure as part of the 150-acre Bianchi Ranch in the early 1970s, they had plans to use it as overflow guest quarters for the inn. With this in mind, they added a second-story room and divided the downstairs area into six bedrooms and five bathrooms.

Those plans never came to fruition, and the structure ended up as employee housing until 2005, when it became vacant.

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THE 1912 RANCH HOME recently remodeled by Clint and Connie Pearce. Holland Construction headed up the renovation.



THE FRONT PORCH was extended into a rotunda-shaped space which includes a sitting area and fireplace. The dining area is part of the Western-themed great room. The dining table was purchased at Habitat in San Luis Obispo and chairs were custom-made by Theodore Alexander, a North Carolina company that crafted several Madonna Inn pieces.

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Having lived for years in a much smaller house on the family's Foothill Boulevard ranch, Clint and Connie saw possibilities in the 5,000-square-foot Craftsman-style ranch home.

"We always loved the setting. It's in the city but at the same time in the country," said Clint.

The couple took their ideas to architect Bryce Engstrom. Work on the house commenced, but they soon received an unwelcome surprise.

"We thought the structure was sound, but as we got into the house we found termites, dry rot, things out of plumb," said Clint. "We virtually had to rebuild."

Workers re-poured portions of the foundation and replaced wiring, plumbing, walls, windows and moldings. In fact, one of the few original things from the old house that remains is the ceiling of the upstairs loft that was part of the 1970s addition. Because its turquoise stain resembles that in the Austrian Suite of the Madonna Inn, the Perces kept it as a tribute to Connie's family.

The couple was conscientious about keeping new materials consistent with those in the original home. With renewed interest in historic preservation nationwide, they found it relatively easy to find historically authentic materials. They were able to duplicate the

home's cedar roof shakes, find the right double-hung wood windows and even match the color scheme with historic paint colors offered by Sherwin Williams.

When they couldn't find a good reproduction, they started from scratch. Carpenters with Holland Construction crafted much of the home's woodwork on-site to match its original Craftsman style. They even created the walnut front door entirely from scratch and hand-cut each rafter tail to replicate the contours of the original pieces.

The only place the couple stepped outside the home's original footprint was in the rotunda-shaped porch, a feature suggested by

THE DEN WITH FAMILY PHOTOS. Furniture was custom made by Old Hickory Tannery, which also made Western antique reproduction pieces for the Madonna Inn.





THE FAMILY'S FARMHOUSE KITCHEN with tile from Artisan Tile in San Luis Obispo. A Black Forest clock and brass deer sculpture were gifts from Connie Pearce's parents, Alex and Phyllis Madonna.

Engstrom to mirror their century-old Canary Island date palm. They also added embellishments not found on the original structure such as El Dorado stone where rotting wood skirting had once been, and hand-forged iron rails to add character to the front steps.

When designing their interior, the couple stood by one overriding philosophy.

"We wanted it to look and feel as if it's 100 years old," said Clint.

From there, they took creative license and gave each room its own theme.

"Connie is a Madonna," explained Clint. "We couldn't have everything the same."

Western style infuses the great room area,

from the antiqued limestone bar in the kitchen to the Cherokee stone fireplace in the family room.

Furniture and accessories are a mix of new and old. Some of their pieces are family heirlooms, such as a Black Forest clock and brass deer sculpture that were gifts to the couple from Alex and Phyllis Madonna. Here and throughout the house are paintings by Clint's aunt, Western artist Suzanne Baker.

A few items were chosen by the couple earlier in their marriage, such as a rustic dining room table that they purchased from Habitat in San Luis Obispo.

The couple is also skilled at finding high-quality reproductions, something they do fre-

quently when outfitting rooms at the Madonna Inn. One of their favorite companies, Old Hickory Tannery, which often creates pieces for the inn, custom built numerous pieces of Western-style furniture for the house including leather chairs and ottomans for the family room and barstools for the kitchen.

The room of 11-year-old Dalton was designed to evoke favorite family trips to Jackson Hole, Wyo., with its cabin-like vaulted pine ceiling and hand-tooled leather headboard. But the real character of the room comes out in clever details that are more evidence of the couple's talent for creative staging such as the use of

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THE MASTER BEDROOM and bathroom were inspired by vacations to Tuscany and Napa. The mirror above the bathroom sink was made to look like an antique three-panel mirror. In reality, three separate mirrors made by Frame Works in San Luis Obispo are hinged together.





WINE CELLAR RACKS were crafted to look like century-old redwood. Masonry walls, seen above, were built by Cumbria Construction in Cambria.



AN ANTIQUE ART NOUVEAU lamp was a gift to the Pearce family.

THIS ICE CREAM CHAIR was formerly in the Madonna Inn's coffee shop. When the chairs were replaced, the family saved this one for their daughter's room.

LIGHTING was selected for its Western flair, as with this cowhide and bow-and-arrow lamp.



BOOKSHELVES IN THE DEN were made by Lorts Furniture. Dalton's room, top, was decorated with a cabin theme. The painting above the bed is of Bishop's Peak, done by Suzanne Baker, Clint's aunt. Audrey's room is in a sophisticated Italian style.

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an antique buckboard seat as a bench and an antique barrel for a corner table.

Their daughter Audrey, 14, required a space significantly more ladylike. Clint calls her room "elegant Italian" with its petal pink walls and 19th-century antique reproduction furniture. Her bathroom continues the theme with its aqua Venetian glass tiles and Carrera marble floor.

Clint and Connie were inspired by trips to Tuscany when they chose the elegant, Old World antique reproduction furniture in their

master bedroom. The warm wood and vaulted ceilings give the room what they call a Napa Valley twist. In their bathroom, soft colors and dreamy glass tile give the feel of a spa retreat.

The final task for the Pearce home was converting their 10-by-20-foot basement into a wine cellar. In keeping with the historic feel of the house, woodworkers distressed new fir lumber to imitate the look of 100-year-old redwood wine racks. Walls were clad in the same El Dorado stone as the exterior of the house.

The house may look a century old, but the Pearces wanted it to be today's state of the art.

The structure is wired for everything from security to the Internet to a sound system that allows any family member in any room to access an online library of 2 million songs.

This approach isn't anything new for a family accustomed to balancing tradition with innovation. "We had a strong desire to preserve the architectural integrity of the old house because we consider it a historic landmark," said Clint. "But we also wanted it to be solid, because we knew we were building the house for the next 100 years."