



Honour the past

Discreet changes to this Victorian home highlighted its historical character while updating the space for the present and future

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Sometimes reworking the layout of a home and bringing in more light is all that's needed to completely transform it. This was the case for architect Danielle Beaulieu, her husband David Welch and their Victorian cottage in Chicago, USA. 'After living in our house for two years, we realised it didn't need lots more space, things just needed to be better organised,' says Danielle.

The timber-frame building is in Logan Green, a quiet neighbourhood to the northwest of the city centre. 'The house was built in 1892,' says Danielle. 'Over the years there had been at least three additions at the back, but at the front the layout and original features in the hallway, living room and dining room remained largely unchanged.'

The cottage is on a plot measuring 7.6m wide by 38m long – a fairly standard size for the city. But the long and narrow dimensions together with the proximity of the »

In the living room and throughout the house the walls are painted in Ice Mist OC-67 by Benjamin Moore



IN BRIEF

LOCATION Chicago, USA

TYPE OF PROPERTY

Remodelled detached cottage

BEDROOMS 4

PROJECT STARTED August 2019

PROJECT FINISHED February 2020

SIZE 180sqm

PROPERTY COST Around £386,500

BUILD COST Around £1,184 per sqm



ABOVE The architrave around the front door is new. It was made to match the original Victorian woodwork in the downstairs rooms



LEFT A pocket door between the living room and dining room is original to the cottage. The Alle table from Hem is teamed with eight Fiber chairs from Muuto

RIGHT The solid northern red oak flooring was laid by the house's previous owners

homes on either side made the rooms in the middle of the cottage gloomy and uninviting.

In the spring of 2017 Danielle and David, who are both 34, moved in and started to get a feel for the place. The kitchen was sandwiched between a staircase at the back of the cottage, which suggested the building might have been a boarding house with two entrances at some point, and a breakfast room. On the first floor, one of the four bedrooms was windowless and led through to another, while the only bathroom was small.

'My plan was to preserve as many of the original spaces as possible, only making significant changes to the newer additions,' says Danielle. 'Removing the rear staircase doubled the size of the kitchen and widening the openings to the ground-floor rooms would make them feel more connected.'

Upstairs, the couple wanted to add another bathroom by taking space from one of the bedrooms, but the most significant change was building dormer windows on both sides of the pitched roof. Doing so would add ceiling height in the bedrooms and bathrooms while preserving the historical character of the front façade, but Danielle was unsure that planning permission would be granted.

In Chicago, every renovation project goes through planning, known as zoning, and building code approval, with a successful application issued a permit one to two months later. The ground-floor changes were straightforward and the couple received a permit in June 2019. With the project effectively split into two phases, they were able to stay in the house while work got underway and Danielle pushed for the first-floor permit.

'The building code for new timber-frame houses requires them be 1m apart from those on either side >>



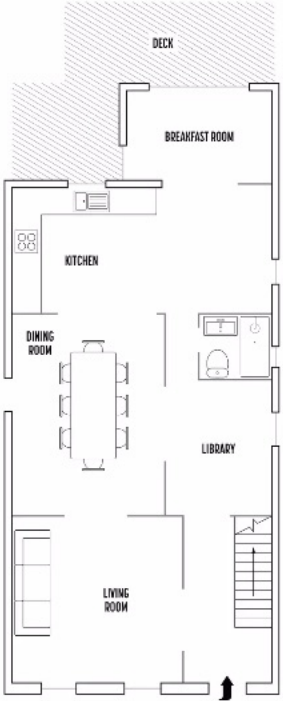


The white oak kitchen is by Ultracraft. Above the sink a new window gives views of the garden that can be seen from the front living room

FLOOR PLANS



FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

'My plan was to preserve as many of the original spaces as possible, only making significant changes to the newer additions'



ABOVE Walls lined with bookshelves and a comfy armchair turned an open area at the far end of the entrance hall into a cosy reading nook. The door beneath the staircase leads down to a basement laundry room



for access to daylight and air, and to prevent the spread of fire,' she explains. 'Our cottage was seen as being too wide for the plot, and to comply with the building code the dormers would have to be smaller than planned. So we would lose rather than gain space.'

Danielle initiated a special approvals process to enable them to build the dormers level with the exterior walls of the house. She pointed out that other homes nearby had already been renovated in a similar way, the proposal had approval from the couple's neighbours and the neighbourhood city official, and would be built with fire-resistant plasterboard and aluminium cladding.

'It was very rewarding when the approval finally came through six months later,' Danielle says. 'The conditions required six layers of fire-resistant plasterboard, which was an expensive and unusual way to build a dormer wall. But David and I were happy to comply so that we got the extra head height we wanted.'

Danielle carried on with her fulltime job while project managing both build phases to make sure everything ran smoothly. It wasn't all without incident though, particularly when the temperature dropped below freezing just as >>



In the shower room the scent of the hanging eucalyptus is activated by steam. The Japanese sauna stool is from Jinen

ABOVE LEFT The vanity unit doors are from the same range as the kitchen, but hung so the grain runs horizontally



In the couple's bedroom the built-in wardrobe doors were moved closer to the gable wall to make space for a double bed

SUPPLIERS

PROJECT TEAM

Architect Danielle Beaulieu at Lieu (studio-lieu.com)

Builder M Five Chicago (m5chicago.com)

STRUCTURE

Windows Jeld-Wen (jeld-wen.com/en-us)

Skylights Velux (veluxusa.com)

Internal doors Menards (menards.com)

Skokie Millwork (skokie-millwork.com)

Front door Salvage One (salvageone.com)

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Kitchen and bathroom cabinets Ultracraft (ultracraft.com)

Worksurface Caesarstone (caesarstone.co.uk)

Kitchen flooring Concrete Collaborative

(concrete-collaborative.com)

Guest bathroom vanity Ikea (ikea.com)

Guest bathroom tiles Cle Tile (cletile.com), Daltile (daltile.com)

Main bathroom Kohler (kohler.com)

Hallway flooring Ann Sacks (annsacks.com)

Lighting Ferm (fermliving.com), Muuto (muuto.com),

Saturlight (saturlight.com), Secto (sectodesign.fi),

Tech Lighting (techlighting.com)

FURNITURE AND SOFT FURNISHINGS

Living room sofa Design Within Reach (dwr.com)

Dining table Hem (hem.com)

Dining chairs Muuto

Study desk Blu Dot (bludot.com)

Shower room stool Jinen (inenstore.com)

Paint Benjamin Moore (benjaminmoore.com)

two-thirds of the roof had been removed. 'We slept in jumpers and one night moved portable heaters around to make sure that the water pipes didn't freeze and burst, which would have ruined the new kitchen,' says Danielle. 'On the other hand, we were incredibly fortunate that the build was finished just before the first lockdown came into effect in March 2020.'

The interior design scheme throughout the cottage is defined by a simple, neutral colour palette and a mix of toning natural materials. 'We painted all the woodwork and walls in a shade of white to highlight the historical texture and character of the cottage,' Danielle explains.

Devising and managing the project from start to finish gave Danielle firsthand knowledge of the impact that design has on an older building and everyday life. 'I'm really proud of what I've created, especially as it's been done without adding to the footprint or altering the historical values of the house,' she says. **GD**