

## Spaces: A fresh approach

### Victorian, guest house brought to new elegance

By Betty Taylor – San Antonio Express-News  
Updated 06:08 p.m., Friday, July 1, 2011

Home designer Brenda Newman of Fredericksburg sits in a smooth, white bergère chair sipping sparkling water. She exudes the same ease and friendliness that her updated Victorian and guesthouse, Carriage House on Orchard, in Fredericksburg convey.

She reveals, in bits and pieces, about discovering a dilapidated house with “garish okra yellow” walls, vines growing everywhere, and knowing “this was the one.”

Six years ago, the cosmetics of the house seemed circumstantial. She told her husband, Ray, now deceased, about the house. He told her to buy it, even though he hadn't seen it. As the former partner in Johnson and Newman Antiques in Fredericksburg, Newman brought her love of antiques and wealth of creativity to invent a space that brought the home back to some of its former 1912 glory while incorporating fresh approaches.



**The Carriage House on Orchard**

After seeing an old postcard photo of the house, Newman discovered it once possessed a wraparound porch. Newman used the old postcard as a reference to bring back a wraparound porch to the house. She refinished the original hardwood floors, added antique 19th century French lighting and gorgeous antique French doors, and opened up the entrance to the living room.

“I had these 19th century columns from Mexico, so I opened up the entryway and placed the columns here,” Newman says. In the hall and living room, she also had the walls refinished in a faux limestone finish. In the living room, Newman styled the room around a new addition: a fireplace and an antique 18th century carved mantel.

Because the house was lacking in closets, Newman created a built-in unit in the master bedroom. She used tall antique French doors on both sides of a large antique mirror to create wardrobe closets. In the master bath, Newman added a faux finish to the claw foot tub that is original to the home. She has added much of her personal collection to the house including French and English oil paintings.

The morning room is another addition to the house. Formerly just an alcove, the morning room sits off the dining room and also accesses the kitchen. Newman had antique French doors installed in the entryway from the dining room to the morning room.

“Morning room is just older lingo for what you would call the den,” Newman says. “It just seems more fitting terminology for a Victorian home.”

Outside, a private garden awaits visitors coming to stay at Carriage House on the Orchard, which was converted from her husband's garage. A water trough in the garden features a 19th century waterspout and a 19th century Victorian figural. Newman also used antique French cemetery gates and fencing as garden borders.

The evergreens and sound of trickling water are sure to make guests want to linger for a while. But Newman is especially eager to show them one of the best features of the garden: the remote-control gas fire pit. At the touch of a button, guests can cozy up to a fire or even roast some marshmallows.

If visitors peer around the corner in the garden, they will notice a giant orange custom iron butterfly.

“It is actually a seat,” Newman says. “I saw all these bright beautiful things on a truck, and I actually followed the truck until the driver pulled over.”

Inside the guesthouse, Newman used 12-foot high antique French doors as the centerpiece in the room. They serve as the headboard to the bed. An antique French desk was converted to a fireplace mantel and offers a drop-down front for the DVD player. Newman designed the bath around a rustic 19th century marble sink. Peruvian stone tile was used for flooring. A pair of old waffle iron sections were converted to wall sconces with silk shades added as a final touch.

“I like the use of the different materials,” Newman says. “I like the new with the old, the way the sink is so rough and rustic and this (the countertop) is so smooth.”