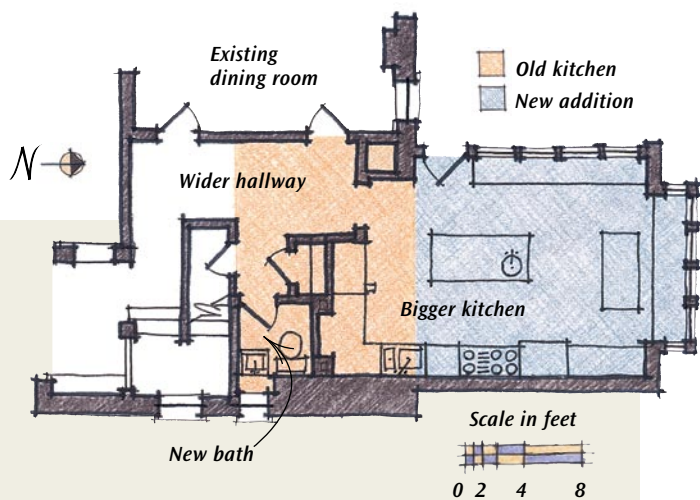


A new Craftsman kitchen celebrates the timeless ideals of honesty and utility

BY DEBRA JUDGE SILBER



# Arts & Crafts Made Modern



When they found their brick foursquare in the mid-1980s, Ed and Kathy Friedman couldn't believe their luck. They'd spent 10 years building a collection of Arts and Crafts furniture and decorative objects, and here was the perfect home in which to display it. The 1915 foursquare, with its built-in benches and bookcases, was as well preserved as if it had been locked in a time capsule.

Except for the kitchen. Remodeled in the '50s, the boxy room had plastic tiles running halfway around it and white metal cabinets backed awkwardly against the walls. Not just outdated, it was completely at odds with the purposeful beauty of the rest of the house.

## An addition with a mission

"From the time we bought the house I was thinking about renovating the kitchen," said Kathy. But bringing the warm, wood-trimmed character of the rest of the house into the kitchen without making it seem dark and tight was a daunting task. It was also clear that an addition would be needed. Not only was the existing kitchen

## AN APPROPRIATE ADDITION

The Friedmans' remodel not only left them with a much bigger kitchen but also made room for a much-needed half-bath and a more spacious hallway on part of the old kitchen's footprint.

Floor plan: Martha Garstang Hill



too small, but the Friedmans wanted to take the opportunity to introduce other modern comforts—air conditioning and an extra bathroom—to the house. In the final plan, both air conditioning ductwork and a first-floor half-bath were worked into spaces that had been part of the old kitchen (see floor plan, facing page).

Given these considerations, the Friedmans chose not to recreate a Craftsman kitchen in all its authenticity but to reinvent it in a way that embraced the craftsmanship and spirit of those early 20th-century designers in a more contemporary space. To the Friedmans, that meant focusing on four themes central to the Arts and Crafts movement: simplicity, honesty, utility, and beauty.

At the same time, they realized they needed a strategy to bring their favorite style a bit closer to the bright, open kitchens of today. They found their answer with the help of Gerald Morosco, a Pittsburgh architect schooled in the Prairie style of Frank Lloyd Wright. Morosco helped the Friedmans discover how elements of this related but slightly more modern style would gently nudge an authentic Craftsman kitchen just far enough forward in time to accommodate a 21st-century family.

**A WELL-CRAFTED KITCHEN** *The expanded and remodeled kitchen in Ed and Kathy Friedman's 1915 foursquare celebrates their love of the Arts and Crafts style. It is a huge improvement over the ill-fitting 1950s arrangement it replaced (inset). An infusion of Prairie style gives the space a modern openness, creating a bright, comfortable, and roomy place for Ed and daughter Mara (facing page, top) to collaborate on cooking chores.*

## A grand plan makes a poor start

Both Morosco and the Friedmans were enthusiastic about the project—perhaps too enthusiastic. Attempting to include their favorite features from both Prairie and Craftsman architecture, they came up with a plan Ed later described as an oversize hexagonal jewel box. “It was a totally inappropriate use of the space,” says Kathy, who nixed the project when she realized its price tag was more than double their initial \$100,000 budget.

Disappointed, the couple didn’t go directly back to the drawing board. “We had to chill out and rethink it,” says Ed. But over the next few months, the Friedmans whittled away at the plan, reconfiguring it as a more modest rectangle that retained most of the features they wanted.

