



Gary and Beth Milici jumped at the opportunity to buy a bungalow listed in a Seattle newspaper as “not for the faint-hearted.” They had been looking for a traditional house that could incorporate their modern lifestyle, and Gary, as both a visionary and a romantic, wasn’t discouraged by the amount of work the 1912 house needed.

The bungalow was sadly neglected, but its integrity was intact, so the couple set out to bring the cozy house back to life. Like many people these days, Gary and Beth are embracing traditional American neighborhoods—and classic houses like the bungalow that give a neighborhood its sense of place.

The appeal of the bungalow is the same now as it was 100 years ago. At a glance, you recognize the solidity and sense of shelter. Inside, the rooms are arranged in an open way that reinforces family togetherness, with easy access to the yard to encourage

American
Classic:

The Timeless Bungalow

After 100 years, these well-crafted homes still make sense for the way we live

BY M. CAREN CONNOLLY AND LOUIS WASSERMAN



outdoor living. On closer inspection, you can appreciate the warmth of the wood trim and the quality of the finish.

Progress on the Milicis' bungalow was slow. It took a worker more than two weeks to strip paint from the woodwork in the dining room alone. By finishing the attic and the basement, Gary and Beth tripled the living space to more than 3,000 square feet, all within the original footprint of the house. And by updating within the bungalow aesthetic—but without attempting a slavish re-creation—they wound up with a classic home that makes sense for today. **h**

See Resources on page 90.

*Landscape architect M. Caren Connolly and architect Louis Wasserman share an architectural practice in Milwaukee, Wisc., and a passion for bungalows. This article is adapted from their book, *Updating Classic America: Bungalows* (The Taunton Press, 2002).*



WHAT GIVES A BUNGALOW ITS CHARACTER?

DOMINANT ROOFLINES, LARGE DORMERS

Bungalows are meant to look like one-story houses (even though most have second-floor bedrooms), with a strong connection to the site and an overall humbleness of scale, reflecting their relatively small size and lack of wasted space. A dominant roof, often with a heavy overhang, supported by squat columns and braces, emphasizes the ground-hugging aspect of the bungalow. Dormers add headroom but maintain an intimate scale.



A large shed or gable dormer is common

A dominant roof creates a one-story appearance



Blending old and new

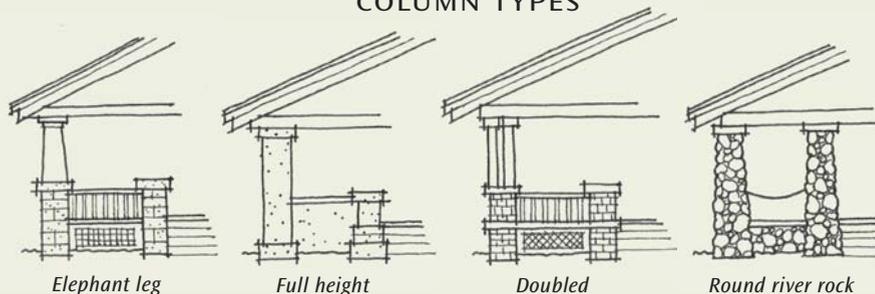
The Milicis wanted their bungalow to reflect its original spirit, but they weren't interested in pristine historical accuracy. In the dining room (photo below), they brought back the original woodwork, ceiling beams, and built-ins, and they used period lighting and furniture. The dark-stained wood and rich-hued paint lend the dining room a quiet grandeur and a degree of intimacy appropriate for dinner with friends. But in the living room (photo left), the Milicis wanted a more open, less formal feel for everyday family activities—reading, talking, and gathering—so they painted the walls and trim in light hues. The Arts and Crafts-influenced fireplace is new, but it fits right in, and its wood-paneled mantel helps tie the living room to the wood-trimmed dining room and kitchen. The fence (right) is also new, but its Craftsman-style design makes it look as if it has always been there.



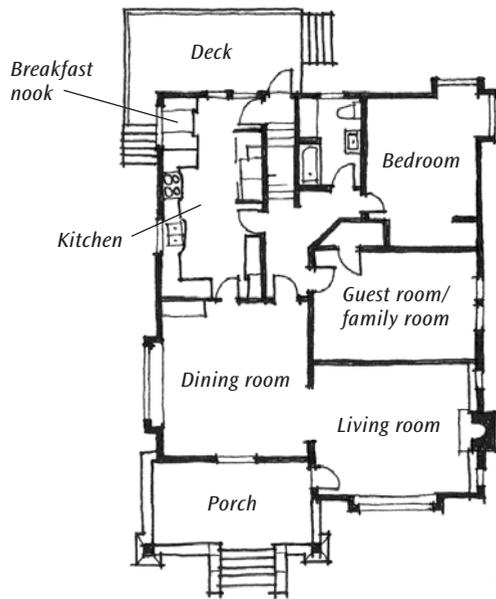
BROAD FRONT PORCHES

Bungalow front porches are conspicuously well built, with stout pillars (squat and tapered “elephant-leg” columns are common), beamed ceilings, and exposed rafter ends. The porch is often set within the footprint of the house, under the sweep of its broad roof, an invitation to indoor/outdoor living. Columns appear in seemingly endless variation.

