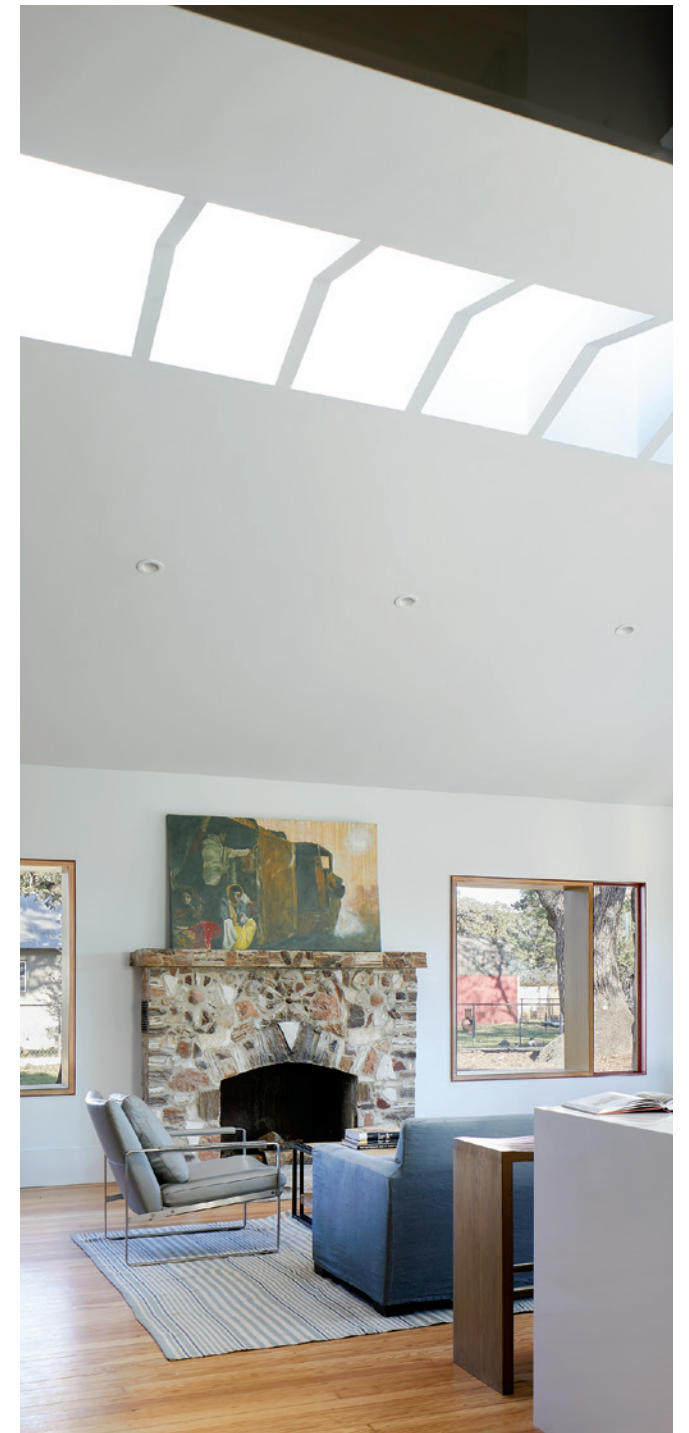
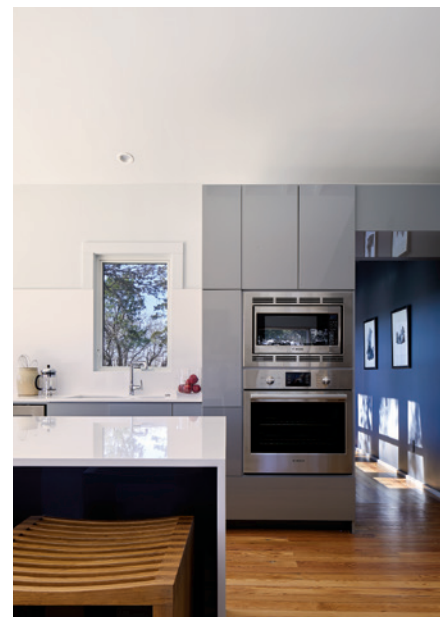


ROCK HOUSE RESTORATION

When homeowners Albert Heartlein and Cala Ferrand discovered this 1930's stone bungalow in a historic neighborhood in New Braunfels, they were attracted to its oversized hillside lot with a large Heritage Oak tree that pre-dates the area's German settlers.