The Friedmans still felt that Morosco, who was trained at Wright’s Taliesin School, had the talents to see their project through. “Most of the architects we talked to didn’t understand at all what we were trying to do,” Ed said. “They’d come in and give us the Arts and Crafts redux approach. Jerry knew what we wanted and knew how to do it.” So they re-hired him to execute their more modest plan. And this time, says Kathy, everything clicked from the start.



**HONESTY IN DESIGN**  
*The Friedmans didn’t hide their modern appliances (below), opting instead to embrace the Craftsman principle of honesty in design and function. Respecting that principle also meant making no apologies for showcasing contemporary materials, like the stainless steel of the island sink (left).*



## Arts and Crafts is a natural for a kitchen

Kitchens have changed a lot since the turn of the century, but even modern kitchens share a feature that is a cornerstone of the Craftsman aesthetic: cabinetry. And it was here that the Friedmans concentrated their efforts.

Morosco recommended Jerry Fink, a local carpenter, who, guided by the Friedmans, designed a cabinet door pattern based on Gustav Stickley pieces the family owned. It took three mock-ups to design a door with proportions that matched convincingly. Even more exacting was the full-inset design that recreates the meticulous flush profile that was the pride of Craftsman carpenters (photos right). Built of American white oak, the cabinets are stained chestnut brown, a shade lighter than the woodwork in the rest of the house.

For all its period appearance, the cabinetry is fully modern inside. The largest piece, an 11-foot-long unit opposite the cooking area, conceals a television, stereo, foodstuffs, and cleaning supplies behind its four sets of doors (bottom photo, p. 47). Positioned near the center island, the TV is situated perfectly for the family to catch the morning news while pouring coffee or buttering toast.

For the countertops, the Friedmans settled on deep-green uba tuba granite. They agreed with Morosco that slate would have had more

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They made no attempt to hide their stainless-steel refrigerator, dishwasher, or six-burner cooktop.

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of a period appearance, but they were concerned about staining. “We wanted something we could live with,” Ed explained.

Likewise, the Friedmans made no attempt to hide their stainless-steel refrigerator, dishwasher, or six-burner cooktop. Masking their metal appliances behind wood cabinetry wouldn't be keeping with the spirit of the movement, Ed explained. “The Arts and Crafts ethic is all about honesty and simplicity, and that means honesty in materials. We wanted to keep to that ideal of honesty: that a dishwasher is a dishwasher, a refrigerator is a refrigerator.”

## Antique collection provides the details

The couple turned to their collection of Craftsman furniture to supply the authentic details for the new kitchen. The brass knobs and drawer pulls for the kitchen cabinets were cast from iron knobs on a chest of drawers and old pulls on a writing desk, both Gustav Stickley originals. The graceful corbels supporting the overhang on the kitchen island (photo, facing page) are fashioned after similar pieces on a wooden settle, or bench, manufactured by Gustav's brothers' company, L. & J.G. Stickley.

The Friedmans also wanted to provide a home in the kitchen for pieces of early 20th-century pottery they'd collected. A niche above the stacked wall ovens creates a focal point for a piece dat-




IT ALL  
STARTED  
WITH A  
\$40 TABLE

**BORN IN AMERICA** in the 1950s, my wife, Kathy, and I were naturally enamored of modernism. But as children of the '60s, we were also drawn to nature and natural materials. These two perspectives united in 1976, when, while on vacation in Gloucester, Mass., we bought our first piece of Stickley furniture. It was a big library table, modern in its straight, severe lines, while at the same time a stunning example of the weight and sensual beauty of solid chestnut. It cost us \$40.

We had seen a lot of Victorian oak, but what was this straight stuff? We spent the rest of our vacation refinishing the table, which we now know we probably shouldn't have done. Then we started combing libraries to learn about Gustav Stickley and his revolutionary and—at that time—neglected furniture. About the same time, a *New York* magazine article entitled “Move Over Deco, Here Comes Mission” introduced us to the growing Arts and Crafts revival. Before long, we were serious Stickley collectors.

Gustav Stickley was the eldest of the five Stickley brothers, all of whom were furniture manufacturers. In designing furniture, accessories, and homes for the American middle class, Stickley merged the utilitarian and aesthetic ideals of the fledgling Arts and Crafts movement with his own progressive sensibility. His furniture is characterized by grace in proportion, honesty of material and construction, and simplicity. All of these principles appealed very much to Kathy and me.

