



# New Rooms for Old Houses



*Beautiful Additions for the Traditional Home*

Frank Shirley





## BALANCING INSIDE AND OUT

Spanish Colonial Revival · Los Angeles, California

When the owner bought this 1926 Spanish Colonial Revival in Los Angeles, it was 1,800 sq. ft. with two bedrooms. All other bidders had planned to raze it and build mansions. But where they had seen a vacant lot, the then-prospective owner saw a jewel: a graceful home, warm and inviting, with handcrafted tiles, custom cabinetry, and well-proportioned rooms. To enjoy southern California's equable climate, she envisioned an outdoor dining area. And, by adding a master suite, a family room, and a larger kitchen, the home would accommodate her needs with ease.

For architect Kevin Oreck, the greatest challenge would be to add more than 1,100 sq. ft. of space while preserving the home's human scale. He did not want to alter the home's lovely but modest face, so he looked to the rear of the house to expand. There he found a bland, attached garage, a liability that became an asset when he expanded the footprint of the garage and converted it to a family room—light-filled, airy, and spacious with French doors that open to a private yard.

Today, the renovated and expanded kitchen opens to a dining patio with a fireplace and grille. Inside, the kitchen and family room ceilings are raised to make their height proportional to the room size. A new, detached garage in the back corner of the yard provides a pleasant landscaping backdrop.

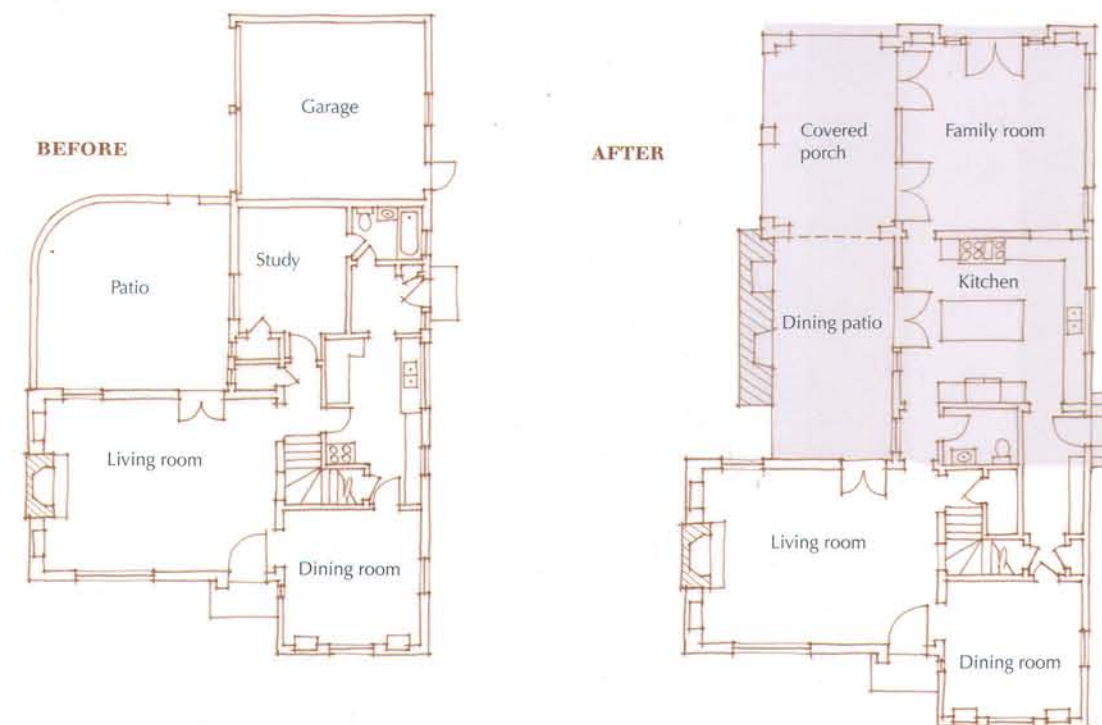
*New and old frame the inviting dining patio. New French doors lead from the kitchen and closely match the originals beyond. Because building codes required doors wider than the original ones, the architect adjusted the width and height to maintain their proportion.*







