



McClelland House, Making Guests Feel Truly at Home

By **Helene Ramackers** - 02/27/2022

Built-in 1878, [McClelland House](#) has a new lease on life following a major renovation. Upscale Living magazine spoke exclusively to CMCA's Managing Principal Jill I. Cole about the intricacies of this project.

Jill, tell us a bit about yourself.

My company, Cole Martinez Curtis and Associates (CMCA) has been designing hotels and resorts for about 40 years. In 2009, my husband told me he wanted to move out of Los Angeles, we discussed where and settled on Napa Valley. It's a great place to live and up until the pandemic, was an easy commute to and from our LA design studio by air.



Photographs by R. Brad Knipstein

McClelland House is steeped in antiquity, dating back to 1878. Were there restrictions placed when renovating such a historic establishment?

The exterior of the building had to be maintained more or less 'as is'. When we began the project, there were a number of beautiful original interior details such as ornamental plaster and woodwork that although not historically 'protected', we felt deserved being restored and incorporated in the new interiors.

How long did the remodel take?

We began planning, designing, and the permitting process about thirty months before the hotel reopened. Physical construction took around 18 months.



Photographs by R. Brad Knipstein

How did you manage to maintain the history of the house?

When the building was acquired by the client, many of the original details had been neglected and allowed to deteriorate. We made every effort to restore as much of the original building including floors, moldings, doors, windows, fireplaces, hardware, etc. as possible.



Photographs by R. Brad Knipstein

You were able to keep most of the original architecture. Were there challenges with that?

Yes, planning and designing modern luxury bathrooms and the large new kitchen were the most challenging. The original kitchen and baths simply could not be kept. All these rooms had to be gutted, expanded, and completely reimagined to meet the luxury standards expected by the owner.



Photographs by R. Brad Knipstein

The staircase is absolutely gorgeous and really draws the eye to the upper part of the house. Was that tricky to restore?

Because of the historical nature of the building, we were allowed to keep and restore the main stairway although it is steeper, and the railing is lower than current building code requirements. An elevator was added to provide easy second-floor access for guests and housekeeping. The back stairs were removed to fit the elevator shaft into the building.



Photographs by R. Brad Knipstein

Talk us through the introduction of modern amenities while keeping the old-world charm.

We went to great pains to ensure the new bathrooms, for example, reflect an 'old world' sensibility. Each bath has unique finishes and [custom-made furniture](#)-grade sink consoles, special light fixtures, plumbing fixtures, and fittings. The spectacular blue enamel range in the [kitchen](#) is both functional and a design feature. It was custom made in France and took nearly a year to get.



Photographs by R. Brad Knipstein

The high ceilings make the rooms look extra voluminous, yet the bedrooms have a cozy Victorian feel.

Bed styles, bedding, chairs, and window coverings are intentionally tall and in proportion to the unique high ceilings.



Photographs by R. Brad Knipstein

The bathrooms – one word – WOW! They were completely demolished and now boast a beautifully modern look. We would love to know more about the different aspects incorporated into the space.

Each bathroom was designed to afford the guests a complete luxury experience. They are all unique offering features and details a guest is not likely to see anywhere else or have at home.



Photographs by R. Brad Knipstein

McClelland House is wonderfully warm and intimate without being over the top. Please talk us through your process.

Before we began the actual design, we spent much time with the client discussing their goals and ambitions for McClelland House. In addition to being luxurious, their desire was to ensure guests felt they were truly at home, able to enjoy the experience of being in Napa Valley. Without making it sound like a cliché, McClelland House was designed to offer a one-of-a-kind experience for those fortunate enough to stay there.

Helene Ramackers

Heléne Ramackers is a freelance journalist who enjoys interviewing local and international celebrities but thinks she has found her calling amongst the travel writing fraternity. A creature comforts girl at heart, she loves all things opulent.