By Claudia Alarcón Photography by Dror Baldinger





from the stone exteriors, stone fireplace, wood floors and exterior trim, there was little left worth salvaging. Interior spaces were small and compartmentalized, but they wanted a large common area for the living room and kitchen, which required a very different type of configuration. Nance decided to approach the project in two phases: first, a remodel to prepare for an addition, and a second phase that will add a master suite, a large dining area, a roof deck looking out over the Guadalupe river basin and the city below, as well as a lap pool and cabana.

“Because we removed the 1980s addition, we technically reduced the overall livable

space of the home to 1,550 square feet. The second phase will increase the size back to a little over 2,500 square feet,” says Nance. The original one-bedroom house serves the dining area, living, kitchen, utility room and bathroom. The 1940s’ addition houses two bedrooms and a shared bathroom. In the remodel, a very simple bar of amenities (bedrooms, utility and bathrooms) was used to unite the two.

For the structure, they hired a local stonemason who was able to find the original quarry and match the character of the stone, skillfully blending the old and the new. They designed the living room and kitchen around the original rock fireplace, complete with imbedded petrified wood and fossils, which is a trademark of the original builder, who built more than 20 rock houses around New Braunfels in the 1930’s.

To achieve the desired open floor plan, they removed the structural interior wall and rebuilt the roof with wood trusses spanning the width of the home. They added new interior

walls and shored up the roof framing to meet current codes. In the dining, living and kitchen area, the rock structure meets a new metal wall. This is where the new dining room and master suite addition will connect to the existing home.

The foundation didn’t need any upgrading, but the wood floor was braced in several areas and restored. However, the wiring, plumbing and HVAC were all outdated, out of code, and in some cases, nonexistent. The windows were old and mostly nonfunctioning, so they were replaced. “We considered repairing and restoring, but single pane glazing is not as efficient as the more common double glazing we see today,” says Nance. The replacement bay windows in the living and dining rooms are a good example of a completely different sensibility in contrast to the original double hung wood windows. “But they respect the original stone opening,” says Nance, “with just a different attitude about the idea of a window: one which is only for viewing, while the other defines a place to sit.”

“Andrew had several important design features that stand out in the old house that will carry over to the addition,” says Heartlein. “These are the metal boxed windows and the clerestory, which are noticeable from the exterior, and are fantastic in the interior, with the repeated gables influencing the light and shadows.” Because of the mature trees on the site, direct sunlight is limited to the rooftops. The skylight is essentially a clerestory window allowing natural light at various intensities throughout the day. “It is a completely custom element that we designed,” says Nance. “It is made of translucent walls, which have a higher insulation value than glass. The room

benefits from evenly diffused natural lighting throughout the day. The natural light filters through light baffles (wood trusses) into the kitchen and living below.”

The firm collaborated closely with Ferrand’s modern aesthetic on the interior space, features and fixtures design. She is responsible for the interior and exterior color palette, which highlights the original yellow pine hardwood floors, and includes the garage.

“Since we put the addition on hold for a few years, A. Gruppo and I designed a backyard patio with large limestone squares and crushed rock,” says Heartlein. Most of the current landscaping is comprised of native, xeric plants. “I did not want to overdo the front yard as the street is economically mixed. I wanted the house to fit into the neighborhood.” ♦

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In desperate need of a remodel, the couple selected Andrew Nance with A. Gruppo Architects, a local firm with ample experience in blending heritage and modern styles. Rather than reproducing a building culture that no longer exists in the area, Nance proposed a design that embraced current building technologies and customs. The result highlights a juxtaposition of the hand-made versus machine-made.

“From the onset, we thought the history of the house was interesting,” says Nance. “We located old insurance maps from the late 1800’s, which show a Victorienesque farmhouse under the Heritage Oak tree. Later, that house was removed, and the current house (a minimal traditional bungalow) was constructed. It began at 900 square feet and was expanded through a series of additions over the next 50-plus years.”

When the homeowners acquired the house, most of the historic elements had long since been removed, and aside