

INSIDE RICHMOND'S FANCY HOUSES

by Brandon Shulleeta photos by Scott Elmquist

From dwellings rich in history to sparkling new river-view town houses, Richmond has an eclectic blend of awe-inspiring homes suitable for just about anyone with a couple million dollars to spare.

Though not everyone can afford to live in one of the premium houses, a few gracious owners agreed to give *Style Weekly* a sneak peek inside.

While Monument Avenue offers perhaps the city's most well-known collection of mansions that are impressive on the outside, sometimes, it's the inside — the architecture, interior design and even the owners — that are most memorable.

Elsewhere, it's Central Virginia's deep-rooted history that makes some houses sources of intrigue and beauty. Such is the case for one mansion on Virginia Avenue that was built in the 1790s and housed a Northern general. It was stunning enough to preserve and move from Hanover County.

If that doesn't suit your fancy, something more singular might: perhaps a Mediterranean-style house that filmmakers deemed just the right fit for a minidocumentary about former first lady Jackie Kennedy?

Exploring a diverse set of some of the fanciest houses in the city, valued at prices from around \$1 million to \$3 million, at least one constant is this: It's the stories, character and people inside those houses that make them home.

2710 Monument Avenue:

A jaw-dropping stunner brought back to life

Inside their historic 2710 Monument Ave. house, I laugh alongside Paul and Julie Weissend as I squint my eyes in the direction of the massive quartzite kitchen backsplash — trying to find an abstract alligator.

It takes me a few seconds, but they assure me that guests usually have better luck after a few drinks. It is the first of several times when I have to remind myself that I've just met the Weissends, even though it feels like we're longtime friends.

Inside the 10,000-square-foot house, it feels like a home in every sense, and not

just because of the welcoming hosts. Thick, decades-old, dark-stained wood throughout gives the house a strong core and a feeling of deep-rooted history — even permanency — while bright artwork, pops of color, several fireplaces, and a plethora of comfortable seats make it welcoming.

The foyer at 2710 Monument Ave. features decades-old wood brought back to life after years of vacancy. The current owners are seasoned renovators.

The Weissends maintained much of the home's rich history, which dates back to 1914, though they worked to give it a more modern and comfortable appeal, making it a fun place for a family.

"Why would you live in some place that doesn't give you joy?" Julie Weissend says excitedly, while providing a personal tour.

I can tell she has given many such tours, and likes doing so, as she sounds much like a seasoned curator while talking through a never-ending, genuine smile.

"I think people's spirits get bogged down, and it's welcoming when there's a place to sit, and it's comfortable and yet it's still aesthetically pleasing," she says while standing in the large kitchen that overlooks the living room.

Every detail in the home is well-orchestrated: from strategically located pink walls that neutralize the architectural masculinity, while also paying homage to Julie Weissend's pink-loving grandmother), to diamond-shaped parquet floors in the master bedroom.

Serving as kitchen countertops and backsplash above the stove, large slabs of quartzite — which is naturally occurring and denser than granite — bring elegance and an earthy, yet heavenly, ambiance to the kitchen. Fiery oranges dance with shades of green, brown and pearly white.

There's a story to go along with nearly every crevice of the house. And where there wasn't one before the Weissends moved in, they seem to have found a way to spruce one up.

At the lower level of the comparatively mundane part of the home, there's a hidden room, for example.

"Between here and there is a secret room," Julie Weissend says, pointing to a wall down a hallway as the end point for my ensuing mission. "See if you can find it."

"Colder. You're getting colder," she says through a laugh, before finally pointing me to the correct wall to push, despite my pleas for time.

If you search well enough (or Mrs. Weissend gives you the answer), you'll find a subtle crack in the wall, where you can push the wall open. Then, ta-da!

Well, actually, it's just a storage room on the other side of the hidden wall, but it's still fun trying to find it.

The Weissends have a high-tech mechanical room to regulate the home's temperature in an energy efficient way, using a geothermal heating and cooling system.

"It's just comfortable — magically," Julie Weissend says.

There's also a modest-sized gym in the home, which seems to make sense for a



Paul and Julie Weissend's Monument Avenue home is rich in history, and has a masculine structure. The couple has worked to balance that masculinity with a degree of femininity in its interior design, hence the bright colors.



The 2710 Monument Ave. kitchen has a backsplash and countertops of large slabs of quartzite, a gorgeous naturally occurring stone that brings flair to the kitchen and an earthy appeal.



The 10,000-square-foot house at 2710 Monument Ave. was vacant for years until renovated by Paul and Julie Weissend. It had been the Senior Center of Richmond.

couple keen on details.

