

REAL ESTATE

inquirer.com/real-estate



Wayne and Jess Thress outside their Victorian farmhouse, which was built in 1870, in Oaklyn, N.J. Miguel Martinez

HAVEN

‘A historical house with a lot of character’

When Wayne and Jess Thress bought their Victorian farmhouse, it needed a makeover, but they wanted to keep the period elements.

By Terri Akman
For The Inquirer

Wayne and Jess Thress loved living in Haddon Township, but they needed a larger house to raise their family. So in 2021, they moved four minutes away to Oaklyn into a 3,100-square-foot, two-story Victorian farmhouse built in 1870.

“Jess grew up in Riverton, and I grew up in Palmyra,” said Wayne, a project manager in a local investment firm. “We wanted a historical house with a lot of character.”

They also wanted four bedrooms, a large eat-in kitchen, a dedicated family room that could serve as a playground for their children, Liam, 4, and Charlie, 1, and a yard where the kids and their two 1-year-old dogs, Scout and Willow, could play.

The house was structurally sound but in need of a makeover. With the help of Riverton-based SG23 Design, the Thresses focused on the first floor.

“We wanted to put more of our stamp on the house and still keep the historical elements,” said Jess, who works in the telecom industry. “I like a minimalist approach with clean lines, but still a warm, homey aesthetic.”

The goal was to respect the interior architecture and history of the house while also making the home comfortable for a growing family, said Shila Griffith, owner and principal designer of SG23.



“The historic newel post, railing, and chandelier are complemented by a new chinoiserie wallpaper in the foyer that allows the vibrant hues in the original stained glass to pop,” said Shila Griffith, owner and principal designer of SG23 Design.

One of the home’s special features is the parlor, common in homes built in the 1800s, with the original woodwork and floors. The couple use the room as an office but kept an old piano left behind by the previous owners. Bright light streams in through large windows.

Moody blue-painted walls, dark woodwork and furniture, and the boldly patterned rug make this a visually rich and warm space, Griffith said.

“When the house was first constructed, that room was used as a

game room, and our former president, Woodrow Wilson, used to play pool there when he was governor of New Jersey,” Jess said.

The original markings from the pool table’s legs are still visible. The couple decorated the room with an Americana vibe, hanging artwork reminiscent of that time period. In the living room, they smoothed the heavily textured walls and replaced the red paint with a clean white.

The foyer, one of Jess’ favorite rooms, was designed around the original red, yellow, and



The kitchen is the hub of the house, where the Thresses host their large families.

blue stained-glass window. They removed the 100-year-old dark wallpaper, replacing it with a light floral design.

“The historic newel post, railing, and chandelier are complemented by a new chinoiserie wallpaper in the original stained glass to pop,” Griffith said.

Jess loves the “wow factor” of walking inside the front door and seeing the open grand staircase.

Though the Thresses aren’t avid cooks, the kitchen is the hub of the house. It’s where they enjoy nightly dance parties with the kids, often under the glow of their portable disco ball. It’s also where they host their large families — Wayne’s parents are both one of eight siblings, Jess’ mom is one of six, and there are dozens of cousins.

The family spend a lot of time in their expansive outdoor space, including a wraparound porch and large front and back yards. Living

near the lake, they have a lot of foot traffic passing by.

“On the Fourth of July, we have people over to sit on the front porch and watch the fireworks,” Wayne said.

The back of the house features a three-car garage and a large space where a carriage house and stables once stood. They are in the process of creating an area with a raised-bed garden, fire pit, and seating area. Wayne plans to build a table from old joists they removed from the inside of the house.

Having grown up in small communities, they feel very comfortable in Oaklyn.

“You know your neighbors, and your kids can play outside,” said Jess. “We had that growing up, and we wanted to be sure our children had that same neighborhood feel.”

Is your house a Haven? Nominate your home by email (and send some digital photographs) at properties@inquirer.com.

HOUSE OF THE WEEK

A three-story Victorian in Delaware County for \$524,900



The Norwood house was built in 1910 and has four bedrooms and five bathrooms. Alcove Media

By Paul Jablow
For The Inquirer

Her Victorian house was “a total fixer-upper” when she bought it in 2012, said Naomi Ram, but in the years since then it has been a haven for her and family members while undergoing almost total renovation.

“We saw a real chance to make it our own,” said Ram, a dentist.

“My niece has had all her parties at poolside,” she said, to cite one example. “and my whole family has enjoyed it at some point.”

And the house’s closeness to the Norwood stop on the Wilmington-Newark Regional Rail line

made her commute to her Center City office easy.

But now that she no longer commutes, Ram is moving back to King of Prussia, where she lived before buying the four-bedroom, five-bath house.

The three-story house was built in 1910 and has 3,742 square feet.

The first floor has an enclosed front porch and a large foyer with custom trim work, a formal dining room with wainscoting, and crown molding. The primary bedroom is also on the first floor.

The kitchen has stainless steel appliances, granite countertops, a breakfast nook, and sliders to the rear deck.

The second floor has two

bedrooms and a family room, with the fourth bedroom on the third floor with an en suite bath and a sitting room.

There is a fenced-in backyard with an inground saltwater pool, a pool house, a paver patio, and a detached two-bay garage with electric, HVAC, and a full bath.

Earlier renovations include new paint and a new roof; more recent include a large, paved driveway. The house is convenient to I-95 and Philadelphia International Airport.

It is listed by Pete McGuinn of RE/MAX Main Line-West Chester for \$524,900.

pjablow@comcast.net
Paul Jablow