



A welcoming space

A perfect blend of old & new for this 100-year-old home



BY KATHERINE FULGHUM KNOPF | Photography by Kathryn Feldmann

Stepping onto a wide, shady porch, one can immediately see that this is a home filled with gleaming details. The welcoming space invites visitors and neighbors alike to stop and stay a while. Jim and Kathy Cain perfected their craftsman-style home over the past 30 years as they improved the layout and upgraded the home's systems. Adding a full front porch always lingered in the back of their minds but other practical needs took priority as the home was originally built in 1923. It was an aging old lady when they discovered it, sitting on a beautiful corner lot across from an elementary school.

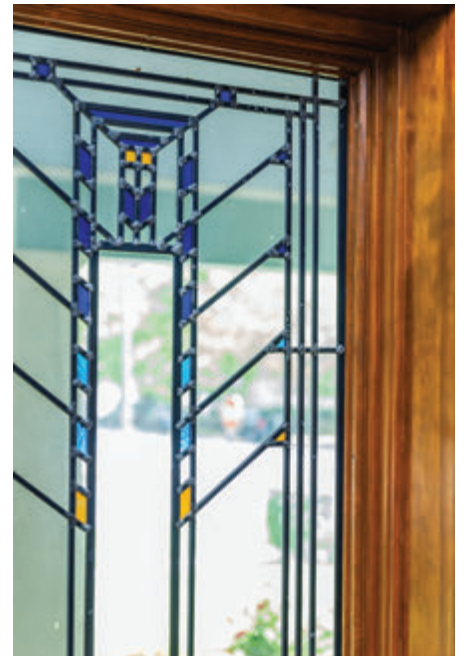


30 years of loving work

The Cains purchased the house and moved in July of 1995 — just in time for the Fourth of July firework celebrations! It was sturdy, but, they soon discovered, remarkably old and dysfunctional. “It had virtually nothing done to it,” Jim notes. “Even the wiring was original.” The list of items to be fixed ran long, and so, year after year, they tackled them. One project at a time, the Cains put their touches on each space to update the home while always maintaining the integrity of the house and its unique style.

The Cains looked to Building Specialists, Inc., when they needed extensive renovation work done. Jim and Kathy took on these projects as they saw the need — enlarging the primary bedroom so they could age in place, adding a new laundry room for easier access, and then enlarging the kitchen so they had space for family and friends. And, every time they started another project, they talked about adding a front porch. “The house was just too flat,” Jim says.





The elusive design for their front porch

For 25 years they knew the house needed a front porch, but they had no luck finding an architect who was able to add a porch that complemented the style of the house. “We always thought the front of the house needed something,” Kathy says. It was a challenge to envision one that met their requirements for a long, wide covered space that also blended seamlessly with the house’s character, but the Cains kept tweaking their ideas and finally found just the right design for the perfect porch.

It was Monica Rokicki-Guajardo from Better Building Works who finally understood their porch concept. Kathy says, “Without her seeing our vision for the front porch, we would never have built the porch.” So, in 2022, with the plans finalized, Building Specialists, Inc., started the work on it. Once completed, the Cains were thrilled with the full front porch addition. It finally made the house complete. “We have a good time on the front porch,” Kathy says. It adds space for outdoor living and entertaining and beckons neighbors to stop by and say hello. “We are really proud of the way the front of the home evolved with the addition of the new porch and how it complements the style of the home so well,” says Sandy Murray of Building Specialists, Inc.

Every element of the home is meticulously chosen as well as practical. On the front porch, brick pavers line the floor and front steps then flow into walkways, forming a clean, detailed hardscape that frames the brick home. Surrounding the home are colorful flowers, finishing their summer blooms amidst the dark green leaves of manicured shrubs. Blue beadboard arches set off the porch ceiling while white wicker chairs (with all-weather floral cushions) invite lingering visits or a comfortable outdoor spot for reading.

Stained glass, Andersen windows flank the nine-pane glass front door and offer a nod to the original craftsman architecture that the Cains painstakingly preserved throughout the home. The center porch light fixture with verdigris patina and lead-divided panes shines with classic craftsman charm while enhancing the green color selected for the home’s trim. To keep the air moving on warmer days, the Cains selected chrome three-blade fans, which are sleek and functional.



