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INTERIOR DESIGN / JENNIFER ROBIN, JENNIFER ROBIN INTERIORS  
HOME BUILDER / KEN FINLEY, KEN FINLEY CONSTRUCTION, INC.



# *Victorian* REVIVAL

A WINE COUNTRY FARMHOUSE GETS A MODERN  
REFRESH WHILE RETAINING ITS HISTORIC ALLURE.

WRITTEN BY KIMBERLY OLSON / PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN MERKL



**A**mong Healdsburg’s many farmhouses, one home stands out: a Victorian Italianate estate built in the 1880s. Some 130 years later, a modern-day couple discovered the house and decided to establish roots. It retained much of its original charm, yet required some structural changes. A few decades ago, a large addition had been tacked onto the rear of the house. “It was quite tall at the back—the ceiling height was 14 or 15 feet—so the whole thing was out of proportion with the front,” says architect Stephen Sutro. “The back was too large, the front was too small and the spaces were too compartmentalized.”

Over the course of a two-year remodel, painstaking care was taken to honor the home’s original architecture while modernizing it for the active family. Along with designer Jennifer Robin and general contractor Ken Finley, Sutro rehabilitated the front of the residence, reusing what could be salvaged while faithfully reproducing elegant details where necessary. “The house was built with original-growth redwood lumber, and every usable piece we took out we put under the doorway awnings and on the walls of the stairway down to the 4,000-bottle wine cellar,” says Robin.

Sutro aimed to make the home feel more fresh, open and light while respecting its historic layout. “Even this farmhouse version of the Victorian had very formal parlors at the entry,” he says. By widening the hallway in the front, the architect was able to make the concept current by creating his-and-her parlors on either side of the staircase. While both are finished with elegant Venetian plasterwork, custom cabinetry and large fireplaces, they each have a practical side. As Robin explains, “The front rooms and

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formal dining room were designed with entertaining in mind, but durability was considered for the fabric selections to avoid the spaces becoming off limits to the kids.”

For the rooms with higher ceilings, the designer incorporated a subtle palette of blues, grays and browns in conjunction with textured finishes, fabrics and rugs for a more inviting feel. The husband’s parlor, for example, features gray plaster walls, oiled-leather wing chairs, a reclaimed wood table, an industrial metal chandelier and a rich wool rug. “This room is the perfect space for a bit of whiskey and good conversation,” Robin says.

At the back of the house, Sutro revamped the layout of the disjointed addition to make it more functional. “They’re a fun, boisterous family and they often host other families with young children,” he says. “So in this home the kitchen and indoor-outdoor living are important.” Thus he created a spacious, open kitchen that connects visually to the outdoors. While its traditional design suits the architecture, elements like a concrete island with reclaimed wood cabinetry are kid-proof.

Robin loved the challenge of balancing the husband’s preferred aesthetic—masculine and industrial—with the wife’s love of classic farmhouse, all while honoring the home’s Victorian architecture. This balancing act is on display in the dining room, where Shaker-inspired chairs mix with an industrial pulley light fixture hanging from a painted beadboard ceiling.

Furnishings are a mix of new pieces—many custom designed—and found antiques. “I love the soul in the wood of the antique trolley table in the family room,” Robin says. “But I also love the new settee in her parlor. It really invites you into the space, with its height and velvet fabric.”

While most of the rooms in the house are meant for all ages, there are some that are decidedly adult-focused. Among those spaces is the couple’s new master suite with a sun room, separate walk-in closets and a master bathroom. The room’s private nature comes from its intentional placement. “The master suite has an entrance that is three-quarters of the way up the staircase,” Sutro says. “If you keep going up the last few steps, you get to the kids’ bedrooms. So, there’s kind of a neat separation between the children’s.”

In this home, variety is the spice of life. It’s at once historic and modern, ideal for both kids and adults, and its styles reflect masculine and feminine perspectives. On top of that, it has a strong connection to the outdoors that makes gatherings a joy. “When the house was built, it probably felt somewhat imposing because of the formal layout and all the ornamentation,” Sutro says. “Now that they use the whole house and entertain often, it feels like an approachable, happy home.” ■



The spacious entry features a graceful stairway leading to the second level. French white oak floors were installed throughout the house, and a three-week-long finishing process produced the soft grayish color. The custom industrial chandelier made from salvaged transmission clutch plates is by Velorossa Design.





Gray plaster walls by Suzanne Young Faux Painting add visual interest and a sense of intimacy in the wife's parlor. The traditional form of the Casamidy Ixelles settee, upholstered in a Chivasso velvet, is a nod to the home's history. The pillows are covered in Harsey & Associates fabric, the bench is by Kroll Furniture and the coffee tables are from C.G. Sparks. The mirror is by RH and the Cerrillos floor lamp is by Sawkille Co.





**Opposite:** In the husband's parlor, original architectural details highlight a bay window with a built-in Kroll Furniture banquette upholstered in Moore & Giles leather. An oiled-leather wing chair by Lee Industries offers a comfortable lounging spot in front of the tufted Cisco Home ottoman covered in a Holly Hunt blue velvet.

**Below:** The long, linear nature of the Tod Von Mertens dining table is emphasized by the Studio Bel Vetro chandelier. Nickey Kehoe T chairs—with seats upholstered in Holly Hunt leather—surround the table.







**Above:** The kitchen is truly worthy of a chef with a La Cornue range sourced through Purcell Murray. White cabinetry is offset by black honed granite; an Ann Sacks Bateig Blue limestone tile backsplash adds texture. Other textural elements include the concrete island's reclaimed wood detail on the cabinetry and the range hood.

**Opposite:** A custom industrial light—designed by Jennifer Robin and crafted by Velorossa Design—is the star of the seating area in the kitchen. It comes with weighted pulleys that raise and lower dome pendants. The space skews traditional to suit the architecture and has an original ceiling and new Shaker-inspired chairs by O&G Studio.



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**Opposite:** A coffered ceiling adds weight to the master suite, which is furnished with a modern bed crafted by Michael's Custom Built and covered in a Lee Industries fabric. The bed is flanked by a pair of Olampia sconces. The daybed is from Crate & Barrel and the rug is by Stark.

**Below:** The light-filled master bathroom houses a cast-iron freestanding tub by Slik Portfolio, clad in stainless steel and decorated with straps and rivets. The tub filler is by Waterworks and the stump table is by Liaigre.



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