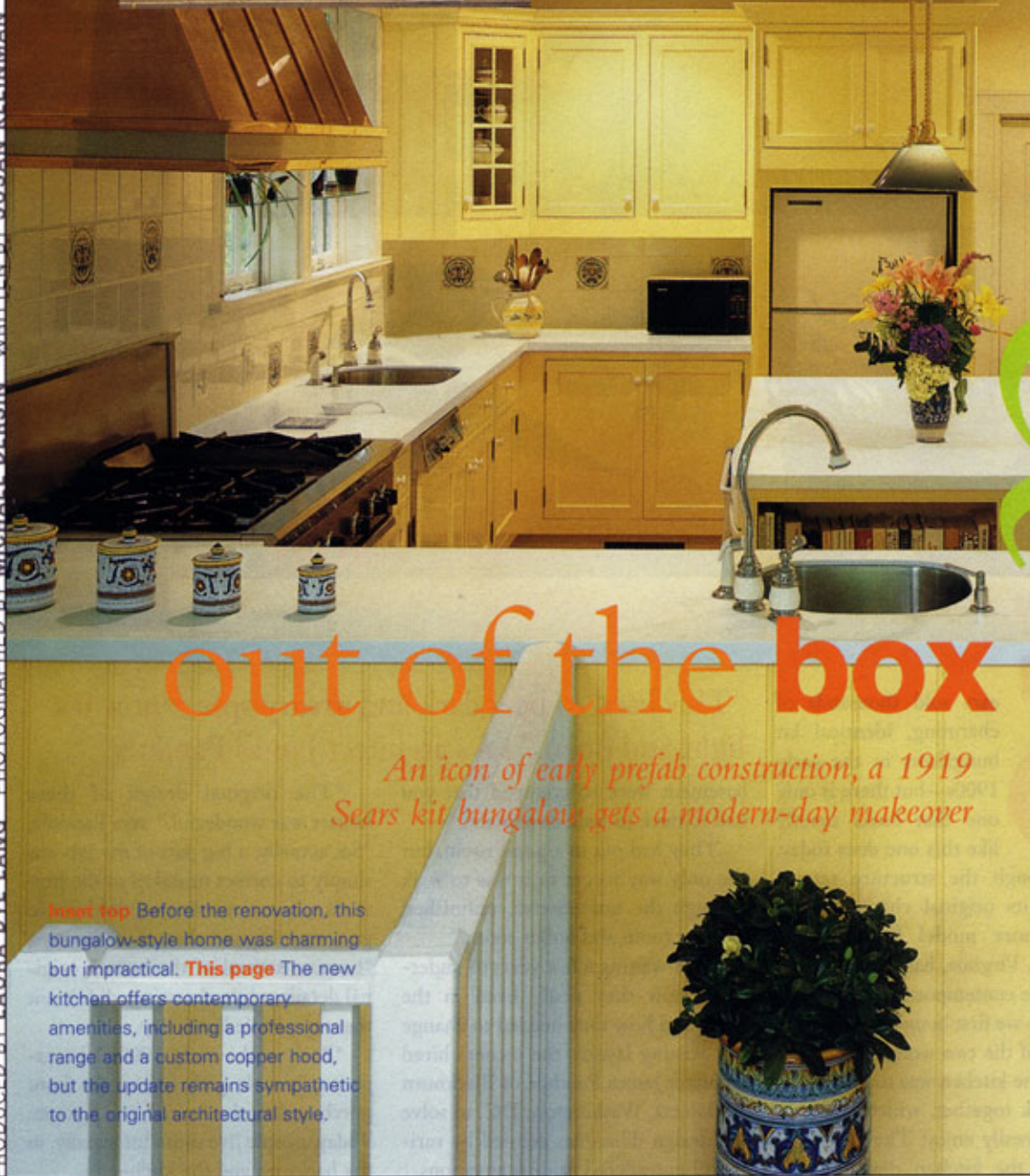


ARLINGTON, VA



out of the **box**

*An icon of early prefab construction, a 1919
Sears kit bungalow gets a modern-day makeover*

Next top Before the renovation, this bungalow-style home was charming but impractical. **This page** The new kitchen offers contemporary amenities, including a professional range and a custom copper hood, but the update remains sympathetic to the original architectural style.

before
&
after

PRODUCED BY LAURA DYE LANG PHOTOGRAPHED BY MICHAEL DERSIN WRITTEN BY SUSAN KLEINMAN

Inset below The old kitchen was gloomy, with barely room for one cook at a time. **Below** The new kitchen is bigger and brighter, thanks to a French door and multipane windows in the breakfast room, which replaced a powder room.



after



before

Sears sold thousands of charming, identical kit bungalows in the early 1900s—but there is only one that looks exactly like this one does today. For although the structure retains many of its original characteristics, this Elsmore model bungalow in Arlington, Virginia, has been updated to embrace contemporary lifestyles.

“When we first bought the house,” says one of the two women who now own it, “the kitchen was too small for us to cook together, which is something we really enjoy. The steps that led from the kitchen down to the

“This used to be a dark and dreary space; now it’s light and open,” says architect James Pandula

basement were so cramped that you had to duck to walk downstairs.”

They had put in a guest room, but the only way to get to it was to walk through the unattractive, unfinished laundry room and boiler room.”