Attached to the master bedroom is a walk-in closet that can be accessed by prying open thick, large double doors, appropriate for a grand reveal to a closet large enough to be a small bedroom or an office. There are floor-to-ceiling closet cabinets, painted greenish-blue. It's brightened by recessed ceiling lights and a sparkling chandelier, an ideal way to feel like a celebrity while getting ready for the day.

History

Now 105 years since it was built, the house was completely renovated several years ago when the Weissends purchased it. The original blueprint inspired the redevelopment, though plenty of personalized improvements have also been made. The back of the house was also added onto.

The Weissends were the perfect cou-

ple for the renovation project at their Monument Avenue home, as owners of Dovetail Construction Co., a Richmond-based company that has been creating renovations for more than 25 years.

"When people say a house has 'good bones,' it's really honoring all the energy and decisions made to that point in time," Julie Weissend says. "A good renovation is when you can channel that and move the structure forward in a progressive way that is palpable to people. It works from a func-

tional perspective and resonates from an inspirational one.”

Since the 1960s it had been used by the Senior Center of Richmond. Commercial elevators and lights had been installed among the many other things that would have made the structure undesirable as a single-family home. It was originally designed to be a single-family, and the Weissends say they wanted to see it return to one, considering that Monument Avenue originally was mostly single-family homes.

The senior center stopped using the building, and it sat vacant until the Weissends purchased it. Amid years of vacancy, the building's city-assessed value was \$515,000 in 2000, according to Richmond property records, compared with about \$2.9 million in 2019.

What makes it awesome

This house has the best of the new and old on Richmond's historic and prized Monument Avenue. While the timeless glory of yesteryear is intact — and aged wood gives it unbreakable strength and character — there's also just the right amount of modern interior design and comfortable furniture to make it feel like a home for entertaining guests and raising their two children, now 23 and 26 years old.

There's also a sense of appreciation for Richmond sprinkled into the interior. In the foyer, for example, an original painting by Theresa Pollak hangs proudly as a centerpiece for conversation. Pollak was a nationally-

renowned artist from Richmond, who founded the Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts. She died in 2002 at 103.

The Weissends embrace the idea of preserving history, and the home is energy efficient as a bonus. They've been quick to open their home to others, and their welcoming embrace would breed excitement for any interior design enthusiast.

“We feel like stewards. There's a responsibility that comes with being a steward of a house, and we really take it seriously,” Julie Weissend says. “It's cool to potentially be an inspiration to people and say ‘You know what, let's save this place and make it better and last another 100 years.’”

1215 Rothesay Circle: A home cool enough for Jackie Kennedy

South of City Stadium, just a few hundred yards north of the James River, is a Mediterranean-style house fit for a queen — or at least a first lady.

It's there that a miniseries about Jacqueline Kennedy, “A woman named Jackie,” was filmed in 1991.

In the film, which depicts her before she became first lady, she can be seen lounging at the pool and congregating in the front yard with a backdrop of the glamorous house at her back. It doesn't take long to realize it's fit for someone important and cool, or at least, rich.

“It is beautiful. I have to say, it's beautiful,” says real estate agent Debbie Gibbs, who's representing the homeowners, who are preparing to sell it. “They're ready to put it on the market.”

The house will be listed for \$1,499,000, Gibbs says.

It's positioned in the city, close to Powhite Parkway, with a large front yard and decently spacious pool in the back.

Guests are greeted with a grand foyer with a tall ceiling, flanked by an updated kitchen that flows into the living space.

“You couldn't reproduce this today for all the tea in China,” Gibbs says. “Architecturally, it just shines. It's one of a kind, one of Richmond's finest. And it's in a spectacular location.”

