

New England HOME

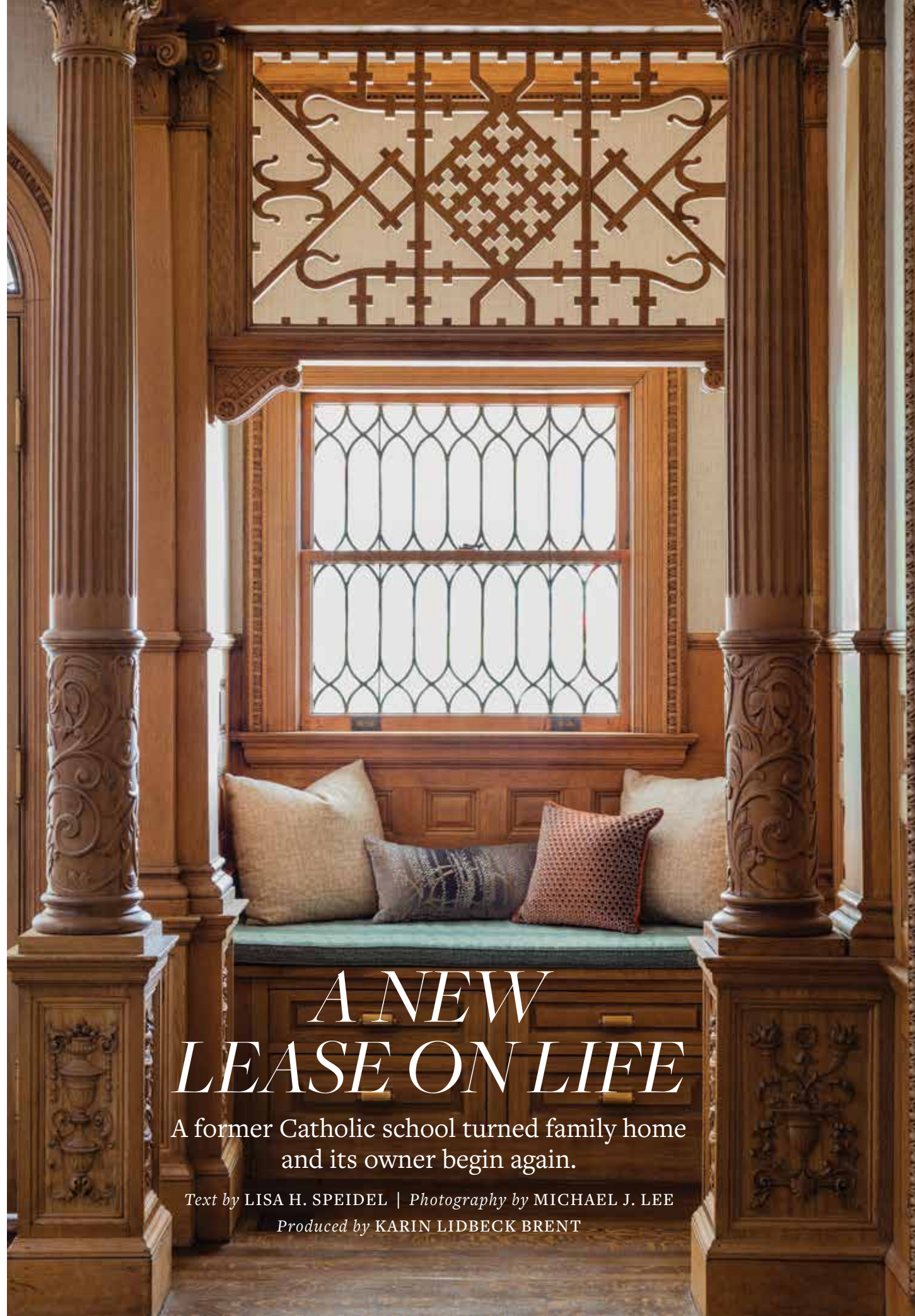
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In the living room, original plaster appliques frame a photograph of a ballerina by Ken Browar and Deborah Ory; "I wanted something with motion in that room," says designer Tiffany LeBlanc. "something sexy and poised to live up to the formality." **FACING PAGE:** Approachable, bohemian fabrics dress down the ornate fretwork in the foyer.



