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#### **Counter Punch**

The new custom cabinetry harkens back to the home's original 1920s-era construction. Countertops are Labradorite granite with a honed finish.

# Prairie School Companion

| MARK A. NEWMAN |

Spare yet beautiful. Plain yet compelling.

These dichotomies easily describe the style of architecture known as the Prairie School, which blossomed in the Midwest in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Seemingly spun out of Chicago as it was rising from the ashes of 1871, it was viewed as a stark contrast to the ornate Classical Revival style and thrived alongside the Arts and Crafts Movement.

When David Heide of David Heide Design Studio, in Minneapolis, was asked to design a new kitchen for a 1922 St. Paul home on the longest boulevard of historically protected architecture in the country, he knew he could bring the kitchen into the 21st century while still preserving the home's treasured, uniquely Midwestern feel.



Merit Award 2010

**CATEGORY** Kitchen Remodel, Over \$100,000

**LOCATION** St. Paul, Minn.

**DESIGNER** David Heide, David Heide Design Studio, Minneapolis

**CONTRACTOR** Terry Chance, Site Assembly, St. Paul, Minn.

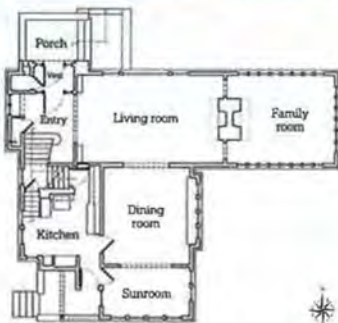
## Order in the House

Heide explains that although he has to work within the constraints of the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission guidelines, his background is strongly rooted in preservation. "In some respects, it's difficult," he says of these limits, but "it's nice to have the guidelines. We're comfortable working in this context and welcome these types of jobs." He adds that because his company is considered to be a local expert, it gets plenty of historical work.

While the 300-square-foot kitchen is the big addition in this project, the first level's entire floor plan also changed: the original dining room became a family room, the sunroom became the dining room, and the space that the original kitchen occupied became a new half-bath and mudroom. "Convincing the owner that this is a good thing to do and that the sunroom would make a fine dining room was critical," Heide says. "It was that big switch of the use of the dining

room that drove the whole thing. Had the owners decided not to do that, I don't know that it would have been as successful."

**It was important to maintain the scale and proportion established by the existing building,** Heide says. "We didn't remove the wall between the kitchen and the family room but rather we made a cased opening between the original living room and the dining room, which maintains the proportion and order of the house."



### BEFORE

The original kitchen occupied a cramped space that was hard to access and not well organized. The home's historic language was an inspiration to the designer who sought to match the addition to the original exterior's stucco finish and window detailing.



### AFTER

The new addition seamlessly blends with the home's Prairie School look and improves the overall circulation of the main level floor plan. The original kitchen is now a mudroom and new half powder room.

## The Light Stuff

The lighting in a modern kitchen with historical leanings can be tricky. While illumination has to be appropriate for the various tasks that take place in that space, it must also be attractive and true to the home's roots.

"When we're working in a historical context, pretty much everything we're doing is custom," Heide says, "so we can get exactly what we want. The owners want something specific and unique if they're spending the dollars they're spending. They don't want to see their kitchen [duplicated] somewhere else!"



### The Facts of Light

All of the lighting in the revamped kitchen was designed by David Heide Design Studio and fabricated locally by Lightworks. This ensures that clients get a unique product and won't see the same fixtures elsewhere.

## Cabinet Positions

Despite the fact that the home's original kitchen seemed more like an afterthought than a key part of the house, **the cabinetry was of the 1920s and served as Heide's inspiration for the new kitchen cabinets.** "We were looking at the precedent from the original cabinets on which to base our design because everything is designed by our studio and built to our specifications," he explains. "The sticking moldings for the panels are dead-on to what was originally in the house, and we took the scale and proportion from the home's original cabinets."

Throughout the kitchen, the cabinets reach all the way to the ceiling leaving the uppermost cabinets a tad out of reach. "I just liked the look of that full-height wall of cabinets, which is how it would have been detailed historically," Heide says, adding that the design was more about the

look than a practical use for storage. "Those [topmost] cabinets are not exactly the place where you put the Cheerios but more for long-term storage, like the Easter bunny cake pan."

The red birch cabinets are fastened to both the walls and the ceiling and were installed by the cabinetmaker, Jon Frost of Frost Cabinets, in St. Paul. "He does a brilliant job of recreating historic cabinets, and we work with him as often as we can," Heide says. "He hand-selects the wood for the grain and a lot of thought goes into the location of particular pieces of wood that occupy various positions in the kitchen."

The brackets on the underside of the cabinets are strictly decorative, Heide says, "[but] they visually bear the weight of the upper cabinet so the cabinets don't look like they're just screwed to the wall."



### Taking Care

All of the cabinetry was custom-made by Frost Cabinets. Special attention was paid to even the most minute details such as how the grain would look on certain pieces.



## Family-Style Buffet

Since the dining room was going into what was once the sunroom, Heide wanted to let southern light into the new dining area now that there was a wall where a row of windows once stood. "When we put the kitchen on the back side of that sunroom, we blocked those south windows," Heide explains. The solution was a built-in buffet with glass on either side. "You're not eating in the kitchen, and yet there's a bit of a visual connection and a bit of an exchange of light" Heide says. "It makes the dining room a special place."



## Mmm, Mmm, Good!

Minnesota winters are famous for their ferocity. The best antidote is steaming bowls of soup, stew, or chili, so a new pot filler above the stove was a must. To insulate the pipes, which are in an exterior wall, 3 inches of closed-cell spray foam insulation was applied to the 2x6 walls of the addition. A reverse-osmosis water filtration system serves the entire kitchen.