



Transformed into a classic Craftsman home, this Sears kit house lives, looks, and performs better than ever

# An American Bungalow: Before and After

BY MICHAEL KLEMENT

**W**hen I walked up to Gerry Duprey's house for the first time with my builder, Bruce Curtis, and our feet nearly went through the rotten front-porch floor, we knew we had our work cut out for us. What we didn't know, but would soon find out, was that the back porch was in even worse shape and that everything between needed work. Some areas needed structural improvement, most needed air-sealing and insulating, and every inch of the house needed aesthetic upgrades.

A little architectural archaeology suggested that not much of the house was actually original. We discovered that this 1928 Sears kit house had been through many transformations. It had started out as a single-family home, then became a multifamily home, then a boarding house, and eventually a single-family home again.

By the end of the meeting, Gerry had dumped 35 lb. of dog-eared books and magazines on us. His inspiration was the American bungalow. We had our work cut out for us indeed: work that would last eight years; work that would include structural improvements, energy improvements, and design improvements; and work that would result in a traditionally styled home for a modern lifestyle.

## We started at the front door

We approach all our design work by exploring space, adjacency, and circulation. In other words, we consider how a room will be used, how it connects to other rooms, and how the homeowners will move between rooms.

One of the first problems was the front door. Positioned off-center, the front door created an unbalanced facade and a clumsy approach. Inside, the door location began

an awkward path through the living space. However, a more pleasing facade, a more direct approach, and better circulation were not the greatest benefits of centering the front door. Centering the beaten path through the home allowed us to create three distinct but well-connected spaces—the dining room, the living room, and the study—where previously there had been only one. We consider this our most cost-effective move: gaining new rooms without adding to the house.

While our goal was to create a series of spaces for different activities, we wanted to use as few solid walls as possible. To connect yet separate the study, we used French doors. To define yet link the living and dining rooms, we used a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -height wall.

The kitchen presented another challenge. Again, we looked to our yardsticks of space, adjacency, and circulation to recognize that



**Details that unify and divide.** Some traditional Craftsman-style details, such as the tall red-oak wainscot, are meant to tie rooms together; others, such as the  $\frac{3}{4}$ -height wall and cross-tied columns, are meant to define rooms in a partially open plan. Photo above taken at A on floor plan. Photo left taken at B.



## SLIGHT CHANGES LINE UP A BETTER LAYOUT

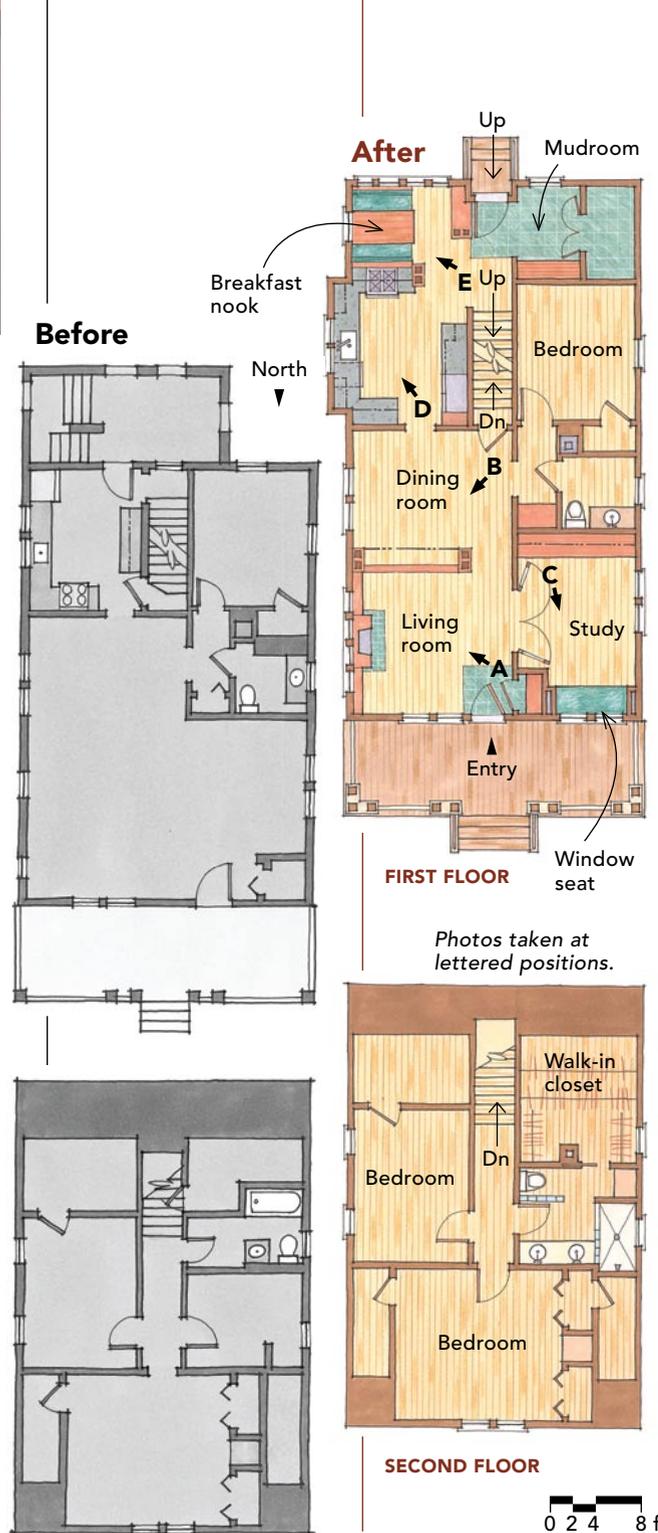
Moving the front door only a few feet to the east had a dramatic impact on this house. Outside, centering the entry balanced the bungalow's street-facing elevation for a more pleasing facade. Inside, it created a straightforward path between the living room and study (photo above taken at C on floor plan) and into the dining room. Moving the basement door out of the kitchen and bumping out the east-facing wall for a cabinet bay added much-needed storage and counter space. The small addition on the back of the house made room for a breakfast nook and a functional daily entry. Swapping the locations of the second-floor bath and closet made better use of both spaces.

