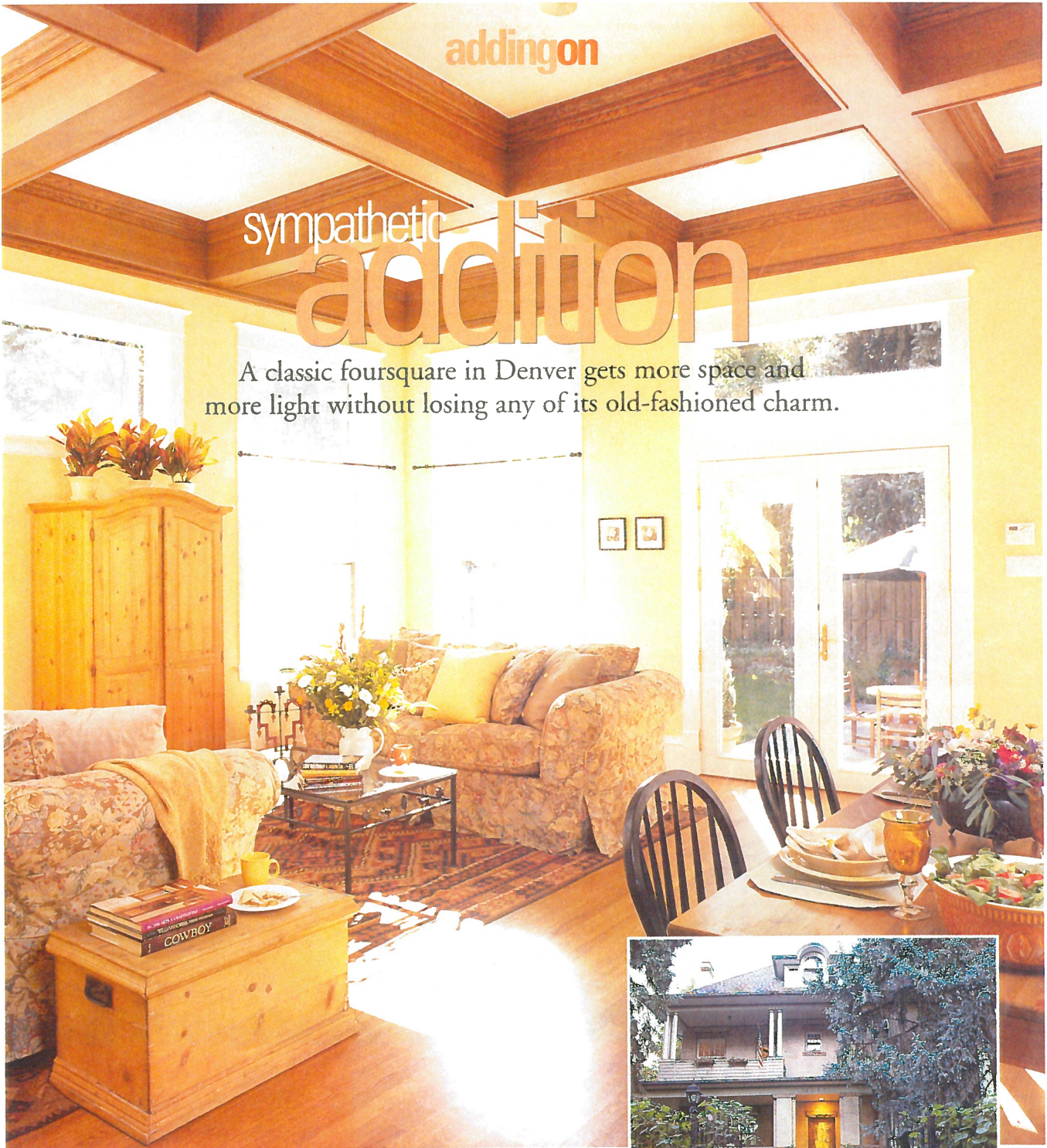


addington

sympathetic addition

A classic foursquare in Denver gets more space and more light without losing any of its old-fashioned charm.



