

# *We Might as Well . . .*



The story of how my brother just wanted his  
Kitchen cabinets painted, and three years and  
half a million dollars later, a dream was realized.

## *A Bit of Family History*

This project would take perseverance from beginning to end. The customers, who also happen to be my brother and sister-in-law, talked for years about renovating their Main Line home. After success with a small project, I decided to put my relationship with my brother to the test and take on a whole house



Existing exterior



Existing Family Room

a Mudroom, Family Room, an enlarged Kitchen, and Front Porch extension. The existing Living and Dining areas would also receive a facelift. The project would be completed on a T&M basis, so approval of any changes in scope of work would not delay the schedule. Permits were secured, and the project was ready to begin.

renovation. After meeting with several architects, they finally decided on Phase II Designs of Jenkintown. Having worked successfully with them on many previous projects, I knew they could make this house the home of my brother's dreams. After more than a year of designing and budgeting, the project was agreeable to all parties, and construction could begin. The final design included an addition for



Existing kitchen

# Should We Stay or Should We Go?



Removal of existing side porch

The first major decision they made was to move out of their house, with their children and all of their belongings, into a small apartment. Being professionals who work from home, both of their respective home offices needed to be kept functional during the entire construction process. After much discussion, it was decided that it would be better if she worked from the apartment, while my brother would keep

his office at the house. Telephone, fax, cable and computer lines were all rerouted to their new locations. Some of their furnishings were moved into PODS which were stored in the driveway, some went to the apartment, and the remainder were stored in the back bedrooms, which we thought were not part of the renovations. But these rooms would soon fall victim to “might as well” also.

Due to the complexity of this whole house renovation, the decision was made to divide the project into two stages. Stage 1 would be completed now, while Stage 2 would be completed at a later date.

**Stage 1** – Complete the addition with the Family Room, Mudroom, Powder Room and enlarged Kitchen. Also, the Front Porch would be added and the exterior of the second floor dormers, but nothing else upstairs.

**Stage 2** – Complete the dormer interiors, renovate the second floor Master Bedroom, Master Bathroom and the existing Home Office Space.



Demolition of existing family room

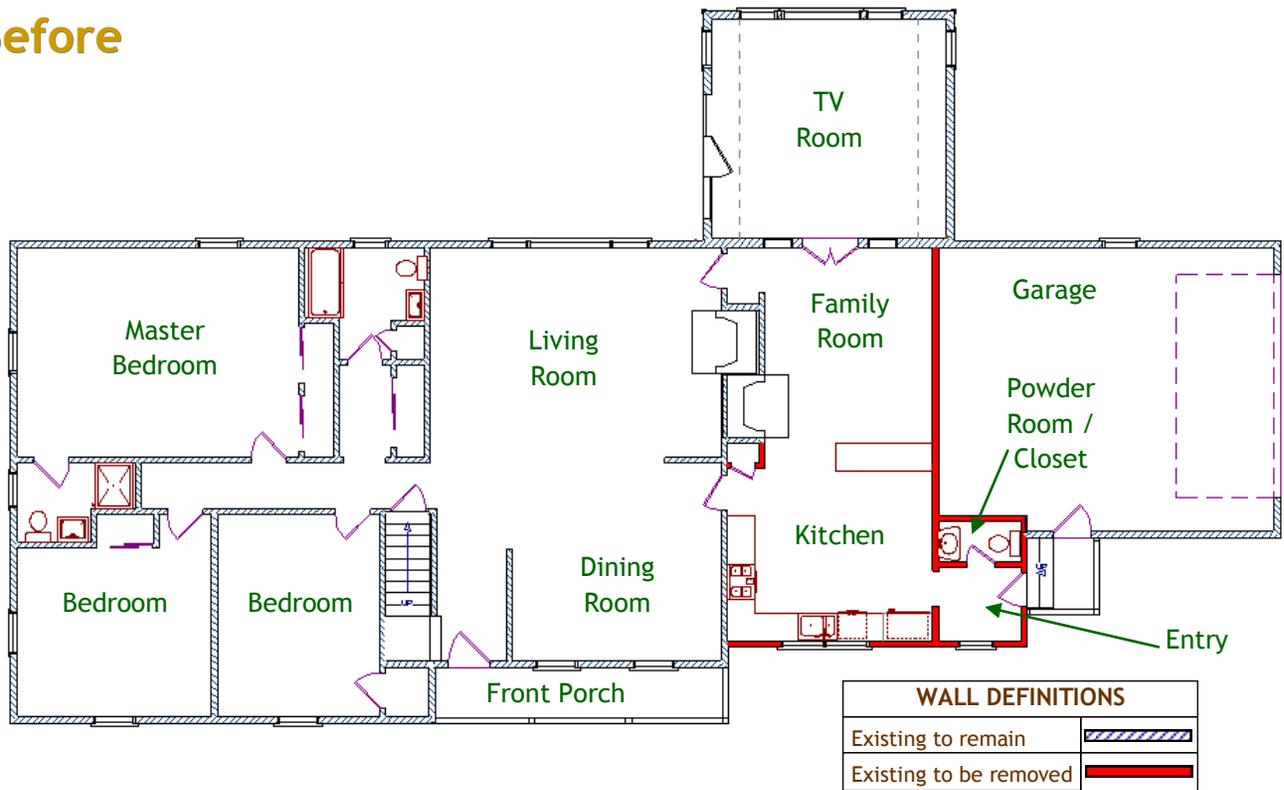
This project would soon prove to be like many other renovation projects; when the walls come down, other things come up.