A NEW LEASE ON LIFE

A former Catholic school turned family home and its owner begin again.

Text by LISA H. SPEIDEL | Photography by MICHAEL J. LEE
Produced by KARIN LIDBECK BRENT



Sometimes change can be good. Liberating even. For the owner of this storied Queen Anne Victorian in Newton, Massachusetts, it was time to shake things up a bit.

For some thirty years, the 9,000-square-foot, fifteen-room former all-girls Catholic school had been the family home. The mother of two raised her children here and flung open its grand doors to host all sorts of events, from kids' parties and college reunions to a sorority sleepover for sixty of her daughter's friends.

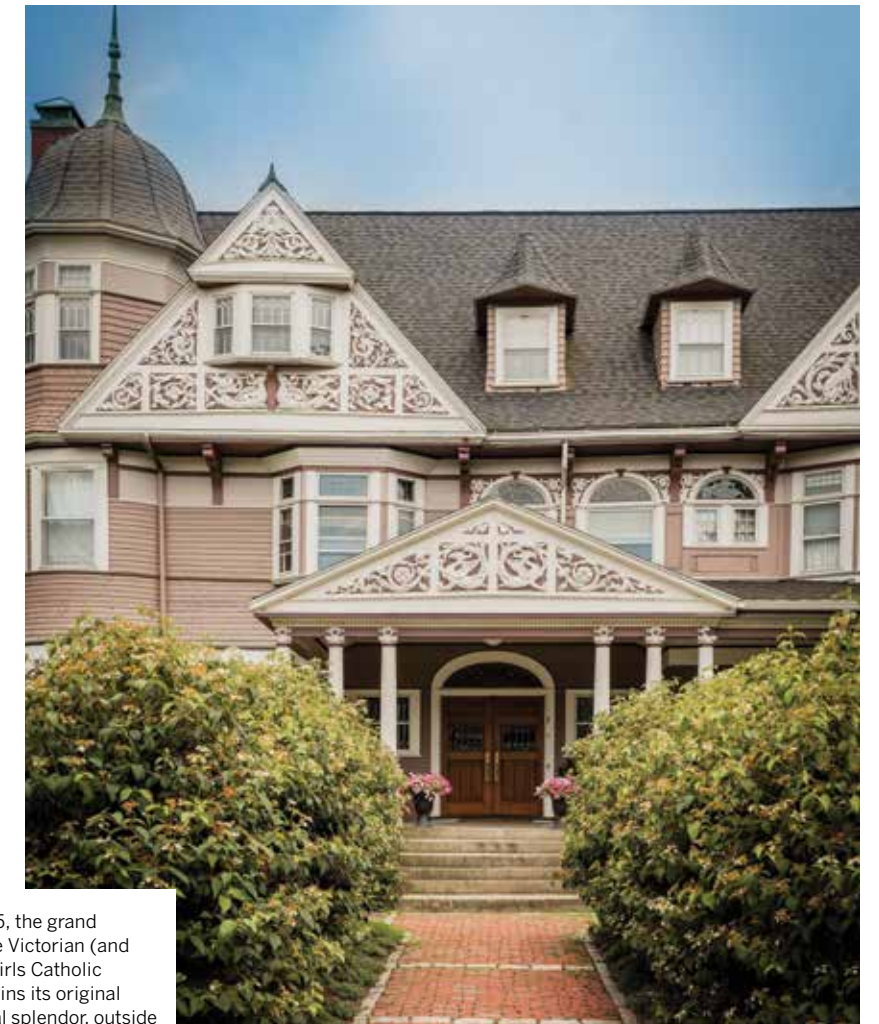
Given all those fond memories, even an impending divorce couldn't shake her spirit—or her love for her home. "I never thought about leaving," she says. "It's such a special house."

Now, it was time to make it her own.

Wanting a major refresh that would retain the circa-1895 home's historic integrity, the owner knew she needed an expert hand. As luck would have it, an online search turned up Boston-based designer Tiffany LeBlanc, and the two women hit it off.