keeping the path through the house on a consistent axis would yield maximum efficiency. This meant straightening the winding basement stairs and relocating their access from the kitchen to the dining room. The stairs are now safer, the door doesn't disrupt traffic, and kitchen storage space increased.

Neither the budget nor the zoning board's setback regulations would allow us to expand the kitchen's footprint considerably. The solution to increasing storage and counter space lay in a careful reading of the zoning ordinance. Although it was clear that we could not extend "floor space" into the setback, we could project "architectural features." So we laid out for the zoning official a careful explanation of how a cantilevered bay would project only cabinetry into the setback.

The same way we started our changes to the floor plan at the front porch, the Craftsman details also started on the porch. Porch columns are synonymous with bungalows. We chose a wooden, clustered, and cross-tied column design because it provided the structural support we needed while giving balance to the facade and privacy to the porch.

The columns became a unifying design element inside the home as well. But other Craftsman hallmarks get the job done, too. The traditional ¾-height wainscot establishes



## SPECS

**Bedrooms:** 3

**Bathrooms:** 1½

**Size:** 1780 sq. ft.

**Completed:** 2007

**Location:** Ann Arbor, Mich.

**Architect:** Michael R. Klement, AIA, Architectural Resource

**Builder:** Bruce Curtis, Washtenaw Woodwrights

commonality for many architectural components, including the fireplace surround, the partial wall between the living room and the dining room, and the kitchen backsplash. To execute this detail without busting the budget, we specified ¼-in. rotary-sawn red-oak veneered plywood for the panels.

Gerry also wanted an inglenook and a bay-window seat. The ideal location for the window seat was in the study. But projecting a bay outside the house was cost-prohibitive, so we created one inside. Building the walls

inward around the bench seat also provided a needed vertical chase.

In the back of the house, the breakfast nook was once a dilapidated porch. Because the porch was beyond repair, we decided to spend the money for an addition here. We used the space for a mudroom and coat closet that make a functional day-to-day entry.

## Energy upgrades with style

When we arrived, the energy performance of this house was dismal. We used blown-in cel-



**A bump-out and a breakfast nook.** A cantilevered "architectural feature" just big enough for a run of cabinets, the sink, and the dishwasher adds enough floor space to make the kitchen feel spacious without infringing on zoning setback regulations. The breakfast booth beyond was inspired by the use of inglenooks in many traditional bungalows. Photo left taken at D on floor plan. Photo above taken at E.

## Proceeding in phases made the project possible

If there is anything we do well at Architectural Resource, it is planning our remodeling projects. Many of our clients, particularly in these challenging economic times, have a pile of dreams much larger than their pile of cash. By creating a plan that proceeds in distinct, measured campaigns, we can help them stay on budget and in their home during the remodeling process.

On this project, we discovered early on that even though Gerry loved our design, his budget and the logistics of executing everything at one time would be untenable. He wanted to be able to live and work at home throughout construction, so we settled on a two-phase construction plan.

Phase one was to tackle the first floor from the east-west wall that separated the kitchen and dining room forward, including the porch. Phase two worked from that wall toward the back of the house, including the addition and the second-floor bathroom. In this way, Gerry was able to use the back entrance, the kitchen, and the upstairs bathroom while we tackled a large portion of the house. And when we tackled the kitchen and the upstairs bath, two of the most challenging rooms to live without, he had the comfort of a beautiful new study, the living and dining rooms, and the first-floor bathroom.

Another benefit of the two-phase approach was that it allowed Gerry to see the plan coming together slowly. Had he not liked the way something was going, changing the plan midstream would not have been as daunting as if we'd tackled the entire remodel in one shot. Phase two of this project did not begin for four years after the first phase was complete. By then, Gerry was a seasoned veteran of remodeling, was well rested, and had financially recovered from phase one.

lulose insulation to upgrade most wall and roof cavities. But the second-floor ceiling, with shallow 2x4 rafters, was a challenge. We wanted to maintain as much headroom as possible and keep a cold-roof assembly to reduce ice damming. So we installed rigid-vent chutes in the rafter cavities, added R-11 fiberglass batts, and attached 2 in. of rigid insulation to the rafters before installing the drywall. The net R-value (R-21) is less than ideal, but was still an improvement and created a dew-point-managed assembly.

We upgraded all the windows in the home with Pella's Architect Series windows, which are Energy Star-rated and are available in traditional muntin patterns. Other energy improvements include new Energy Star-rated appliances and Energy Star-rated, airtight recessed lights. We were pleased to find that even though we added space to the house and have not yet updated the heating and cooling equipment, the home's energy bills have dropped substantially since the remodel. □

Michael Klement is the principal at Architectural Resource in Ann Arbor, Mich. Photos by Stanley Livingston, except where noted.