

Preserving the Past

RESTORATION REDEEMS A MEDINA 'TEAR-DOWN'

Four years ago, an Eastside software executive and his wife attended a Realtor's open house in Medina. Strolling the grounds of the 1908 craftsman-style home, the husband found himself drawn to the building's exquisite period detailing and estatelike setting.

At the same time, he couldn't ignore the comments of the other prospective buyers, many of whom speculated about what they'd do with the property once the house was torn down.

That kind of thinking didn't sit well with the husband. A native of India, he grew up in a culture that reveres the past and tries to preserve it. So when the home's initial sale fell through and the property was offered to him, he vowed to restore it, not raze it.

Originally built as a summer residence, the home had been expanded and remodeled several times over the years. "Structurally, the house wasn't in bad shape," notes architect Mark Anderson of Anderson Olason Marsh Elster. "Unfortunately, it had been carved up and pieces had been added on. Aspects of the house had been tinkered with and were out of balance with the rest of the structure. The goal was to tie it together and not make it look like a hodgepodge of additions."

The puny front porch and inhospitable entry were replaced with a broad veranda that helps knit together the home's various additions, while offering a sheltered refuge on rainy summer days. An ample stairway crowned with a gabled roof draws visitors into the house from the rambling

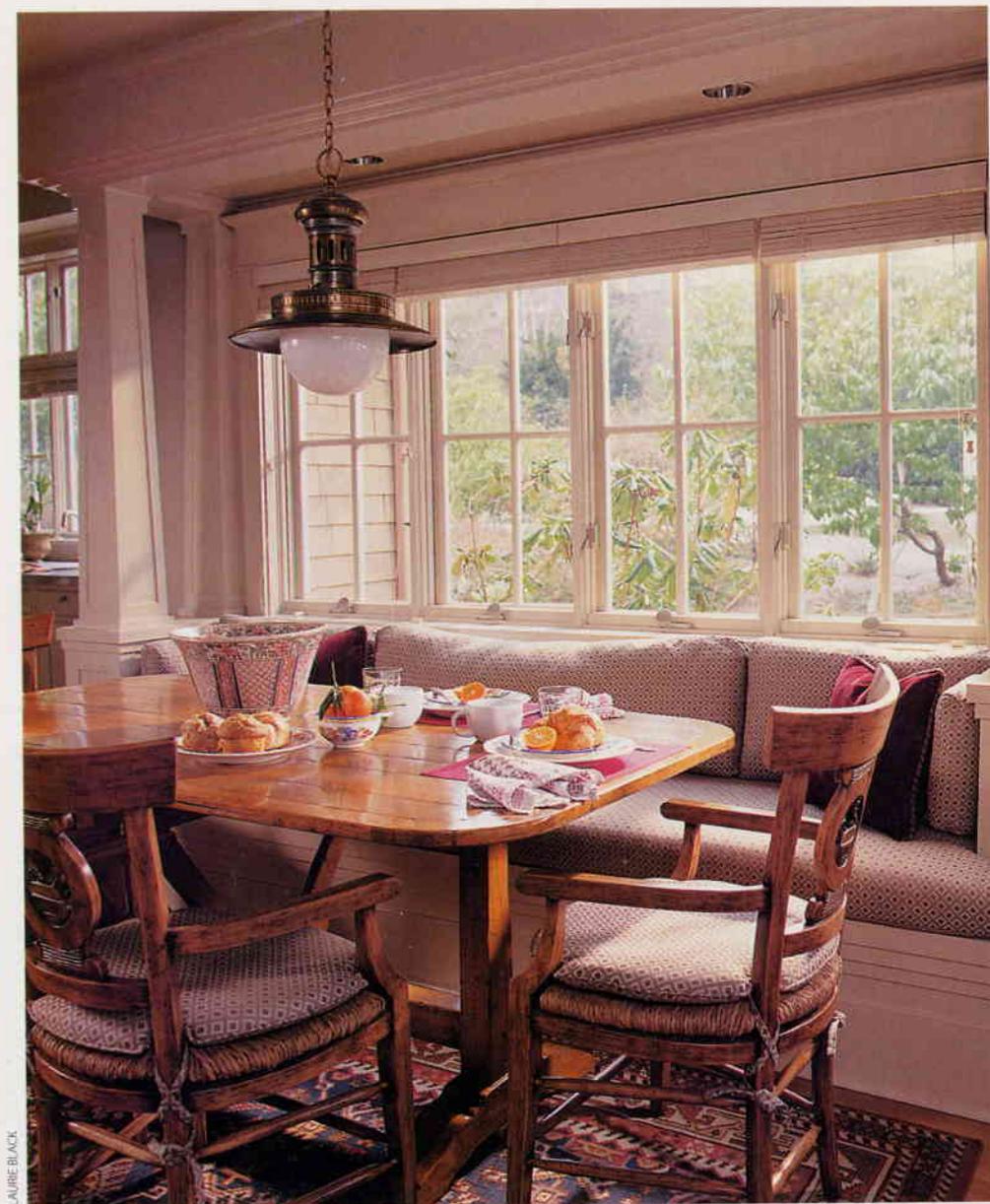


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front walk, designed—like most of the remodel—to banish thoughts of formality or pretension.

To counteract some perilously low ceilings upstairs, Anderson raised the roofline over the children's and adults' bedrooms, and replaced the Quasimodo-sized hallway that linked them. The newly enlarged "bridge" overlooks a two-story entry hall that feels more appropriate to the scale of

Haphazard remodels had taken their toll on the Medina home (opposite, inset). A new porch and entry unify the front facade (opposite) while emphasizing the home's craftsman roots. The dining room (above) still sports its original wainscoting.



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the 5,500-square-foot home. (As an added bonus, the entry acts like a flue, siphoning out summertime heat through clerestory windows above.)

While the old interior still offered clues to its elegant past—a bit of crown molding here, some wainscoting there—the details weren’t carried through consistently. Anderson and interior designer Pamela Pearce replicated the period details throughout and added touches of their own, like reproduction light fixtures, tapered craftsman-style columns and tiled fireplace surrounds. “The owners responded to the old character of the house,” says Pearce, “and they wanted everything we did to carry that theme through.”

In keeping with the preservation approach, Pearce reused as many of the owners’ old furnishings as she could. Against a background of gray-beige walls and cream trim, she paired the couple’s Oriental carpets with a virtual United Nations of furnishings derived from European and Far Eastern sources. Burnished steel tables are mated with Thai silk and plush chenille: elegant-but-understated materials that instill an air of quality, not opulence.

