

A house outside Historic Oakwood breaks from the mold



The Edenton Street house has a Victorian aesthetic, but is modern at the same time. The house is clean but with traditional references.

PHOTOS BY MARK HERBOTH

Victorian revival

By SARAH CORBITT
CORRESPONDENT

The owner of the house on Edenton Street knew what he wanted. He had collected pictures and sketches of details he liked in a notebook he started during a college drafting class. He presented the notebook when he met for the first time with architect Brett Hautop of Vernacular Studio.

Immediately, Hautop recognized the owner as an adventurous client — an architect's dream. And after that single meeting, the homeowner decided that Hautop was the right architect.

With the notebook as a starting point, the design came together: an enclosed courtyard, a green tile bathroom, a central family gathering spot, lots of natural light and — most important — a round stair tower.

Two years later, the 3,600-square-foot house presides over a steep embankment on Edenton Street near downtown Raleigh.

The finished house is modern and clean but with traditional references that fit its older East Raleigh neighborhood, a few streets over from historic Oakwood.

The house is exactly what the owner, who prefers to remain anonymous, wanted.

THE PROJECT

EDENTON STREET RESIDENCE

Architect: Brett Hautop, Vernacular Studio, 530 Hillsborough St., Raleigh, NC 27603, 341-5716

Residence address: 550 Edenton St., Raleigh

Square footage: 3,600 heated, 400 unheated

Budget: \$650,000

Key attributes: Modern Victorian; generous rooms with space for family gatherings; carefully selected views



Custom cabinetry and an airy connection to dining area and stair are hallmarks of the kitchen. The house is exactly what the owner wanted.

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Home of the Month is a collaborative effort with the N.C. State University College of Design through its Home Environments Design Initiative. Featured homes, selected by an expert panel, highlight the benefits of good home design and represent the diversity of homes and home renovations designed by North Carolina architects. The articles, written by faculty, graduate students and alumni of the School of Architecture, highlight the attributes of each home. Our goal is to offer inspiration and knowledge that can be applied to your living space.

VICTORIAN

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Curvy stairs

On the exterior, the prominent stair is key to the modern Victorian shape of the Edenton Street house. Originally, the owner wanted a perfectly round stair, but Hautop found more success with the design by squashing it into an ellipse. The stair is set to one side of the main hallway that runs the length of the house.

Getting the final, complex shape built wasn't easy. Several local woodworkers said the stair couldn't be done. Finally, Hautop met Bob Stockford, a carpenter who accepted the project as a challenge. "It became an issue of pride for everyone involved," Hautop said.

Steel rods were built into the walls as a frame to support the tapering staircase and an overhead skylight.

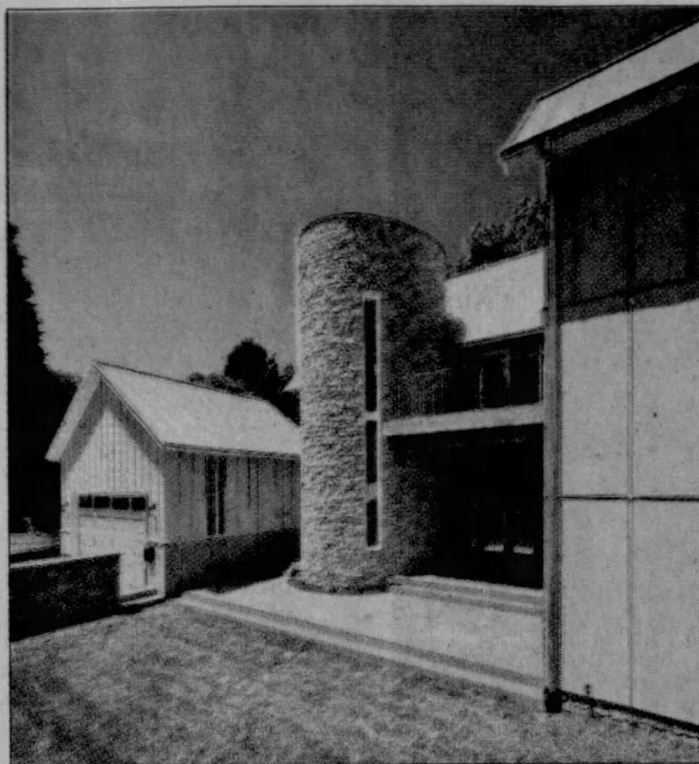
Stair fabricator and carpenter Stockford used a laser to find the center of the 28-foot tall stair tower and drew each tread out on the floor. The handmade pieces had to fit perfectly and be built to last. Stockford called Hautop when a few stairs were solidly built, saying, "You've got to come over and jump on this." There was no movement at all. Stockford had found the key to making the complex shape work: a steel frame that supports it.

Part of an architect's job, Hautop said, is to match the client with a builder who will help turn a vision into reality. Bob Aiello Builders, the general contractor, was willing to try new things. "Staying on schedule is not the goal," Hautop said of Vernacular's reliance on builders as master craftsmen. "You have to be willing to roll with things."

The Edenton Street house did stay on schedule, however, and on its \$650,000 budget.

High ceilings

The stair tower, clad in Tennessee Ledge stone, is one element of the Victorian aesthetic that's evident from the street. High ceilings are another. Coupled with its



The 28-foot-tall stair tower has windows running its length and is wrapped in Tennessee stone.