COLUMN TYPES



FIRST FLOOR

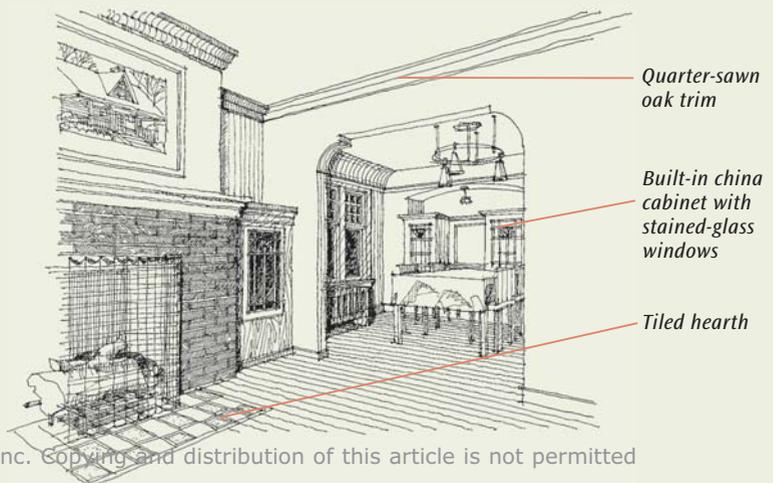


A kitchen with breathing room

Typical of historic bungalow kitchens, the Milicis' original kitchen was cramped and dark, with just two small windows on one side. By combining the kitchen with the pantry on one side and the mudroom on the other, the Milicis created a large, well-lit kitchen with a cozy dining booth that looks as if it came with the house. The kitchen has up-to-date appliances, yet it retains a quiet, pedigreed look, in part because of the care taken with natural materials—a warm-hued cork-tile floor, wood cabinetry with glass doors, decorative tile, varnished wood trim, and good reproduction pendant lights.

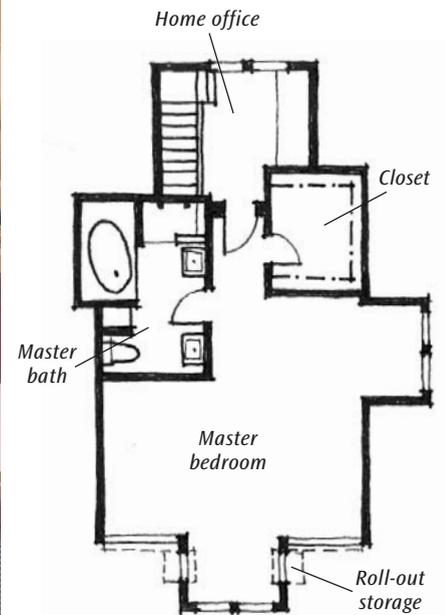
BUILT-INS AND HALF-WALLS

To make the most of limited space, bungalows often feature built-in bookshelves, window seats, and intimate inglenooks beside the fireplace. The centerpiece of the dining room is apt to be a built-in china cabinet and buffet. To create a degree of separation between spaces while allowing activity to flow freely, bungalows frequently have partial walls (with or without pillars) between entryways and living rooms, or between living rooms and dining rooms. These half-walls often serve double duty as cabinet space or bookshelves.





SECOND FLOOR

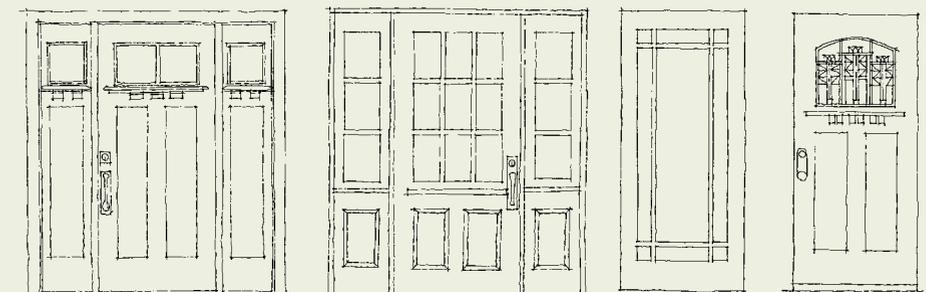


Life inside the roof

By turning the unfinished attic into a master bedroom with bath and walk-in closet, the Milicis brought themselves into intimate contact with one of the prime hallmarks of the bungalow: its dominant, sheltering roof. The reconfigured second floor looks more like a faithful reconstruction than brand-new construction, though the Milicis chose painted finishes rather than the more traditional dark-stained wood. The slope of the roof reduces the ceiling height, but the bright paint and well-lit dormers make the room feel larger. And the Milicis took advantage of the “knee walls” (formed where the sloping ceiling meets the wall at less than standing-room height) to carve out bookcases and two rolling linen-storage units that slide out of the knee walls into the dormer area. Gary Milici managed to tuck a small home office onto the stair landing.

DISTINCTIVE DOORWAYS

Look at three bungalows in a row: You're apt to notice similarities in scale and in overall form and sensibility, but also the distinctiveness of detail from house to house. The bungalow front entryway and the first impression it makes are often a signature element. Even in a modest bungalow, the front door will be of substantial frame-and-panel construction, perhaps with sidelights, stained glass, or a graceful curved top.



Craftsman style with sidelights

Twin panel, 3/4 glazing with sidelights

Prairie style

Stained glass