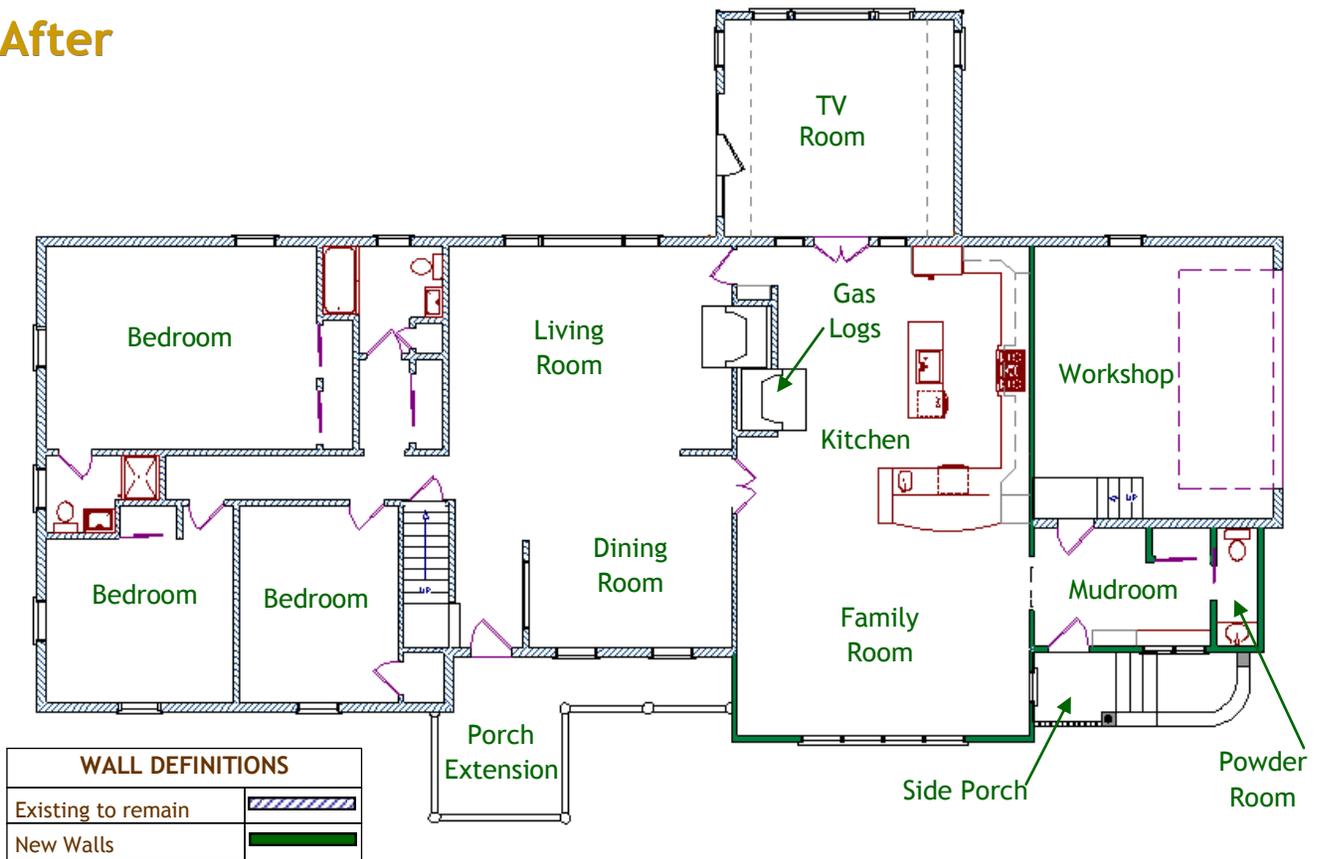
Demolition of existing kitchen

# First Floor Plan

## Before

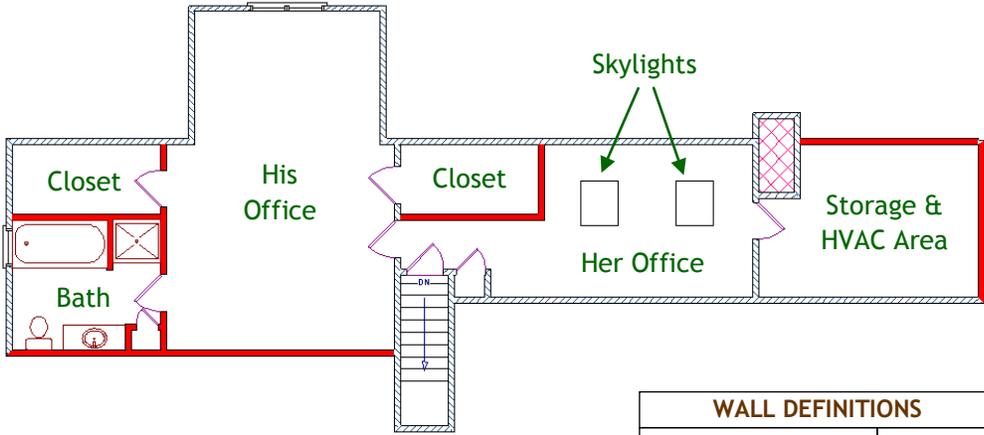


## After



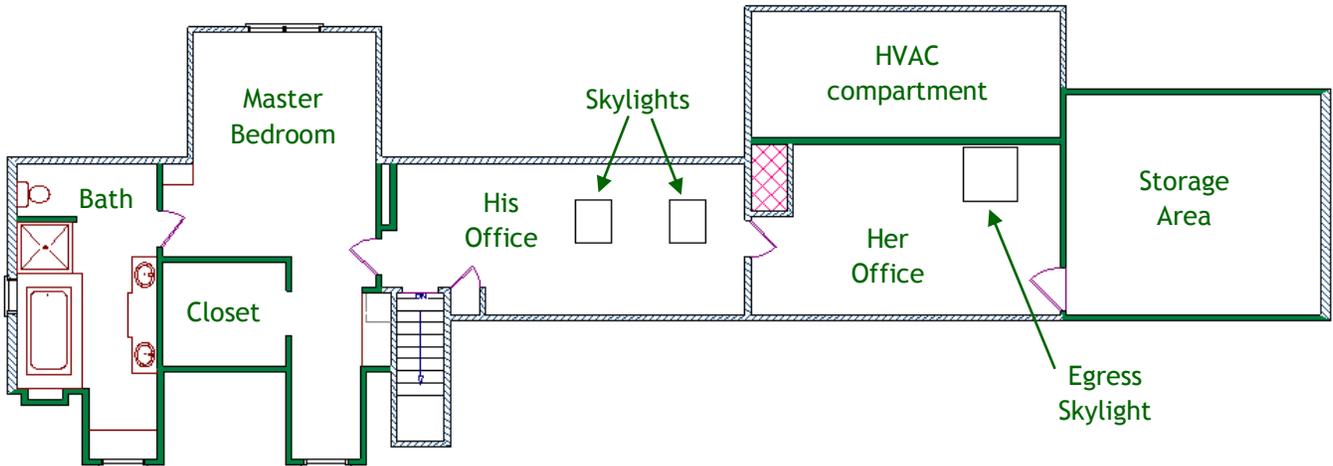
# Second Floor Plan

## Before

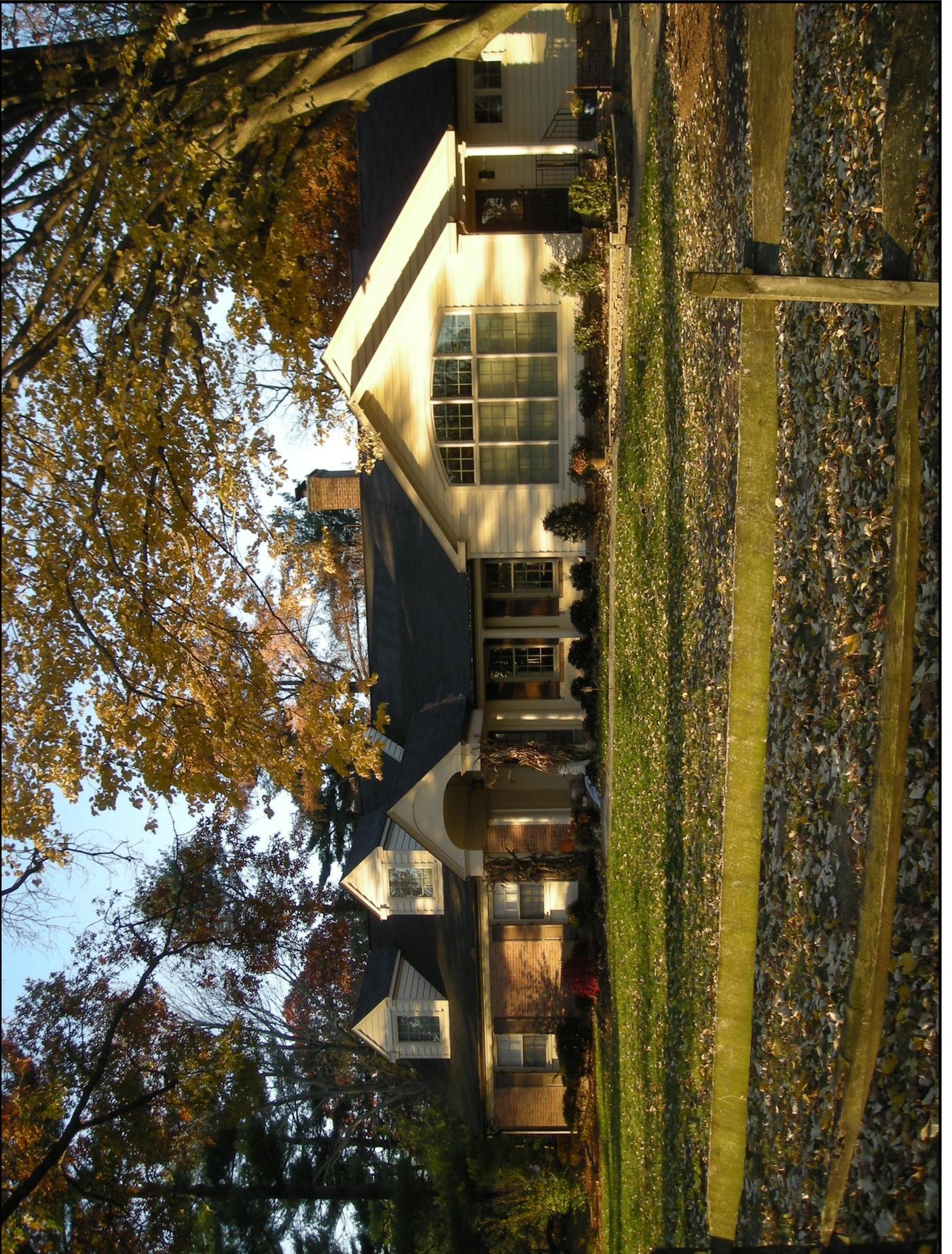


WALL DEFINITIONS	
Existing to remain	
Existing to be removed	

## After



WALL DEFINITIONS	
Existing to remain	
New Walls	



# An Opportunity to Excel

The new Family Room included a vaulted ceiling design which required a very large and very heavy clear span beam to hold up the existing roof structure, along with the new roof. Now came the first major change; we discovered that the old storage area floor was not strong enough to support the floor loads for the future office area. All of the floor joists needed to be removed and replaced. This work needed to be done while keeping the existing roof in place to keep the weather out.



Old wiring along with new PSL beam and floor joists