After waiting a few years to understand how they really lived in the space and how they needed to change the existing layout, the owners hired architect James Pandula of Blackburn Architects, Washington, DC, to solve the design dilemmas created by various ill-considered prior renovations.

“The original design of these houses was wonderful,” says Pandula, “So, actually, a big part of my job was simply to correct mistakes of the previous renovations. But we did have to go a step beyond that, too,” he says, “because several of the home’s original details, while charming, didn’t suit the way people live today.

“Back in the early 1900s,” he explains, “people gathered on the front porch and in the formal living room. Today, people live more informally, in the backyard and the kitchen.”



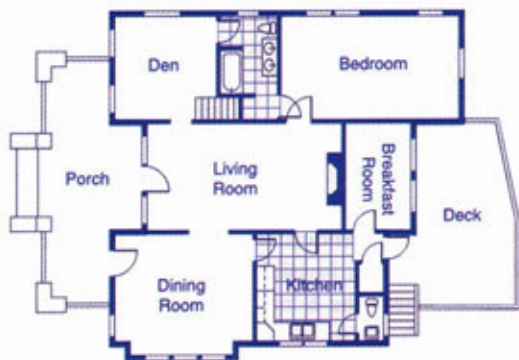
Above In a previous renovation, an old screened porch was enclosed, creating this dreary and rarely used breakfast room.

Right Now that the kitchen has been opened up and the eating area relocated, the same spot is home to a desk—one more nod to the way people really live today.

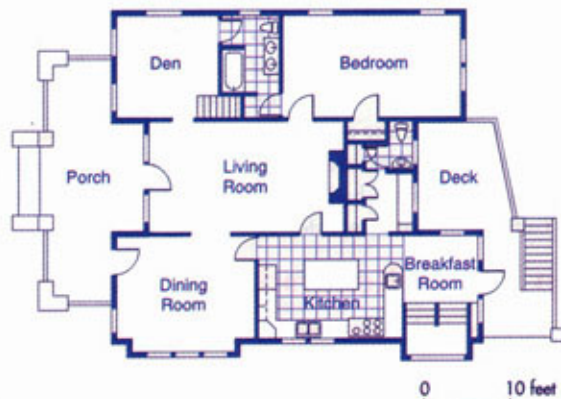


Below The old kitchen was small and dark, its walls to the outside blocked by a powder room. The stairway to the basement was inconvenient and cramped, and there was no flow from indoor to outdoor areas. **Bottom** With 120 square feet added to the kitchen, and the powder room and breakfast area relocated, the livable space is much larger and enjoys sunlight all day. New stairways—both inside the house and out to the garden—are more spacious, making the home feel like one inviting, flowing space.

before



after



For the kind of easygoing backyard living his clients were after, Pandula expanded a small concrete landing behind the house into a wood-railing balcony with enough room for two gas grills, and for guests to mill around and sip drinks or help flip burgers. “We have a couch and chairs there [in the covered seating area],” says one of the owners, “so it’s a great space for social gatherings.”

To create better flow between the house and the property it sits on, Pandula removed a staircase that previously led down the side of the house to the neighbors’ yard and replaced it with sturdy steps that go straight to this home’s backyard instead. Then,

before & after



architectural details

"I had no idea there was so much interest in kit homes," says one owner of this 1919 Sears bungalow, "until one morning, a tour bus pulled up." Here's where to turn for more information:

■ **Tours** Smithsonian Institute; 877-338-8687, smithsonianjourneys.org.

■ **Online** oldhouseweb.net

■ **Books** *The Houses That Sears Built: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Sears Catalogue Homes*, by Rose Thornton (Gentle Beam, 2002, \$20) and *Houses By Mail: A Guide to Houses from Sears, Roebuck and Company*, by Katherine Cole Stevenson and H. Ward Jandl (Preservation Press, 1986, \$28).

to give the exterior of the house a more finished look, he replaced a part of the garden with a pretty fieldstone patio, leaving room for flowers and shrubs. A vine-covered pergola shields French doors that look on to the patio.

The deck and the backyard beyond it are now inviting and accessible—but if not for the architect's renovation they would have remained invisible from the kitchen, where the homeowners spend so much of their time.

"Before," says Pandula, "there was a powder room at the back of the kitchen, which blocked any view to the outdoors. The house was inward looking, but my clients were more interested in linking to the garden."

To give them the view and the open feeling they desired, he bumped out the back of the kitchen, added a

French door flanked by multipane windows and transoms. Cathedral ceilings over the expanded area make it look airier, as well as larger.

"We actually only expanded the footprint of the house by about 120 square feet," says the architect, "but there is a lot going on in the revision."

Indeed. The revision includes two kitchen workstations and room for a professional range. There's now plenty of cabinet space, above and below the Corian counters. And although the cabinets are designed to hold contemporary cookware, they're fashioned from painted wood to maintain the cozy bungalow style. The expanded kitchen also has enough room for a spacious dining table and a convenient desk nook. "It's not a complete home office," Pandula concedes, "but it's the perfect place to balance a checkbook or pay bills."

Keep it real: Renovating an historic home means retaining period architecture, while updating flow and details for contemporary life

Above left A gracious new porch and stairs lead to the backyard, now an ideal spot for outdoor entertaining. **Inset top** Old sliding doors and a shallow balcony offered neither charm nor comfort.

Below Another new stairway leads to the finished portion of the basement. See Resource Guide for details.