LeBlanc set out to strike a balance between the grandeur of architecture from a bygone era and the desire to make the house comfortable for today. "I call it threading the needle," she says. "Make it livable and functional but still really considered, layered, and beautiful. You

Built in 1895, the grand Queen Anne Victorian (and former all-girls Catholic school) retains its original architectural splendor, outside and in. **FACING PAGE:** LeBlanc chose a sleek midcentury modern table to complement, not compete with, the foyer's elaborate woodwork.





Double blue-velvet sofas and a mirror-topped table flank the fireplace in the living room's sitting area. "The room commanded that level of formality," says LeBlanc, noting the rich, dark woodwork, the onyx surround, and plaster appliques that display a musical theme.

Venegas and Company collaborated on the white kitchen; a large island now sits where a chimney once was, and the modern globes floating above are from The Urban Electric Co. **FACING PAGE:** The dressed-up dining room sports new crown molding, and dining chairs from Vanguard Furniture accompany the owner's existing table.

don't want people to feel like they need a starched shirt to sit in your house."

LeBlanc promised the admittedly skeptical owner that when the reno was complete, she would use every room in the house. Bringing in light was key—"we added a huge amount of lighting throughout," says the designer—as was softening the interior with new wallcoverings or Farrow and Ball hues that nod to the historic, integrating new furnish-

ings and fixtures, and meticulously repairing all floors and woodwork.

The latter was overseen by builder Fergal Moughan, who immediately impressed the owner. "There was water in a window well in the mezzanine," she remembers. "And Fergal said to me, 'I don't care if you hire me or not, but I need to fix that now.'" LeBlanc echoes the owner's high praise: "He's like a house-whisperer to old homes," says the designer.



“You don’t want people to feel like they need a starched shirt to sit in your house.”

—DESIGNER TIFFANY LEBLANC



In the family room off the kitchen, an eggplant-colored chair from Ambella Home with Nobilis upholstery pops alongside the intricate original mosaic-tile fireplace surround. **FACING PAGE:** LeBlanc describes the mezzanine's ceiling as "the belle of the ball;" a blush-toned wallcovering paired with neutral furnishings and carpets let it shine.

That same mezzanine now sings, its stunning original ceiling and woodwork tempered by a Kerry Joyce textured blush wallpaper and modernized with a bold Larry Zox abstract.

In fact, the whole house sings, from the owner's pretty first-floor office with

bench seats and new built-ins ("it's command central," says LeBlanc), to the adjacent dining room, which was lightened and brightened while still wearing its dressed-for-the-holidays feel.

Phase two brought a new kitchen and main suite. D. Michael Collins Architects



ABOVE: A mirrored soaking tub that nods to the antique and a classic marble floor bring the glamour. **RIGHT:** A taller backsplash in the main bathroom lends an Old World feel to the space. **FACING PAGE:** “Everyone looks best in blush,” says LeBlanc of the inspiration behind the main bedroom, which has a lush, layered, feminine feel; the replica bed is from Leonards New England, and the drapes are from Rogers & Goffigon.

directed the heavy lifting, including removing a big, old chimney in the kitchen to create better flow and adding a coffered ceiling with real beams for support. Venegas and Company collaborated on the owner’s wish for a white kitchen. On the second floor, a rarely used sleeping porch became part of the main suite, which shines with a feminine aesthetic and a hint of sparkle.

True to LeBlanc’s assurance, the owner enjoys every room—and so does her family. She talks fondly of her granddaughter using the pull-chain toilets to potty train and sleeping in the same bed the toddler’s mom once did as a kid. And as for herself? There’s now lots of light, a new dog, and Diana Krall on the Sonos.

“It’s my home, and it’s taken on a new life,” she says with joy.

EDITOR’S NOTE: For details, see Resources.



INTERIOR DESIGN:
Tiffany LeBlanc, LeBlanc Design

RENOVATION ARCHITECTURE:
D. Michael Collins, D. Michael Collins Architects

BUILDER: Fergal Moughan, Moughan Contracting