History

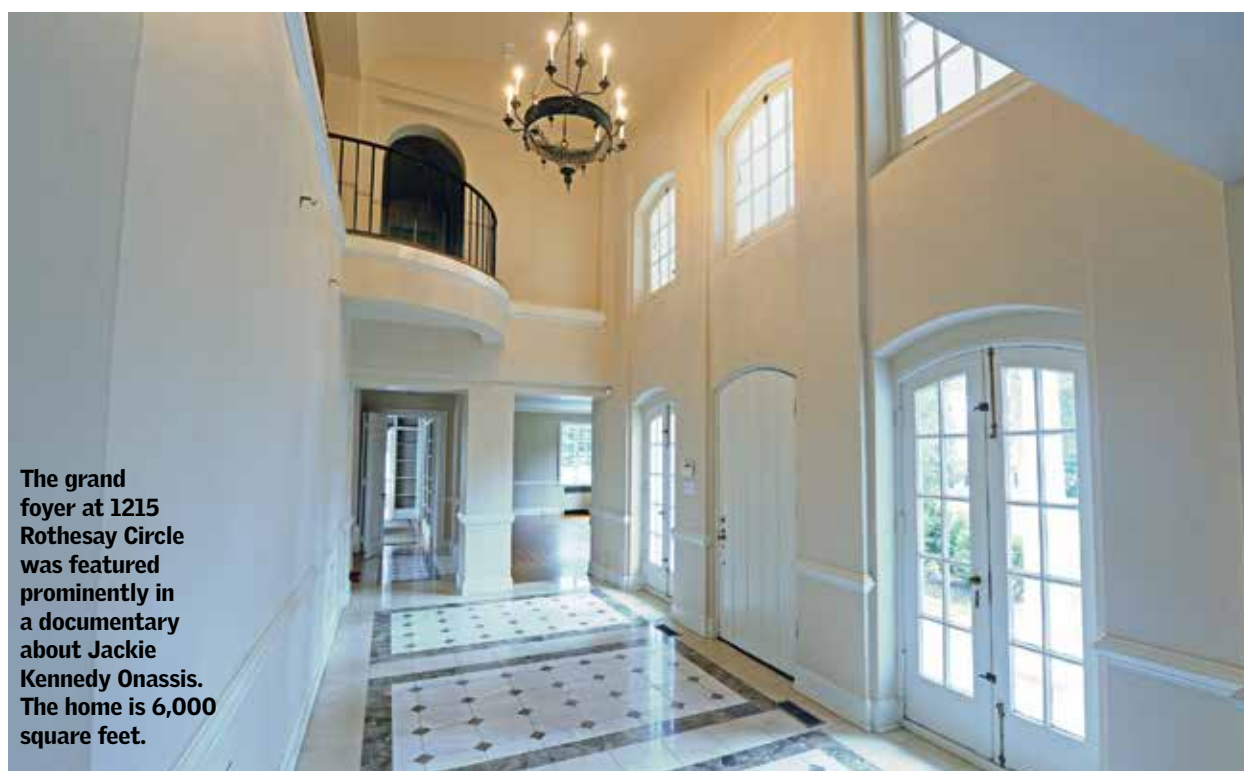
With gorgeous brick pavers, the more than 6,000-square-foot house was built in 1925 by architect Otis K. Asbury.

There's a guest apartment on the second floor, which overlooks the foyer. There's also a stunning Mediterranean-style balcony on the front of the home.

What makes it awesome

It's a Mediterranean-style house dropped into a city, near a river, with a spacious yard and a pool.

There's something special about a home when it's deemed by film directors to be cool and fantastic enough to be lived in by Jackie Kennedy. While she never actually lived in the house in real life, it certainly fits the bill.



The grand foyer at 1215 Rothesay Circle was featured prominently in a documentary about Jackie Kennedy Onassis. The home is 6,000 square feet.



The owners of this Rothesay Circle home are seeking just less than \$1.5 million for the Mediterranean-style home that has a large front yard and a backyard pool.



The Rothesay Circle home was built in 1925, designed by architect Otis K. Asbury. The room curvatures and arches for room entryways were fanciful touches popular during the time, particularly for a Mediterranean-style home.



One of multiple living spaces in the brick mansion at 201 Virginia Ave., owners Robert Hines Jr., and his wife, Anne, this living room prominently features antiques from the 1700s and 1800s.

201 Virginia Avenue: A home with enough history to fill a book

If walls could talk — they'd probably scream inside the brick Georgian-style mansion at 201 Virginia Ave. in Richmond, a half-mile from Mary Munford Elementary School.

That's not because the current owners are frightening — on the contrary, they're quite friendly. And it's not because their home is scary, it's stunningly beautiful and akin to a live-in museum.

It's the happenings of yesteryear that are eye-popping, including amputations that left blood stains on the hardwood floor to this day and ghosts believed to have lingered inside.

"I believe it," owner Anne Hines says of spirits previously residing in the home. "When we arrived here. ... I think that the spirits were quite glad to go on."

The walls are covered in wallpaper in many rooms, including yellow wallpaper with bright flowers in the stairwell. There are valuable antiques throughout, mostly from the 1700s and 1800s.

The storied antiques are fitting for a couple that made a name Richmond through antiques. Anne and Robert Hines Jr., who are in their 70s and raised three children, ran the wildly successful Thomas-Hines Inc. antiques store in Carytown before closing in 2014 after 42 years.

Hanging on the living room wall are 19th-century French pistols designed for duels — or as Anne Hines plainly describes: "when you go 30 steps, turn, and pow!"

