



A former enclosed porch is now a comfortable study, thanks to a widened aperture, reclaimed wood floors, thermal windows, leather furnishings and colorful accents.

TRANSFORMED TREASURE

BY ELAINE ROGERS • PHOTOGRAPHY BY TERRI GLANGER

REJUVENATING AN OLD PRAIRIE-STYLE HOME IN EAST DALLAS

When a home improvement project involves a serious fixer-upper and a structure most accurately described as a shambles or a dilapidated shell of a home, the expenses of time and money may seem endless, but the emotional rewards are usually rich. When the starting point also involves friends and family assuring the homeowner that they're either naïve, nuts or both, the victory is even sweeter.

Such was the case when Heidi Camp of Dallas found an old residence that had reportedly declined to the status of a crack house in east Dallas some 15 years ago, bought it “for a song,” and happily moved in and set about the process of transforming the aforementioned wreck into a livable and beloved homestead.

“I couldn’t believe my luck when I found this place,” she recalls. “It was on the city’s condemned list and people thought I was crazy to want it. But I didn’t see all the problems, I just saw this historic, quaint little house that needed some work. I’m from Mississippi, so I love old houses and lots of trees, and this was a find. I loved it from the start.”

Initially, it took Heidi four or more months to make important repairs to the foundation and address some structural changes. Priorities involved essentials such as getting plumbing back in working order, repairing smashed walls and replacing windows and doorknobs. Eventually, she moved on to occasional decorative decisions. “My folks came to see me and to take a look at what I was doing,” Heidi

recalls, “and my mom wanted to take me out to buy some draperies. I said, ‘Mom, if you really want to help, how about buying me a new toilet. That’s what this place really needs right now.’”

While cheerfully showcasing her comfortable home and detailing the changes it’s been through during a long, ongoing process of updates, Heidi makes it clear that fixing up this home has been a labor of love and she’s never had any regrets about buying a home in such a state of disrepair and diving in headfirst. Her neighborhood is a patchwork of urban decline and renewal, but she feels right at home. Work on her historic home continues from time to time, but the pace is leisurely now.

To a large degree, she retained many of the two-story structure’s 1920s touches, replacing and repairing 12-inch crown molding and blending fixtures and furnishings from her grandmother’s era into many of the rooms. Last year, however, she was finally ready to create the kitchen she’d always dreamed of having, and in this space, modern sensibilities prevailed. Working with Marc Scudder of Miramar Consulting, Heidi decided to double the size of the kitchen with an extension into what used to be a poorly constructed breakfast room, and she “went all out” in the room’s design.

“I’ve always tried to maintain the integrity of the home’s historical period, but when you walk in and see the size of my new kitchen and the stainless appliances, you know there have been a lot of changes here,” she says with a shrug. “Old houses go through a lot of phases with their different owners, though. I think that’s one of the things that makes them so interesting.”



Opposite: Six tons of gravel and river rock spread in a horseshoe-shaped area between the deck and garage create a rock garden and a touch of Feng Shui in the outdoor living area that extends through French doors from the home’s remodeled kitchen.





Designed and built by Marc Scudder of Miramar Consulting, the modernized kitchen touts a spaciousness seldom imagined in Prairie-styled homes of the early 1900s, courtesy of an extension into what used to be a breakfast room. Its many features include multi-hued granite countertops, maple cabinets, built-in wine storage, enlarged window views, casual bar seating and high-end appliances accented by a striking backsplash of black granite tile.



Although traditionally styled, the living room touts a range of eclectic artworks, posters and prints that have caught the homeowner's eye through the years. An original fireplace that was torn out during the home's years of decline has been replaced by a freestanding electric unit.



An heirloom dining table and china cabinets are a perfect fit for a small dining room traditionally styled with red-plastered walls and white crown molding.

In its latest incarnation, the modernized, made-for-parties cook zone touts a spaciousness seldom imagined in Prairie-styled homes of the early 1900s. A 10-foot granite kitchen island emphasizes the room's length and provides a roomy prep area. Scudder, an intern with the American Institute of Architects and the Texas Society of Architects, notes that the island also centers the kitchen's entertainment focus, serving as both a buffet counter and a "screening device" that flows traffic to the other side of chef activities.

"Obviously, this is a kitchen designed for entertaining," Scudder says. "It was very small and compartmentalized before, so the goal was to improve the flow and create circulation with the double doors opening up to the back." Noting the improved views and the use of "organic materials," i.e. stone and wood and granite, Scudder also touts the warm tones and built-in wine storage that give the revamped space a Bistro style.

Heidi's "pride and joy" is her Wolf stove, an extra-wide model with six burners and a griddle that is backed by a dramatic display of black granite tile and well suited to the demands of frequent entertainments. "I saw this stove in a house when I was 25 and I practically laid down on it and purred," she says. "I knew one day I'd have one of my own."

A kitchen this high-end required a large stainless refrigerator to match the other appliances, Heidi notes, although she admits that she fought the idea at first. "It's a monstrosity," she says with a laugh. "I really couldn't imagine having a fridge that cost almost as much as my first car, but I finally had to admit that a small one would look out of place in a room like this."