While the public spaces reflect the formality of the home’s 1908 roots, the owners admit they’re casual people who don’t entertain much, preferring to hang out in the kitchen with their two young boys. Unfortunately, when they bought the house the kitchen was a cramped affair tucked at the end of a circuitous hallway. The design team expanded the kitchen and tweaked the circulation to make the room more accessible.

The remodeled kitchen is a culinary tour de force, with cream-colored cabinets fitted with wavy Cotswold glass framing three sides of a sunny, vaulted space. The wife, an accomplished cook, likes to whip up Indian dishes at the island,

A window seat borders the reproduction farm table in the breakfast area (*opposite*), part of a new addition that includes the kitchen (*this page*). Honed marble counter tops and face-frame cabinets fitted with Cotswold glass exude understated elegance.



Wicker chairs and woven shades establish a casual theme in the sun room (*this page*). The neighboring living room (*opposite, above*) is more formal, and features a new fireplace surround inspired by craftsman design. The entry hall is visible at rear. The luxurious master bath (*opposite, below*) was appointed with matte metal fixtures, small squares of limestone and medicine cabinets (*far left*) designed to look like old windows.



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which is equipped with a Thermador cooktop and warming oven. A massive stainless-steel hood hovers overhead. In the corner, there's a work station where she mills her own flour.

In keeping with the home's unpretentious approach, pale marble counter tops were honed to a subdued matte finish and repeated in a children's computer center across from the French country-style breakfast table. Around the corner there's a traditional Indian prayer room (more of a niche, really) outfitted with low stools and a cabinet filled with Hindu relics.

The phrase "a river runs through it" might have described the old basement. ("You could have fished down there," deadpans Anderson.) Now dry, it's been converted into a family rec room with pool table, TV area and kitchenette. When the parents want a little privacy, they can escape to their newly expanded master suite two floors above. There, a skylighted bathroom echoes the vaulted lines of the kitchen below. Small squares of variegated limestone surround the steam shower and soaking tub, while the dull sheen of platinum and nickel underscores the sense of understated opulence.

Outside, landscape architect John Barker retained the sweeping lawn that dominates the acre-plus site, but replaced the overgrown foundation shrubs with a sprinkling of magnolias, silk trees and styrax. An old pump protrudes from a garden bed in back—a reminder of the days when the house got its water from Lake Washington.

Looking back on the two-year restoration, the husband admits the project made more spiritual sense than financial sense. Still, one suspects, it's a decision he'll never regret. ■