Today we have more than 100 pieces—chairs, tables, bookcases, lamps—produced not only by Gustav's own firm but also by that of his brothers Leopold and John George (L. & J.G. Stickley), so it was only natural that in doing our kitchen addition, we strived to honor Stickley's ideals. —Ed Friedman



**COLLECTIVE VOICE** The long wall unit (above) makes a fine showcase for items from the Friedmans' collection of vintage Fulper Pottery (these pieces date from 1910 to 1920). The cabinet knobs and pulls (left) are copies of similar details found on a chest of drawers and a Stickley desk in the family's collection.



**BLENDING AND BENDING**  
*The exterior of the kitchen addition repeats elements of the home's original style in the brickwork and the tile roof but also introduces a Prairie look with the low profile and tall windows. Originally, the kitchen opened onto a covered porch (inset).*

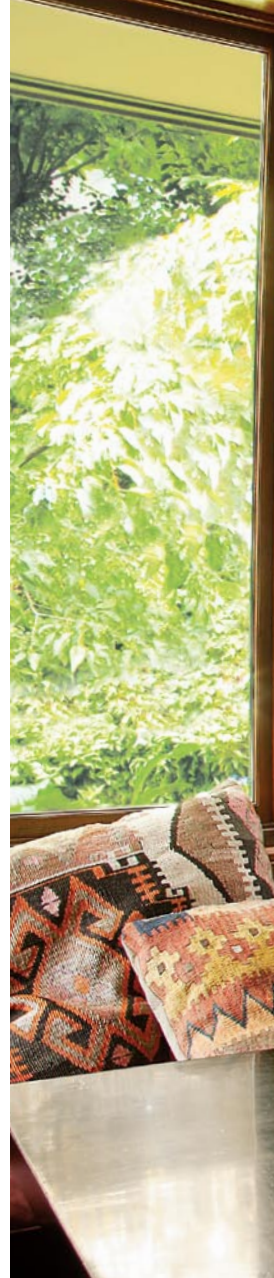
ing from 1910, while others glisten in the light cast by the long row of windows above the wall unit. The display niche, as well as the backsplash behind the stove and sink, is covered with white subway tiles Kathy had noticed in homes built by Craftsman architects Charles and Henry Greene as well as Wright. Ed and Kathy added some drama to the original square design of the brick-red Welsh quarry tile floor by having some of the tiles cut into diamonds to mimic the shape of the cabinet knobs.

Introducing Arts and Crafts motifs subtly was one of the Friedmans' goals. "We wanted to have the Art and Crafts theme but without overdoing it," said Kathy. It was that goal that persuaded them to abandon a plan to light the kitchen with an over-size reproduction Frank Lloyd Wright chandelier. They opted instead for small recessed light boxes trimmed in oak to match the cabinets. "My theory about these things is that if they are well placed and well detailed enough, they disappear visually," said Morosco, who devised the lighting. "The idea isn't to ornament them to make them fit in, but to make them blend in—sort of like architectural camouflage."

### Two movements merge

But the blend that makes this period kitchen work so successfully today is the stitching together of Craftsman and Prairie architectural styles. Historically, the two movements took hold at nearly the same time, with Wright's open, light-filled horizontal forms reinforcing the honest, handcrafted approach embraced by contemporary Arts and Crafts builders.

So while the cabinetry is pure Arts and Crafts, the large banks of windows, the vaulted ceiling over the dining table, and the roof





**SET TO SERVE** *Kathy wanted to tuck a Stickley china cupboard in this niche alongside the table until she saw a butler's pantry like the one above in a photo of a kitchen by Craftsman architects Greene and Greene. The table is a rare Stickley piece for which Ed made a new wooden top to protect the leather original from everyday use.*

**KEEPING UP APPEARANCES** *This 11-foot-long wall unit houses a television, stereo, pantry space, and cleaning supplies behind its authentically crafted doors.*

overhang that shades the exterior are pure Prairie. In addition, the Prairie-style method of using higher and lower ceilings fit right in with the Friedmans' desire to add air conditioning to the house. In typical Frank Lloyd Wright style, Morosco dropped the ceiling in the hallway, making room for air ducts that fan out to the rest of the first-floor rooms. "Frank Lloyd Wright always brought you through smaller spaces into one with a sense of elevation and openness," Ed said. "In this case, Jerry used this architectural detail in an ingenious way to hide the air-conditioning ducts."

It's using these period design techniques in the context of a modern home that really embodies the Craftsman principles Kathy and Ed sought for their kitchen and make it not a turn-of-the-century curiosity, but a comfortable, functional space for the present. "It's not an ornate look," Ed said of the Craftsman ideal. "It's very straightforward, very clean. I consider it really modern." **TH**

*Debra Judge Silber is an associate editor.*

**For more information, see Resources, page 86.**