

 MINNESOTA DREAM GREEN HOMES REVEALED

MIDWEST

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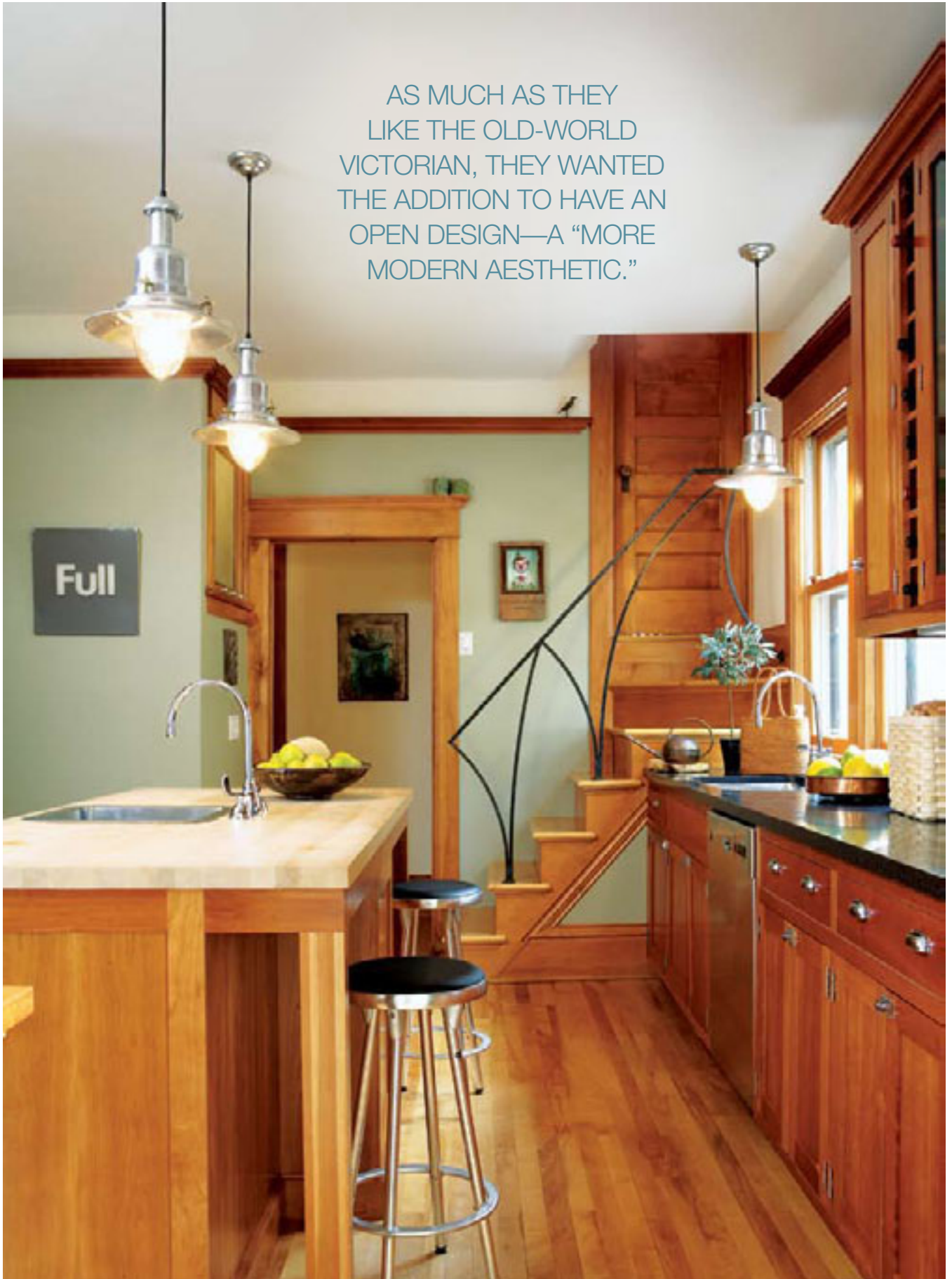
# character

Who says you  
can't respect the old  
and seize the new?

BY JACK GORDON | PHOTOS BY SUSAN GILMORE  
STYLED BY DAVID ANGER



AS MUCH AS THEY  
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The twin-gabled, board-and-batten cottage looks so natural sitting next to its larger Victorian neighbor that a casual passerby might fail to notice that the two structures are attached. They rest on a corner lot in south Minneapolis, one faces east and the other north. The short link between them is mostly glass, in the form of a generous window that heightens the sense of separation.

With a closer look, the passerby could likely guess that the tall Victorian foursquare predates the 1.5-story cottage, but certainly not that it is more than 100 years older. The original home was built in either 1898 or 1902, depending on which version of its provenance one believes, say owners Luca Gunther and Kit Wilson.

Gunther and Wilson bought the Victorian in 1998, charmed both by the character of the house itself and by its Lake Calhoun neighborhood. Since moving in, their family has grown: Now there's Ivan, 9; Julian, 7; and August, 21 months. When they decided they needed more space, conflicting impulses were at work.

