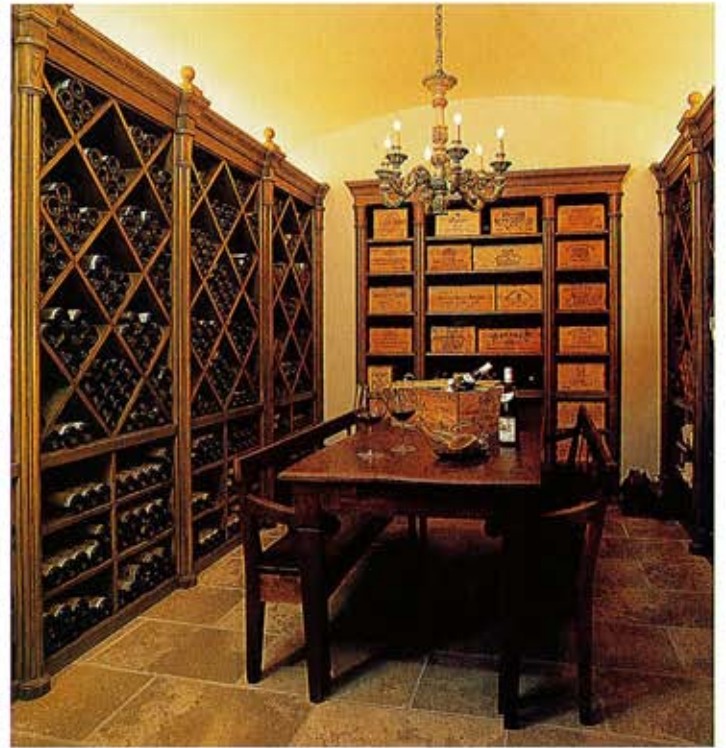




The garage for Dick and Barbara Nelson's beloved 1949 MG-TC features exposed posts, beams, brackets, oak wainscot, and clerestory windows to admit natural light. The storage wall cabinetry is also finished in oak. The wine room side of the former garage is sealed from the outside and given a cellarlike ambience with plaster walls and vaulted ceiling, limestone floors, hand-rubbed oak, and architectural cabinets.



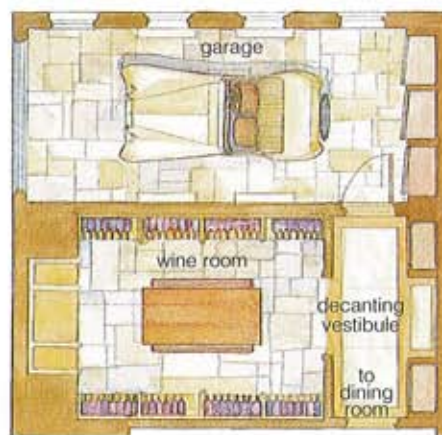
## Special Interests

Houston architects Curtis & Windham convert a client's two-car garage into a space for bottles of wine and a vintage car

by Philip Morris Photographs by Jack E. Thompson Jr.

It was not your usual garage conversion. And for Houston architects Bill Curtis and Russell Windham, who pursue high craft in their residential designs, the project was right up their alley: Turn a 24-by-24-foot town house garage into a wine room and space for a 1949 MG-TC sports car.

This transformation at the residence of Dick and Barbara Nelson is compelling. "These spaces are only a few feet removed from the house, but



MELANIE MAGEE

you feel like you're in another world," says Curtis. "The cabinetry supports the care taken in making and storing the wine, and the garage has a sense of weight and substance that takes you back in time."

The diverse uses of the two spaces are stylistically compatible. Claiming half the space, the wine room is lined with storage bins that leave ample room for a table and benches for tasting wine or dining. The garage, used



both for display and care of the roadster, has bracketed wood columns, exposed beams, wainscoting, and shelves that evoke the time when garages were evolving from stables.

On the exterior, the wine room segment was sealed but fitted with period side-opening doors identical to the working pair on the garage. A

**Client Dick Nelson, center, wanted serious wine storage conditions, and architects Russell Windham, left, and Bill Curtis delivered in style.**

new porte cochere extension provides cover for the owners' regular use. Internally, a door connects the two spaces and another door in the wine room leads to the dining room via a decanting vestibule.