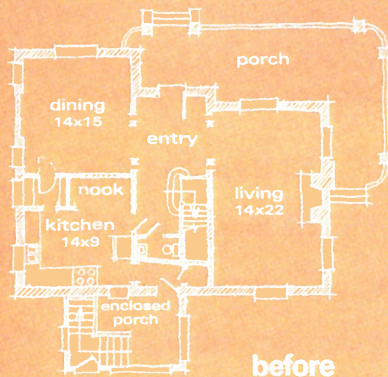
The old adage “They just don’t build them like they used to” speaks volumes about historic homes. It’s difficult to equal the materials and craftsmanship found in homes built at the turn of the last century. But those old floor plans were obviously not designed with the needs of a turn-of-the-millennium family in mind.

TOP: A family room added to an early-20th-century structure provides dining and work space for 21st-century living. **ABOVE:** This 1912 house has plenty of architectural charm, but its floor plan didn’t meet the needs of a contemporary family.

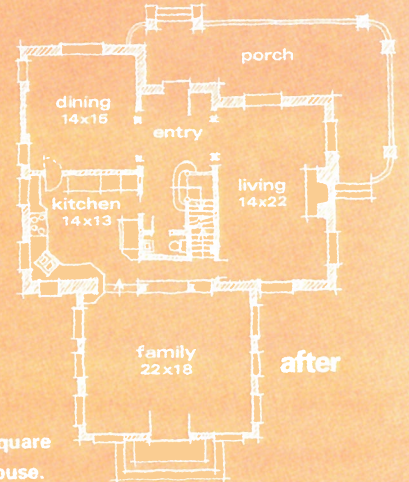
PANTIEL PHOTOGRAPHY BY J. CURTIS



before




before



after

Scaled slightly smaller than the front facade, the three-story rear addition to this 1912 foursquare incorporates copycat columns and matching dormers to tie the new space to the existing house.



By lowering the family-room floor a foot, architect Doug Walter created a visual separation between it and the original kitchen. The higher ceiling contributes to the sense of spaciousness.

Solving the space problems that vintage homes can present while preserving their style and quality is the province of architect Doug Walter. “I happen to think that an addition should be designed to fit the home and not be so easily distinguished as new,” says Walter.

That’s just the attitude that appealed to Charlotte Rath and Rob Simon as they faced the renovation of a 1912 foursquare in Denver. Although the house was solid, its antiquated layout made it feel unwelcoming.

“The basement was a dungeon,” Charlotte says. “The master bedroom was cramped, and the kitchen was a hole on the side of the house. We knew the kitchen needed to be updated and opened to the rest of the house, but we had never planned to make so many major changes.”

It was obvious that the house needed help, and Walter was the architect to provide it—the project won a Great American Home Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. “Designing for historic houses is tricky,” he says, “but the same principles used here to increase compatibility can work on a ’50s tract house.”

Walter’s “Big Three” design tools for additions are roof, mass, and materials. For this house, he matched the roof type, pitch, and material and mimicked the broad overhangs and flared eaves. The addition’s mass mandated a compromise between interior space needs and pleasing exterior proportions. The projecting balcony, the horizontal banding at the second floor, and the flared base all contribute to an integrated whole.

Before the renovation, the kitchen was dark and isolated. Today, it's a bright and cheery workplace that links the original house to the addition.



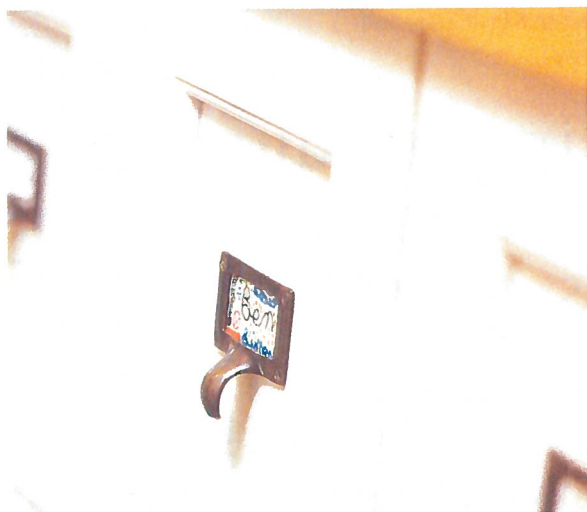
Meticulous attention to materials also helps to meld the old and the new. Stone and brick for the belt course, which runs near the base of both the original house and the addition, were salvaged when part of the house's back wall was demolished. New cedar shingles, similar to those used on the existing dormers and second-floor front balcony, were stained to complement the brick.

