



Faithfully restored

A checkered past and out-of-character 1980s remodel belied the truth of this gracious home

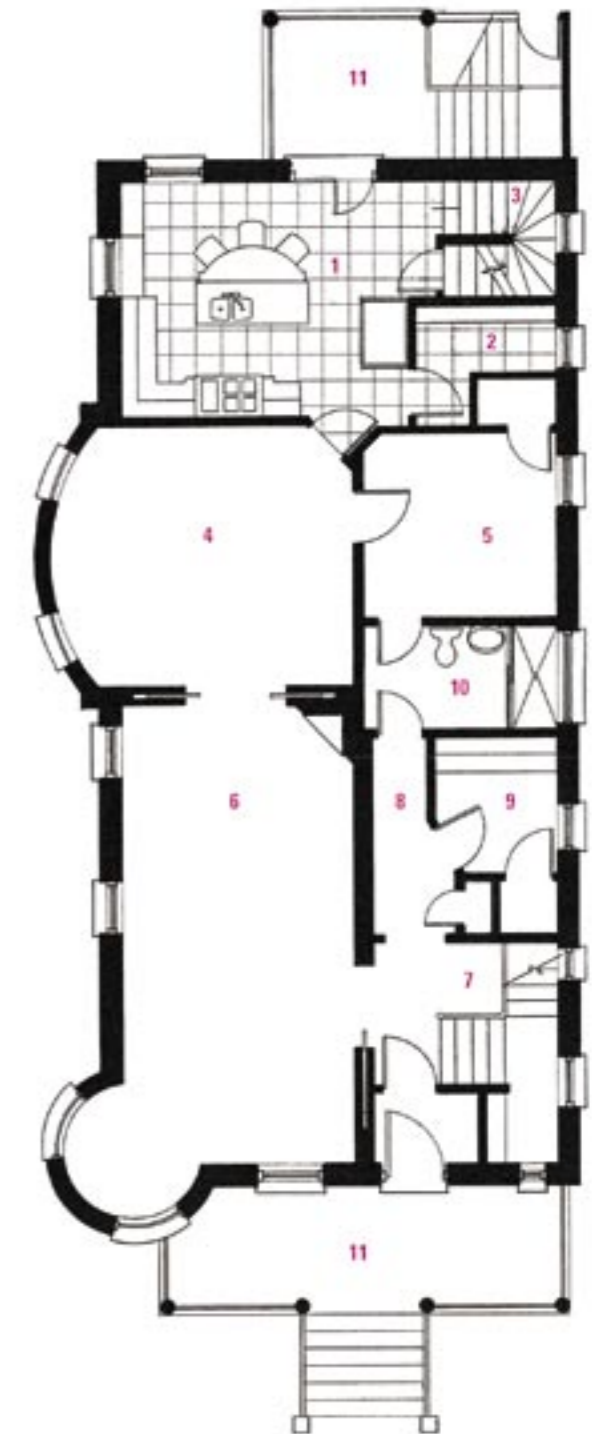
Gentrification has played a vital role in the restoration of inner-city neighborhoods the world over. Once neglected districts have experienced a renaissance as couples and young families seek a more urbanized lifestyle than that of their parents.

For the owners of the property featured on these pages, the opportunity to restore the home in keeping with its heritage was a large part of the attraction, says architect Michael Menn, principal of Design Construction Concepts.

“As far as we can ascertain, the home was built around 1894. Over the years the house has had a number of different uses, including as a boarding house. The new owners were looking to restore the home as a single family residence, keeping the style and aesthetics as close to turn-of-the-century as possible, without sacrificing the practicalities of modern-day living.”

The best example of where authenticity meets practicality is the kitchen – the hub of day-to-day family living.

“Previously, the kitchen – which is



believed to have been added on to the home in its current position around 1915 – consisted of a series of chopped up spaces with a large, cumbersome work triangle, says Menn.

A previous owner remodeled the kitchen in the 1980s, but failed to update the wiring and plumbing. Menn and his team also had to level the kitchen floor.

Another aspect to the kitchen is its role as transitional space – to and from outdoors, and to and from the second level – which needed to be maintained.

Because the kitchen is a multi-purpose space, the solution was to make it function better in each of its roles. Gone is the clutter, replaced with an open-plan layout that actually resulted in a 25% gain in cabinet space. The inclusion of a breakfast bar has given the family an all-important casual dining area, making the kitchen more communal, says Menn.

Designer Marshall Erb was contracted to co-ordinate the interior design of the home with the architectural restoration.

“The whole purpose was to reinterpret

the Victorian mansion aesthetic for a modern lifestyle. Essentially, to create something that felt like it had been there for a long time and yet offered the functionality of a modern kitchen.”

The choice of materials played a large role in realizing the design brief, says Erb.

“The stone floor tiles and unlacquered faucet and refrigerator were chosen because they exude an instant patina. Likewise, the hand-glazed tiles in the hearth, used with a wide grout, convey a sense of wear and tear due to their irregularity.”

The major focus was to preserve the historic look, especially from the outside. Erb says central to that ethos was to provide the homeowners with a kitchen that was meant to be bashed about, to convey a sense of its having been lived in.

Color too, plays an important role, with Erb choosing pigeon grey for the walls and shaded white for the cabinetry.

“The pigeon grey has a variable tone depending upon light conditions. Off-set by the white cabinets, it is both contemporary and traditional at the same time.”

Architect: Michael Menn, Design Construction Concepts (Chicago, IL)
Interior designer: Marshall Erb, Marshall Morgan Erb Design
Kitchen manufacturer: Custom Cabinets
Cabinet hardware: Schaub & Company
Countertop and flooring: Limestone
Lighting: Juno
Kitchen sink: Kohler
Faucets: Herbeau
Oven: Wolf
Refrigeration: Sub-Zero
Dishwasher: Gaggenau

Photography by Mike Kaskel

Preceding pages: Undertaken as part of an extensive whole-house remodel, the kitchen was opened up and an island with breakfast bar added to provide a casual eating area.

Above left: Materials such as the stone flooring and unlacquered faucet were chosen for their rapidly aging properties. They were then teamed with period aesthetics to create a kitchen that looked like it had been in situ for a long period of time.

Above: Legend for plan – 1 kitchen, 2 pantry, 3 stairs, 4 formal dining, 5 guest bedroom, 6 lounge, 7 entry, 8 hall, 9 study, 10 bathroom, 11 porch.