Inside a glass case, 18th-century porcelain monkey band figurines made in Meissen, Germany, are situated strategically. The popular but rare figurines depict fancifully-dressed monkeys playing in a band, which Robert Hines has taken a liking to, adding to the collection over the course of years.

"Now that gentleman," Anne Hines begins, as she points at a portrait in the dining room. "He was the last rural governor of Jamaica, and he considered himself quite a ladies' man. And so, he had (numerous) portraits of himself done."

To this, I respond: "So this is like sending selfies, back in the day?"

"Yeah," Anne Hines says with a laugh, "He just thought, you know, it was absolutely the bomb."

Mrs. Hines continues to operate her interior design business under the Thomas-Hines company name. Though her own home has historical flair, her acclaim as an interior designer is widespread, serving customers with a wide array of styles.

"This was our taste," Anne Hines says. "I love it. I love



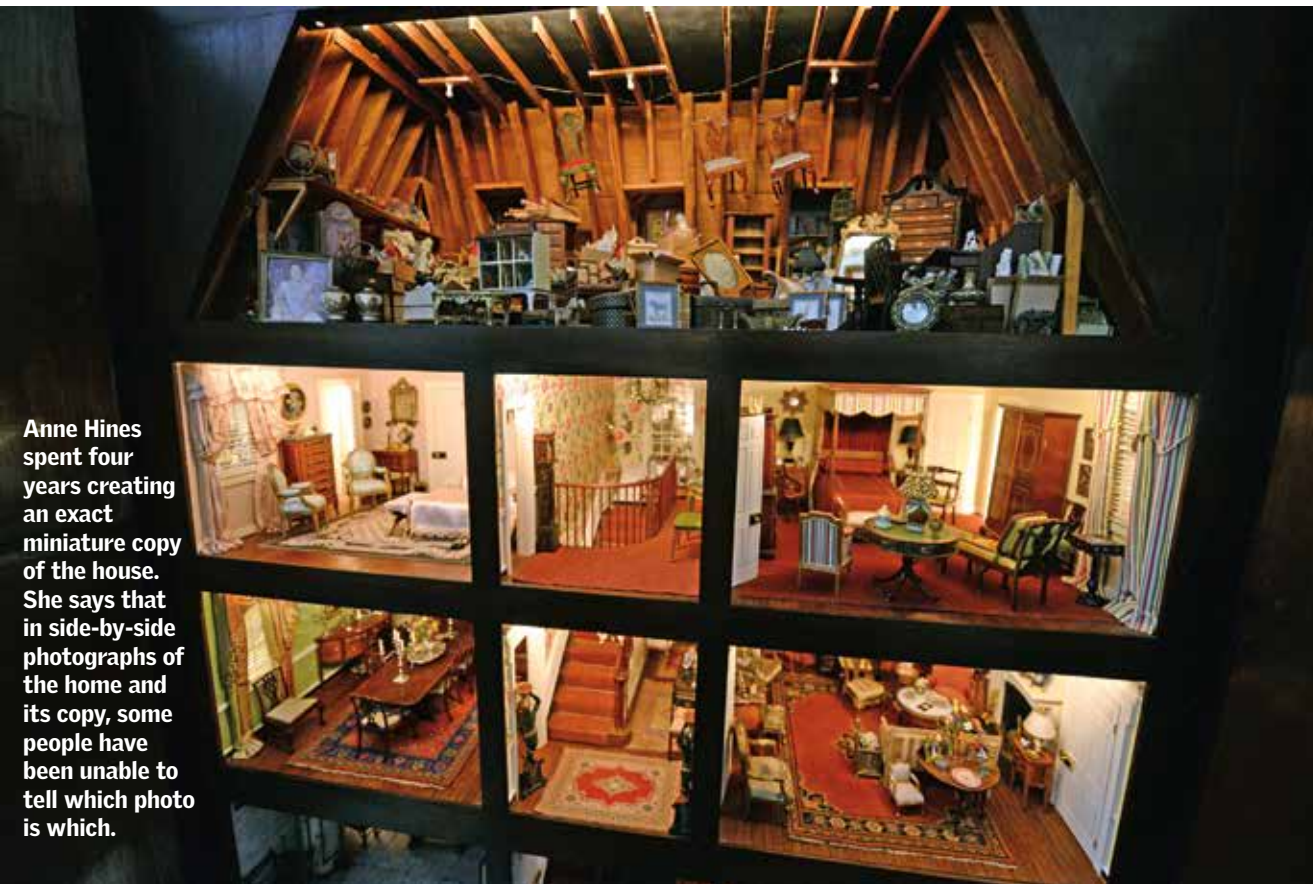
The Virginia Avenue home was originally built in the 1790s in Hanover County and was moved to Richmond. Historical documents show that a Northern general had stayed in the home during the Civil War.