Updating the heart of the home

More recently, the Cain's kitchen needed attention. The tile floor was failing, and the grout would never come clean despite their best efforts. Once again, Building Specialists, Inc., offered the best solution. They helped the Cains redo the kitchen within the original floor plan. Their team designed lighter colored cabinets that go to the ceiling to hold all of their cookware and dishes. The Cains chose a tile backsplash at Morris Tile Distributors in a soothing color called "Misty" that highlights Kathy's collection of colorful Fiesta dinnerware dishes and serving pieces. "The kitchen has brought me a lot of joy," Kathy says. "We use every part of [it]."

The Cains kept the lighting pendants from the previous kitchen, and Kathy and her son painted them to match the new color scheme. They now hang over the enlarged island with cabinets below for storage. The center island also holds their beloved mixer on a stand that pops up for baking days, and there

is plenty of space for the family of six to eat a meal or spread out a buffet of dishes for a holiday meal. The island is topped with a soothing white countertop with taupe veins that blend the cabinet color with the wood floors. It is warm and attractive. "The kitchen, the most recent project, turned out lovely, and again, we think it really echoes the home's style," says Murray.

As a nod to some design genius, the kitchen is warm and practical. Every inch of the space is used — from the floor-to-ceiling cabinets for storage to the perfectly chosen appliances and their placement. Gary Snyder, from Building Specialists, Inc., made baseboards to match the other baseboards in the house, so the new spaces flow seamlessly with the old. They reused the bronze cabinet hardware from the former kitchen because Kathy loved it. They found new appliances at Ferguson Home with copper handles that match the cabinet drawers and doors. With glass doors that display their fabulous Fiesta dinnerware collection, it created a kitchen with elegance and purpose.



It's Time to Start Planning Your Next Project!



If you are thinking about a kitchen redo, fabulous outdoor living space or getting your main suite on the main floor, now is the time to start planning. Residential construction has been extremely busy and getting started early is the perfect way to get your project in line and on the calendar.

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A shared collection

Kathy and Jim first started their Fiesta collection when they lived in Camp Lejeune, N.C. Out antiquing one day, they found a relish tray they both liked so much they bought it on the spot. That started the collection bug. From there, they found a tripod candlestick, and the hunt was on. Now, Kathy explains, “Every time we go someplace, we look for it. We are almost done; there are still a few ‘white elephant’ [pieces] we are looking for ... so we keep at it.”

“There are so many things to look for; we have been doing this for years,” Jim adds.

And their collection is quite varied and beautiful. The myriad of colors are balanced by the soothing color palette they chose for the walls and floors of the home, allowing focus to be drawn to the collection. It is amazing to see the number and colors of water pitchers — navy, pink, azure, dark green, orange, moss green, yellow! — plus so many other items: demitasse cups, milk pitchers, mixing bowls, plates, candlesticks, platters and egg cups, serving bowls and glasses, all in different colors. Their kitchen and dining room both offer a feast for the eyes.



Outside – bees and more!

When looking out the kitchen window, Jim's beehives are easily spotted neatly positioned by the garage. "We keep bees and have been doing this for a number of years," Jim says. It all started when Jim read an article on the decline of bees and decided to do something about it. Jim resolved to buy bee boxes to give some hives a home and acquired several colonies. Now, he has bees to raise, and the benefit is the honey they collect and jar. It goes right to the kitchen for labeling – some jars to keep and others to make wonderful gifts.





Maintaining design & adding function

The original garage was small and “parking here is a real problem,” Jim explains. They wanted to build a new one where they could both get their cars inside and also have some additional space. Without room on their lot for another garage, they tweaked the design. Gary Snyder of Building Specialists, Inc., helped with the answer: simply enlarge it by adding on to the original one. The result: a “garage mahal” if you will! Now, planted flower beds border the new garage addition and provide food for the bees that live beside it.

As Murray says, “Some of our original additions to the house gave it an overall larger presence, but we also think the garage, with design that complements the house architecture, turned out really well and functional for that small lot. We are really proud to be a part of all they have accomplished over the years to make their house perfect.”

From replacing every window in the house with craftsman-style ones to keeping the original wallpaper of blue birds, flowers and vines that still winds from the front hall up the stairs, this home is the perfect marriage of old and new. ♦