ABOVE: The low-pitched roof, restful symmetry, and restrained vocabulary make the original front facade warm and inviting. Tucked behind, the addition is barely perceptible. A corner of its roof can be seen behind the living room roof. RIGHT: A master bedroom reigns supreme on the second floor, enjoying materials and finishes other bedrooms do not. For a connection to the outdoors, the bedroom addition is to the rear and opens onto the backyard through an expanse of French doors out of public view.



The outdoor rooms, comfortable and intimate, are framed by the addition's walls.

### A MASTERFUL SUITE UPSTAIRS

Upstairs, what was the desolate roofscape of the garage is now a cheerful master bedroom. This showpiece of the second floor has a cathedral ceiling like that of the original living room. Exposed oak trusses spanning the width are appropriately simplified from those of the more formal living room. A viewing deck overlooking the backyard opens the room to the outdoors. Clever placement of the bath and walk-in closet extends the master bedroom beyond the first floor and creates a covered porch below, offering a welcome respite from the noon sun.

By converting the old garage space for most of the first floor addition, the unassuming scale of the original house is preserved despite the significant expansion of living area. The second floor addition follows the original house's straightforward shape and the simple symmetry of the facade. Viewed from the backyard, the addition blends quietly with the house beyond. From the front it is nearly invisible. The addition is taller, but it is set back nearly 25 ft. from the front facade and the roof pitch is identical, keeping it out of view.





**TOP:** *A sense of balance emanates from this original dining room niche and cabinet. It is just the right size for the room and serves as a guide for much of the new cabinetry. **FACING PAGE:** An arched opening connects the new kitchen with the family room and garden. Simple light cabinetry makes for a nice counterpoint to the richly hued, furniture-style island designed to match the dining room cabinet.*



#### A COMMON VOCABULARY

Oreck, like the owner, appreciated the distinctive design elements and handcrafted materials of the house. Rather than introducing a new lexicon, he used the house's original vocabulary. Inside, he repeated key touches such as arched openings, decorative ceramic tiles, and oak beams and floors, linking the new to the old. The plaster finish on the new walls was hand-troweled to leave pockmark imperfections, matching the "Santa Barbara" finish of the older structures. Out-

side, the original vocabulary was simple: whitewashed stucco walls, low-pitched red Spanish tile roofs, and turquoise-colored doors and windows. The addition followed suit.

Details stand out in a home of such restrained vocabulary, and Oreck was attentive to the details. For example, the decorative, glazed tiles are flush with the plaster, a handcrafted and time-consuming detail that harks back to an earlier time.

All the door and window hardware that was removed during the renovation was salvaged and reused. It would have been quicker, easier, and perhaps cheaper to discard it, but a part of the house's character would have gone with it. Where

#### OLD HOUSE STYLE Spanish Colonial Revival (1910–1935)

Spanish Colonial architecture arrived before any other colonial style, taking hold where the Spanish settled, primarily in Florida, Texas, California, and the Southwest. Houses were of adobe; some were of stucco-covered stone. Their windows were small and unglazed, and roofs were either flat or low-pitched.

Spanish Revival style is a romantic recollection of the architecture of those colonial settlements. Never a national style, it flowered in areas of Hispanic roots during the era of period revivals, 1910–1935. Despite the breadth of influence and their geographic dispersal, Spanish Revival homes share many common features. Azulejos, the brightly glazed tiles of Spain, decorate doorways and stairs; wooden entry doors are sometimes intricately carved; and figural wrought-iron railings grace balconies. Courtyards are prevalent, taking advantage of the style's prominence in temperate climates, as are arched openings. By 1940, the style's popularity waned, though it survives in isolated communities, such as Santa Barbara, California.