As the plans progressed, the owners fell into the "Midas touch" syndrome, says Charlotte: "If we're going to remodel the kitchen, we Midas well do the basement, and if we're already doing the basement, we Midas well change the staircase—that's pretty much how things went."

It wasn't long before they dispensed with notions of a modest remodel and gave Walter the thumbs-up for an

1,100-square-foot addition. The new floor plan added 230 square feet to the attic and 437 square feet each to the main floor, second floor, and basement. The second floor gained a master bath and an expanded closet, among other amenities, but the most welcome changes are the remodeled kitchen and the spacious, light-filled family room. Says project architect Karin Taylor, "What we added was what much of the rest of the house lacked: sunlight."

Especially lacking in light was the kitchen. Typical of its era, it was a cramped space built for servants. To enlarge it, the architects took space from the butler's pantry and breakfast nook. And a huge section of the outside wall was cut away, opening the kitchen to light and air from the new family room. "We didn't just take out >



matched to perfection

Before starting work on a historic building, Doug Walter plays a game he calls “channeling dead architects.”

“I ask myself, ‘If the person who designed this house were here now, what would he or she do?’” Walter explains. The assumed answer is something along the lines of “It’s the character, stupid!”—and this architect knows that a critical component of maintaining architectural integrity lies in the details. For this Denver house, attention to everything from paint color to window size resulted in an award-winning project.

“Wherever possible, materials and detailing match the originals exactly,” says the architect. “We basically brought the front to the back.” Among the more obvious cloning techniques was siding the addition with the same kind of cedar shingles used on the original dormers. Matching the old brick would have been both difficult and expensive, so Walter used bricks salvaged from the demolition of part of the rear wall to create a belt course that ties old to new. “We lowered the belt course to have enough brick to continue it around the whole house.”

Other perfect matches: The columns on the balcony and the dormer with the arched-top window mimic elements found on the original house. Not so easily discernible is the consistency of window height and style. “It was important that the tops of the windows were at the same height on the front and back,” says Walter. The details are different, though: The heavy stone sills and lintels in the brick walls didn’t make sense on shingle, so timbers were cut to resemble stone.

The architect’s favorite testimony to the seamless effect came from a guest who wasn’t familiar with the house: “After looking around, the visitor commented, ‘They sure don’t build them like they used to.’ The owner smiled and said, ‘As a matter of fact, they still do.’”

FOR MORE INFORMATION, TURN TO THE BUYING GUIDE ON PAGE 122.

a small piece of the back wall—we removed about twenty-five feet of it from the first floor to the roof,” Walter says. “This gave us the openness everyone wanted as well as a virtually unlimited supply of old brick for the addition.”

That openness is the signature of the multipurpose family room. With its expanse of windows, the room takes advantage of its southwestern exposure and provides access to the yard. “We lowered the floor twelve inches for better views of the yard through the larger windows and more privacy from the neighbors,” says Walter. “The ceilings in the original house were already generous; in this room, they became positively grand.”

He tied the new interior detailing to that in existing rooms. In the kitchen, quartersawn white oak was used

to match old woodwork, new flat-panel white-painted cabinets replaced the old ones, and maple butcher-block counters provided a strong traditional element. The wood-beamed ceiling in the family room is a more elaborate version of the one in the living room, and the decorative columns duplicate those in the entry.

“In the long run, the house pretty much told us what it wanted,” says Charlotte. “It was a grand house, and it required a grand addition.” Luckily for the house, it had an architect who listened. ■

TOP LEFT: White-painted flat-panel cabinets topped with functional maple counters retain the vintage feel of the house. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Small drawers, resembling those in an old card catalog, make room for life’s little odds and ends.