

WELL PRESERVED

An architect restores the charm to her family's historic home

By Gene Menez

When the Heroy family is home, it's pretty easy to tell.

You can usually find architect Erica Heroy and her husband, David, on the front porch of their Craftsman bungalow in the Chestnut section of East Austin, enjoying drinks and watching people walk by. Occasionally their daughters, 9-year-old Cleo and 6-year-old Marion, come out and sit with them.

"Sitting on the porch is such a nice way to connect with our neighbors," Heroy says. "It's a big, beautiful, old-house porch."

Untrained eyes may not realize that the porch has undergone a careful preservation. Under the Heroys' direction, the location of the front door has been shifted slightly and a new coat of paint has been applied. Nonetheless, the porch has retained its original charm, which is impressive given that the home—which was formerly owned by Veola Young (wife of "Doc" Young, the first African-American pharmacist in Austin) and located on Trinity Street until 1954—is at least 100 years old.

The restoration of the porch is representative of the work the family had done to the rest of the historic home after they bought it in 2015. This is evident when you enter the house. Just inside the front door sits the main living area—a warm space that features a shiplap wall as its focal point. The shiplap previously had been covered by Sheetrock, but the Heroys removed the Sheetrock and only lightly sanded the shiplap, intentionally leaving it a bit, in Heroy's words, "messy."

"The shiplap is nice because it tells the history of the house," she says. "We like the messiness of it. We felt like it's a fit for our family."

The shiplap, which runs throughout the 1,750-square-foot, three-bedroom home, complements the light wood floors, which formerly had been stained dark before the Heroys had them sanded and oiled.

Bright colors pop throughout the house, but none more so than Benjamin Moore's Stratton Blue, which covers the trim and two original built-in shelves that separate the living room and dining area.

"I really wanted to do something fun and different with the trim," Heroy recalls. "I just figured, This is my house. I probably couldn't talk a client into doing all of these colors, but I am just going to go for it because it's mine."

No other space in the home has undergone a bigger transformation than the kitchen. An island gives the family additional counter space, and the upper and lower cabinets and walnut vent hood give the old kitchen a 21st-century feel. (When the Heroys bought the home most of the existing kitchen cabinets were gone.)

But the biggest change to the kitchen is how it opens up to the din-

NEIGHBORHOOD
CHESTNUT

SQUARE FEET
1,750

BEDROOMS
3

BATHROOMS
2

ARCHITECT
ERICA KEAST HEROY





The Heroys (bottom right) added a master bedroom and bathroom (opposite top) to the back (opposite bottom) of the house; the kitchen (left) has a new island, cabinetry and light fixtures; shiplap (below middle) runs throughout the interior; Benjamin Moore's Stratton Blue covers a bookshelf (immediately below); a wood-burning stove was added to the living room.



ing space. Previously, a wall with a beautiful cabinet divided the two areas, posing a dilemma for the family: They wanted to keep the cabinet since it had so much character, but they also wanted to remove the wall to open the floor plan.

Heroy's solution? Tear down the wall but salvage the cabinet and make room for it in a kitchen wall.

Today, the cabinet adds character to the otherwise contemporary kitchen. "It really makes the space," she says.

Last year Heroy received a merit award from Preservation Austin for the restoration of the home. The people from that nonprofit, however, are not the only ones to recognize her work.

When Heroy is out on the porch and relaxing with David, she'll often hear from passersby.

"People will walk by and shout, 'We love what you did with the house. This has always been my favorite house on the street,'" she says. "It's so nice that it's finally fixed up the way that it always deserved." ▲

