

CHARMING CHARACTER IN HYDE PARK

By **DANA W. TODD** | Photography by **THOMAS MCCONNELL**

Like most Craftsman homes of the 1900s to 1930s, the Hyde Park house's features hail to a time period focused on originality, hand craftsmanship and simplicity.



Chances are, if you've ever dreamed of living in a house with a white picket fence, you pictured a certain kind of home behind that fence. The fairy tale house usually involves an American Craftsman style house, like this beautifully

renovated and updated 1939 American Craftsman in historic Hyde Park. Its charm starts at the sidewalk with a perfect picket fence and moves through the upstairs and downstairs with enchanting features that live in a modern way.

Built during the heyday of the American Arts and Crafts movement, houses like this were the antonym of Victorian excess and the Industrial Revolution's mass production. Someone built this 1939 charmer during Hyde Park's construction boom. The boom took place during a second wave of building in the neighborhood from the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s to accommodate a rapidly expanding middle class's need for (at that time) suburban homes. Now in the

heart of downtown Austin, this modest bungalow needed an expansion and a facelift to accommodate a modern lifestyle. David Wilkes Builders accepted the challenge to increase the size of the cramped house and add storage and spaciousness while retaining and enhancing its inherent charms and antique character.

To add bedrooms and living space, the builder increased the footprint from 1,700 square feet to more than 2,400 square feet



by adding a second story. According to Remodeling magazine's 2014 Cost vs. Value Report, a two-story addition provides a homeowner with an 88 percent return on investment when he sells the property. That figure is up from 2013.

The new top-level story added a master suite with attached screened-in sleeper porch, a guest suite and a utility room. To

blend the addition with the original floor plan, the builder also renovated the rest of the house. Careful material selections and thoughtful interior design ensure the new rooms integrate with the remainder of the house's character.

To retain the home's architectural integrity and stay true to the era's Craftsman appeal, the new rooms continue the white

oak flooring of the first floor, stained with a dark walnut finish. The new stairway seamlessly blends the original and new floors, challenging anyone to determine they weren't all installed in the 1930s. As a practical yet beautiful design measure, David Wilkes Builders installed wall art niches up the stairwell and into the redesigned kitchen downstairs, to coordinate the old with the



new and provide storage for the homeowner's travel treasures, family heirlooms and Peter Lik photography collection.

Period woodworking details, such as those on the stairway, remain true to Craftsman style.

"The new style features painted white trim on the staircase as opposed to the traditional stained wood," says Leslie Castillo of David Wilkes Builders. "This simple addition creates a high level of contrast with the stained steps and handrail that many people find quite appealing."

The builder used simple blank newel posts and box newels, adding specialized trim detail to provide another hint of Craftsman style. Five-panel walnut doors in the new spaces coordinate seamlessly with the original wood doors.

To keep the interior true to the 1930s era, the builder minimized the use of hallways in order to maximize square footage for storage and livability. He also added a true throwback type of room — a screened sleeper porch off the master



concrete sink and countertop in the master bathroom, with a matching vanity and center spanning bridge.

“We opted for cast concrete in order to create a ‘wow factor’ statement piece for the master suite,” Castillo says.

Other creature comforts make the master bath live like a masterpiece. A BainUltra® bathtub with a heated back rest takes the stress out of a long day. An elegant Hansgrohe® showerhead is finished in brushed nickel, and the shower’s digital temperature control and Steamist® steam system is just as relaxing as the tub.

“The space offers understated sophistication, with a practical floor plan and artful details,” Castillo adds.

David Wilkes Builders completely renovated the floor plan downstairs, enlarging the kitchen by claiming square footage from an old back porch and removing the living room fireplace that restricted traffic flow. In the kitchen, new appliances, cabinetry, woodworking and lighted art niches above the kitchen cabinets stand next

to salvaged period details. Ceasarstone® Artic White countertops and stainless steel appliances paired with a cool blue Moroccan style tile backsplash cool the kitchen. White oak floors and pendant lighting warm it up a bit, creating balance.

“The cabinets are in the Shaker style consistent with the 1939 Craftsman era,” says Castillo. “To continue the 1939 style, we beaded the ceiling and added wainscoting to complete the look.”

As a final nod to an antique aesthetic, the builder used as many green materials as possible, one of the hallmarks of American



Craftsman design and its focus on using local raw supplies.

“The use of natural materials creates an organic feel throughout the home,” Castillo says.

Custom white oak flooring, another sustainable choice, also provides a surface durable enough to withstand high traffic and enables fuss-free maintenance. Other sustainable features include the use of foam insulation, low toxicity paints and floor finishes, and efficient EnergyStar® appliances.

To increase the efficiency of the home in addition to using energy-smart products, the builder designed the rooms “just large enough” with creative built-in cabinetry and space usage. The team also added a large front porch during the downstairs renovation, a relatively inexpensive feature that adds pleasing sidewalk appeal but that is also a green choice.

“Porches showcase the structural elements of roof construction and exterior walls, create additional shade, foster cross ventilation, and most importantly, provide pleasant and exciting spaces that maximize the connection with the outdoors,” says Castillo.

The new porch, along with the picturesque white picket fence, is a welcoming introduction to the authenticity that lies within the house’s new footprint. ❖

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