"You come through the compressed space of the wood-paneled vestibule," says Windham, "so when you enter the wine room with its white plaster walls and vaulted ceiling, the feeling is expansive, but still like a cellar." Walls are natural French plaster, the floors are French limestone, and the oak millwork is hand-finished with a mixture of pigment, turpentine, and beeswax.

The need for maximum wine storage and flexibility turned into a bit of an architectural quest. Curtis and Windham settled on horizontal bins below diagonal bins that reach toward the ceiling. At the end of the room, opposite the vestibule, stand shelves for wooden cases. The built-ins are detailed with Gothicized columns supporting an entablature topped by ball finials. The wine room is maintained at 55 degrees and 72 percent humidity by its own ducted mechanical system that avoids the noise and intrusiveness of typical chillers.

In the garage, the details are, appropriately, more rustic than those of the wine room. Plaster and oak with a hand-rubbed finish are repeated, but the paving is bluestone like that used in the porte cochere. Horizontal planking is used on the lower walls, and strong and simple brackets join the timberlike posts and beams. High windows along the outside wall bring in controlled natural light. Framed technical drawings of the MG-TC enhance the space, along with roadster models and other auto-related accessories.

Dick and his wife use the wine room and garage for entertaining, and

## Judy Bates Watercolors



"Winter Garden II"

23" x 30 1/4"

**erl** originals

ART CONSULTANTS & GALLERY

3069 Trenwest Drive • Winston-Salem, NC 27103  
336-760-4373 www.erloriginals.com

Discover  
a Whole New World

INTERIORS  
MARKET



antiques  
architectural accents  
fine furnishings

Atlanta  
404.352.0055

Jackson  
601.981.6020

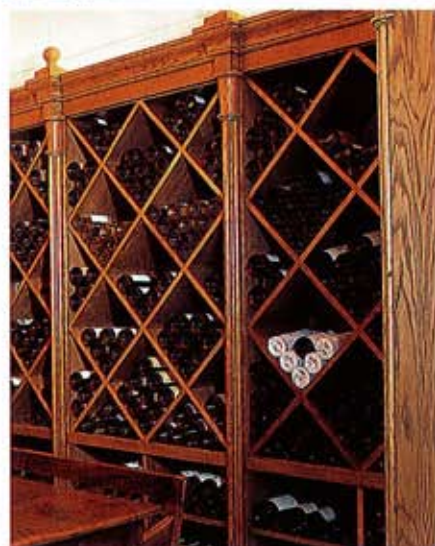
Jacksonville  
904.733.2223

Birmingham  
205.323.2817

Baton Rouge  
504.343.3655

extraordinary collections from fine dealers in all of our five locations, each with an in-store gourmet cafe

## SOUTHEAST FOLIO



A wood-paneled decanting vestibule, top, dramatizes the transition from the dining room to the wine room. Curtis and Windham designed the wall storage units, above, with diagonal bins for flexibility and architectural effect, enhanced by Gothicized columns and ball finials.

the adjoining dining room makes it easy. Dick has had the MG-TC for 30 years, but he especially treasures the space to store fine wines. "I'm buying wine all the time and stashing it away. We keep Bordeaux and Burgundies and California reds for up to 10 years, ports and Sauternes even longer," he says. "We could handle from 2,500 to 3,000 bottles. Anyone with a garage might want to think about that." ♦

To contact Curtis & Windham Architects, call 713/942-7251.

A photograph of a group of people in a room with a large rug and a tiger sculpture. The room is decorated with a large, ornate rug and a tiger sculpture. A woman in a red dress is sitting on the rug, and four men in suits are standing around her. The room has a classic, elegant feel.

DOUG AND NELDA LAY, JOHN DEWERT,  
DAVID HARTMAN, BOB FRITZ

**ORIENTAL RUGS**  
ANTIQUE AND NEW

5634 CHAPEL HILL BLVD. • DURHAM, NC 27707  
CORNER OF I-40, HWY 15-501 • 1-800-333-1801