Along with the kitchen remodel, reclaimed wood flooring was installed throughout the entire ground floor level floor of the home, lending a sense of continuity that stretches from the main rooms in the front of the house to the kitchen, two downstairs bedrooms and a study located in what used to be an enclosed porch. Similarly, the party zone of the kitchen easily extends through French doors out to a large wooden deck that dominates the small backyard.

Much of the work outside was done by Heidi along with her new husband, Joe Rademacher and nephew Sean Camp. Both she and Joe express a high level of satisfaction with the results and with a dining area, a small outdoor kitchen and a spa tucked under a thick canopy of towering trees, it's a safe haven from urban life. Here

and in the kitchen, they often host crawfish boils and chicken fries. As an extra bonus, Heidi says the couple utilized the outdoor kitchen for many a meal during the three months that the kitchen was under construction.

Adding balance to the mix is Heidi's "Feng Shui area," a small rock garden separating the deck from the detached outdoor garage. Crediting a musician friend with delineating the space, she says, "We hauled in six tons of gravel and river rock and spread it around this area that was sort of horseshoe-shaped." At the center is what she calls her "imitation of a \$1,500 fountain."

"I like it a lot better because it only cost \$150," she notes. "Doesn't it look great?"

Adjacent to the kitchen is the study, a comfortable cubby of a room that Heidi says was once "an awful space."

"It was just an enclosed porch, and it felt like a hole," she explains. Bringing in the wood flooring of the main rooms, sans thresholds, and widening the entry from a skinny door that led from the former breakfast room made the study feel like part of the house, Heidi explains. After that, it was just a matter of putting in thermal windows and furnishing with a comfortable leather couch and colorful accents to make it a popular place for TV viewing and "just kicking back" with Heidi's nephew and Joe's son and daughter, all frequent



Heidi Camp and Joe Rademacher frequently relax outdoors where they built a large deck for dining and entertaining.



Various unusual items from Dallas artists on display in the home include a large, black cat sculpture fashioned from coat racks on display in the home include a large, black cat sculpture fashioned from coat racks to wall art called "Sisters" that showcases Victorian children's clothing, stiffened and painted black. The former was created by artisan Richard Beane, the latter, by Helen Back.



Rescuing a shabby structure from the city of Dallas' condemned list was the first step to restoring its status as a quaint 1920s Prairie-style home in east Dallas. Today, with its glorious old trees and historic charm, the home is a testament to the merits of urban renewal.



Pop culture rules in an upstairs den with poster art celebrating the ghoulish characters of the movie "Nightmare Before Christmas" and a glass-enclosed "creepy doll collection" of Night of the Living Dead dolls.



The kitchen's 10-foot island provides a roomy prep area and buffet counter while flowing traffic away from the cook zone. It's also a favorite perch of Gaston, fondly called "Heavy G," a stray "porch kitty" who now finds domestic life and regular meals much to his liking.

visitors.

Traditional décor rules through much of the house and the downstairs guest bedrooms are furnished with Mississippi antiques and heirloom furniture. Joe volunteers that since Heidi is the eldest granddaughter of her family, "she got all the family baggage." Her grandmother's small dining table is a perfect fit with the dining room's red-plastered walls and white crown molding, and by the stairs, Heidi keeps old photographs of ancestors arranged in the same order favored by her grandmother in a Mississippi home.

A freestanding electric fireplace in the formal living room replaces an original unit that was "ripped out" when Heidi bought the house and the traditional tone is strong here, although an assortment of highly diverse wall art brings a variety of eclectic touches to the fore. Heidi jokes that her collection includes more than a few examples of "\$5 posters in \$200 frames," and artworks ranging from Mississippi paintings to a Swedish soft drink advertisement she bought when she was 18 keep the eye busy while maintaining a comfortable mood.

Upstairs, a casual den delivers more surprises than the aforementioned poster art might have promised. Heidi calls it her Tim Burton room as the walls celebrate the movie "Nightmare Before Christmas" with numerous prints of the uniquely ghoulish characters. "It's just a favorite movie of mine," Heidi explains. "Actually, I love the characters more than the movie. It was love story, really." Fitting in with the theme: Heidi's "creepy doll collection" features a variety of Night of the Living Dead dolls. "I know, it's weird," Heidi says with a laugh. "But I just think they're great." Other upstairs artistic offerings range from a wall display of Joe's guitars to a giant sculpture of a black cat fashioned from large coat racks, made by Dallas artisan, Richard Beane.

Overlooking the backyard, the master suite is comfortable and functional, although it remains the site of a number of Heidi's still-to-do projects. There's the decorative Mexican tile she and Joe want to put on the balcony of the upstairs master bedroom and a revamp of the master bath that is roomy but bland with white octagonal tile and white pedestal sinks she installed when she originally remodeled 15 years ago. "I still want to get a claw-footed tub and re-do the whole room," she says.

Baths downstairs await updates as well, and Heidi admits that she retains an ongoing and ever-growing list of projects regarding the home. "It's always a work in progress, so I don't know if I'll ever say it's completely done," she muses. "But, it has come a long way from the crack house it was."



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