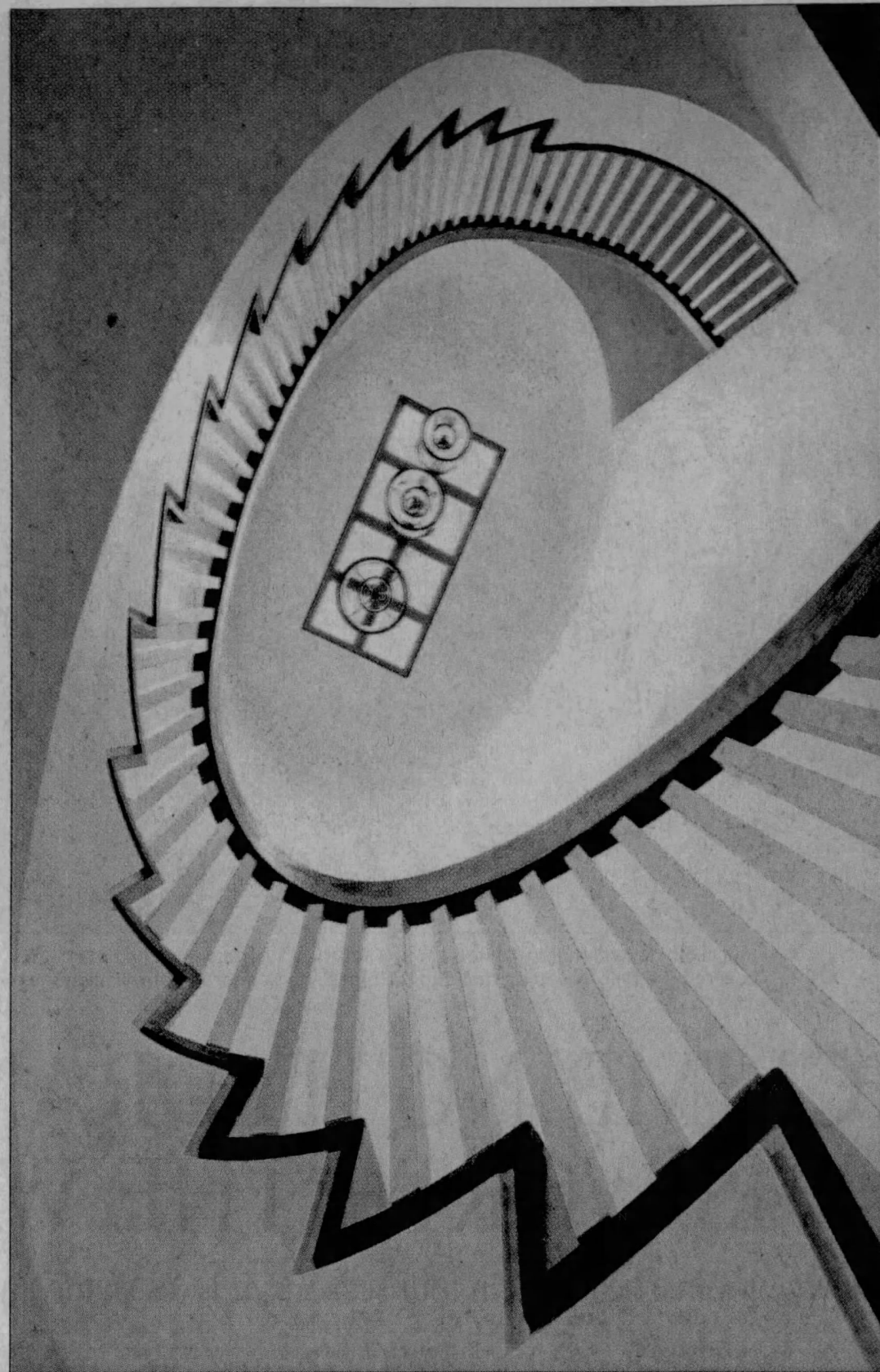
steep lot — the Edenton Street house sits 12 feet above the street grade and has a 4-foot crawl space — the house appears dramatically tall and narrow, though its rooms are generously proportioned. Carefully placed windows highlight views of the neighborhood. These windows also preserve a characteristic particular to Victorians, a sense of privacy and internal focus. A walled courtyard adds to the feeling of being serenely removed from the busy street life below.

Both the public Edenton Street entrance and a less formal entrance off an unpaved side street draw visitors into the house. On Edenton, a few stairs lead to a wide porch that holds the recessed front entry. Sticking with Southern customs common to the neighborhood, the porch ceiling is painted light blue. Large windows around the entry visually expand the spaces by giving a view through the house into the courtyard and to the back door beyond. The courtyard gate off the two-car garage invites a look into the more private spaces: the covered patio next to the stair tower and soon-to-be fire pit. The back gate offers a view from the

large back door through to the front porch. The hallway between the front and back doors is painted red — a bold stroke in a palette of mostly light neutrals.

Inside, the house is luxurious, detailed and thoroughly modern. It is light-filled and airy with high ceilings. Custom wood windows from Jeld-Wen add warmth to the detailing. Plain baseboards and a 1-inch recess around the baseboards and moulding make for clean ornamentation. Cabinets and interior millwork are crafted from quartersawn white oak. Spaces flow from one to the other in the more public downstairs, linked with an open kitchen and dining area. Ample upstairs bedrooms are linked by a common sitting room.

The central dining room was another of the owner's requirements. Because he has family nearby, he sought a space that could be the setting for large gatherings. The custom dining room table can seat 15. Finding the table was easy, but acquiring the seating has not been. To keep with the house's strong aesthetic, the owner is being patient about choosing the right chairs. His ideal? Mismatched.



After some said it couldn't be done, the dramatic and complex 28-foot tall stair tower was realized through intensive custom carpentry and a steel frame.

PHOTOS BY MARK HERBOTH

Sarah Corbitt is a May graduate of the master of architecture program at NCSU. She is an LEED-accredited professional specializing in sustainable design and vegetated green roofs.