The Georgian-style mansion was decorated to be elegant, while fully maintaining its historical charm, all while including plenty of seating for guests.



The Hineses managed to maintain the historical integrity of their Virginia Avenue home while also renovating the kitchen, to ensure the home would be functional.



Anne Hines spent four years creating an exact miniature copy of the house. She says that in side-by-side photographs of the home and its copy, some people have been unable to tell which photo is which.

it to death.”

Speaking of death, the Hines first found interest in the home on the heels of a tragic death, in which a previous homeowner died in 1968 from a fire that started from a cigarette, Anne Hines says.

The Hines first saw the house a little more than 50 years ago, just a week after their wedding. They hoped to one day live in it and kept their eyes open for the opportunity in the decades that passed.

“Robert said: ‘Ah, that is a fabulous house. I want to own that someday,’” Anne Hines recalls. “He, 23 years later, bought it.”

History

The house was built in the late 1790s with material shipped from England, according to Anne Hines.

It was originally erected in Hanover County, where it served as the home of a Northern general during the Civil War, she says, based on a book and other historical documents.

Amputations were carried out in what’s now the living room, and there are still some blood stains on the original pine floor, though those stains are covered by a rug.

In 1938, it was moved to Richmond in what’s now a quiet subdivision, known as Westmoreland Place, which has numerous high-end houses.

While it’s rich in history, and Anne Hines articulates those stories with great enthusiasm, the Hineses certainly don’t feel like they’re living in a museum.

“Oh, no, this is home,” Anne Hines says before chuckling. “I guess it’s like the queen of England living in Buckingham Palace. It’s her home. ... This is just our taste. It’s home to us.”

What makes it awesome

Though there are antiques rich in value and history in nearly every corner of the home, Anne Hines leans on her skills as a successful interior designer to make everything flow together.

There’s a lot to take in, but none of it feels out of place.

Close attention to the details proves valuable inside the storied walls, and the Hineses take pride in those details — so much so that Anne Hines spent four years creating a miniature replica of the house with even the smallest of details duplicated to perfection.

She says that a photograph taken of a room in her actual home, placed beside a close-up photograph of a room depicted in the miniature, even left friends who had previously visited the home unsure which picture was the real thing.

501 W. Seventh St., Unit 8 (Manchester):

A stunning townhouse by the river.



The James River is a centerpiece of this town house in Richmond's Manchester. Gorgeous views are available through much of the four stories of the home, loaded with open spaces. The ceiling is about 20 feet high in the living room.



Classic beauty is a mainstay of the town homes at the 7west complex in Manchester, including the bathrooms. Everything is designed to be timeless impressive.



The staircase that spirals the length of the four-story town house in Manchester is at the heart of the architecture. There's also an elevator for added convenience.



These town homes in Manchester face the James River and glare blocks visibility from the exterior, allowing enough privacy that many homeowners are keeping their windows uncovered, other than their bedrooms.



Perhaps the greatest asset of the luxury town home in Manchester is its location, with breathtaking views of the James River and Richmond's skyline. From the rooftop patio, the rush of the James River falls can be heard.

Looking at the James River from the balcony of a town house in Manchester at the newly built 7west complex, it's easy to get lost in the tranquility.

This particular home, Unit 8, is 3,120 square feet and has about 20-foot ceilings at the highest point.

The staircase winds up three levels. There's also an elevator.

Owners moved into the new home in late-January.

The living space is on the third floor and has a large open kitchen that flows into the living room, where there are massive windows from the floor to the ceiling, giving full views of the James River with a sky-rise ambience.

"It's industrial-modern. That fits with the warehouse district feel," real-estate agent Patrick Sullivan says. "At the same time, it's timelessly modern."

On the rooftop deck at this town house, which is near the base of the Manchester Bridge, little noise can be heard other than the river.

"What you hear is the fall of the James River," Sullivan said. "That's almost all of the ambient sound, because you're at the fall line."

There are 12 units there, with prices ranging from about three-quarters of a million dollars to just over \$1 million.

History

While Rocketts Landing, at the eastern edge of Richmond, where it borders Henrico County, is known for its breathtaking river views, these new luxury town homes on the south side of the river are enough to make someone *almost* forget about Rocketts Landing.

Manchester has been on the rise over recent years, as revitalization efforts are afoot, and residential developments near the river are breathing fresh air into the area.

What makes it awesome

Perhaps, Richmond's most beautiful asset is the river, and this town house captures it well.

"You get the best views of all of Richmond, wonderful views of the river," Sullivan says. **S**