As much as they like the old-world Victorian, they wanted the addition to have an open design—a “more modern aesthetic,” as Wilson puts it. However, says Gunther, they were determined to respect the design integrity of the original house, as well as “the sense of place and history” afforded by the surrounding houses.

The expansion had to be attached, certainly, but somehow attached “next to” the Victorian rather than grafted onto it in a way that would destroy its shape. Over the years, the couple had undertaken minor renovations with



PREVIOUS PAGE Luca Gunther digs through his LP collection, while Kit Wilson looks on. They added a pair of Ferruccio Laviani's “Bourgie” lamps to the top of the built-in cabinet. “We love to mix in things with a Victorian nod,” says Wilson. OPPOSITE PAGE A custom-designed wrought iron railing and industrial-style pendants add modern verve to the maple and cherry-clad kitchen. THIS PAGE, TOP A view inside the Victorian, from the living room to the dining room. The built-ins and fireplace surround are original to the circa 1902 house. ABOVE The artful cherry staircase rises to the addition's second level.





Columns on the board-and-batten cottage addition echo the Victorian's columned wraparound front porch. The north-facing addition has a sweet, naturally stained picket fence. Its low profile invites conversations with neighbors.





architect Meriwether Felt, now creative director at TreHus Architects + Interior Designers + Builders of Minneapolis. They called on her again and explained what they hoped to achieve. Felt delivered in spades, with a solution that works brilliantly, inside and out.

#### OLD AND NEW

Gunther and Wilson's primary goals were to add a large, contemporary family room and an attached garage. The new addition consumes most of the small backyard that used to separate the original Victorian from a detached garage.

But because the driveway to the old garage came off the street, while the new one enters from a rear alley, the cottage actually gained an equal amount of yard on the side of the addition that was converted into a long stone patio, perfect for shooting the breeze with neighbors strolling to and from the lake. The couple also spends time relaxing on the Victorian's wraparound front porch, "so we know our neighbors pretty well," Gunther says.

Inside the house, the old and new adjoin off the kitchen, which was remodeled in 1998 with low Shaker-style cabinets. For the new addition, Felt carved out a doorway by replacing the tall refrigerator with generous refrigerator drawers in the expanded island.

The short connecting portion—which Felt calls the "interstitial space"—serves as the landing for a new, open stairway leading down to a basement playroom. Here, it becomes evident that twenty-first century carpenters matched the nineteenth-century craftsmanship of the original woodwork, mostly in cherry. Even the thigh-high safety gate at the top of the stairs is an elegant piece of work. The floor fitting that catches the gate's latch to hold it closed is actually a tuning peg grommet, says Felt, adding that the TreHus carpenter who built it, Brian McCarty, is a guitar maker.

Another step down from the landing completes the transition to the thoroughly contemporary family room. The walls in this vaulted space rise 14 feet to meet clean, white beams, while the ceiling extends to a 21-foot peak. The high walls serve another goal of the expansion. Wilson is a painter, and the couple collects works by other regional artists; they wanted more space to display their favorites. The family room thus doubles as a gallery, its walls display carefully selected paintings and a large, colorful weaving by local artisan Kelly Marshall.



#### NEW AND OLD

The blending of vintage and modern reaches its apex when Wilson pushes a button and an enormous flat-screen television rises from its hiding place in the row of gleaming cabinetry beneath a window. Though the new space is contemporary in most respects, it also gives a graceful nod to the past. Against the wall opposite the TV cabinet, a long, rectangular wooden table handed down from Gunther's mother is flanked by chairs from Wilson's childhood home. The hardworking family heirlooms—used both for dining and for the kids' homework—serve as the design focus for an area with a more vintage feel.

A built-in cherry bench provides seating for one side of the table, where an old-time rolling library ladder serves towering bookshelves on either side. A steel rebar light

fixture over the table lends intimacy to the high-ceilinged space. The fixture swings forward to allow the ladder to move back and forth along the bookshelves.

Beyond the family room, framed in a passageway like another work of art, a beautiful cherry staircase rises to the addition's second level, its slat railings a study in geometry. Up the stairs are a bath and a large, unfinished bonus room above the garage. One day the space may serve as an artist's studio or a grandmother's suite.

For now, Wilson says, her sons are more impressed with the fact that the staircase's upper landing affords a clandestine, tree house-like view of the family room. The boys have a point. It really is a handsome sight. **MH**

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ON FEATURED PRODUCTS AND SUPPLIERS, SEE PAGE 166.





OPPOSITE PAGE In the new family room, slat-back chairs from Wilson's childhood home surround a wooden table passed down from Gunther's mother. Horizontal slats add visual interest to the staircase, and mark the transition between the Victorian and the cottage addition. BELOW Ivan, Julian, and baby August practice drawing at the long table, surrounded by 14-foot-high bookshelves and their mom's oil paintings.

