

Seamless Renovation Satisfied by a Top-to-Bottom Redo

By Gina Jaber
Photography Scott Hargis

It's not often – if ever – you hear a couple, when finished with a major 18-month house renovation say, “It was a really fun process.” But that’s what Kay and Dale Emerson said after their remodel.

The Emersons wanted a large home with big open spaces with room for guests, family and friends. When they purchased their 1910-built Craftsman-style Gold Coast home in 2006, they bought it knowing they would eventually enlarge it. With Custom Kitchens by John Wilkins of Oakland as their guide, they settled

on almost doubling the size, taking the home from its original 2,960 square feet to 4,530 square feet. Because the home sat on a small lot, they chose to add a third floor, which meant serious digging to add a full basement, an area that now has a kitchenette and family and living areas.

The Emersons, cognizant of the reduced mobility aging implies, intended to use daily all three floors, so installing an elevator in anticipation of their later years was a must. Next was the fortuitous problem of dry-rot damage to the original but awkward front porch. →

BEFORE



AFTER





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AFTER



AFTER

BEFORE

This meant a total rebuild. Re-using and recycling material as well as maintaining architectural details and the period and style of the home were priorities for the Emersons and the designers. The home was taken down to the studs and rebuilt with tremendous attention to detail but with modern technologies and energy efficiency in mind.

The job was ambitious but achievable. After the major visual and structural changes to their home, from top to bottom, the Emersons were thrilled with the outcome. Now, almost a year after the remodel completion, they remain happier than ever.

Here's what the couple has to say about their seamless renovation.

What features of the original home were important to you to maintain?

We liked the feeling of the Craftsman look and the heavy beams in the living room ceiling. We also liked the Clinker brick in the old chimney facade, which we re-used outside. Other than that, there was very little we really liked. There were no particularly charming features we wanted to hold on to.

And what appeared to present the most limitations and constraints for the project?

Probably the kitchen. The space was very burdensome and tight. You had to keep your head down when walking through the room. Getting to different areas of the house was not comfortable; nothing flowed well. Getting down to the basement was very difficult; you had to walk through a narrow passageway and short door to get there.

Were there any big surprises you encountered along the way?

There were lots of surprises, but the biggest one was probably discovering that the one of the home's exterior walls in the dining room, supporting the second story, had been built without nails! That was a shock. This time around, lots of nails were used everywhere.

What do you love the most about your "new" home?

Definitely the open spaces and the light. The brightness and spaciousness are so pleasant; it makes being home always a pleasure. And even though the house is big, we love that it still feels cozy. Our kitchen island is also a thrill. It serves as a wonderful workstation with its prep sink and is a natural gathering place for guests and family.



Kay, did you choose your fireplace tile based on your collection of Roseville pottery?

Yes, I've always thought the pottery had a warmth to it and wanted the same warmth in the tile. I tagged lots of pages that I liked from various books that I showed to our designer before we started the whole design process for the house.

The finish on the walls of your first floor bathroom is so interesting; what is it?

The walls were given a Venetian plaster finish in a deep terra cotta red, which provides the softness and depth you're seeing. We think it's very warm and pleasing.

Living through construction work is never easy. How did you do it?

Well, we couldn't live here while the whole house was being opened up, so we had to move out. But I'm really glad we lived in the house for over a year or so before the construction started. We had a good feel for the home, which guided our design choices and decisions. And honestly, every single person from Custom Kitchens was a pleasure to work with.



Without an exception, everyone on the team took so much pride in their work. It made a big difference to us and was a lot of fun to watch the progress, despite the inconveniences.

It sounds like the remodel met your expectations.

Oh, it went over and above our expectations. It was definitely worth get-

ting to the other side of the construction. We love sitting in the living room looking out the French doors to the street and seeing the light change throughout the day. We really couldn't be happier. 🍷

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