The next surprise was the extent of all the old wiring that would need to be reworked, along with the fact that the existing HVAC systems all needed to be redesigned. Luckily for the customer, a new gas service was just installed on the street and all of the existing systems could be changed to gas. This allowed for the three new HVAC units to be vented directly to the exterior. Also, along with gas cooking, the old Family Room wood fireplace could now be changed to gas logs and be enjoyed in the Kitchen with the click of a button.



HVAC compartments with cork board panels

The exterior design elevations depicted a series of new roof lines, which would all magically plane out with the existing roof lines, along with a contractor's most dreaded note, *v.i.f.* To pull this off, we needed to install new rafters on top of the existing rafters to force the new roof to line up with the old roof. I knew that my brother would notice anything less than perfection.

# Exterior Progress Photos



Mudroom & porch addition

Front porch extension



Family Room window



Front elevation of home



Mudroom entry porch

Front porch extension & new dormers



*“Wow, what a difference!”*

# Interior Progress Photos

*“Man, it’s huge!”*



Family Room



Existing fireplace in family room



Cellulose Insulation



Second floor drywall



Skylight in new office area



New Garage wall

# While you're at it ...



Renovated  
Master  
Bathroom



Stage 1 construction was proceeding along very nicely when my brother decided that aaaaa... since they were not living in the house, and aaaaa... the dormers were already being added, wouldn't



View into Master Bedroom  
dormer

this be the time to renovate the second floor? Yes it would, but the problem was that there was no design for the second floor. Phase II

Designs needed to drop everything, field measure the entire second floor, and complete the plans for this additional space ASAP. A Master Bedroom with a walk-in closet, Master Bathroom, and two separate home office areas were quickly designed. Now, along with Stage 1 rough mechanicals, demolition began for Stage 2. If this project was going to be successful, we would need to very quickly catch Stage 2 up to Stage 1.

Working on a T&M basis allowed this additional work to be budgeted quickly without the normal delay of contract pricing and waiting for approvals. We completed the second floor demolition & rough framing and moved the mechanical subs right upstairs. This allowed the Cellulose insulation and drywall to be



New storage area access door

completed at the same time. Now it was time to focus on the difficult task of material selections.



Master Bedroom bookcase

# Details, Details, Details



Finish material selections for plumbing and electrical fixtures, cabinets, countertops, tile, flooring and paint colors; all needed to be made and now.



Kitchen countertops



Luckily my brother's flexible work schedule allowed him to take the lead role in making these selections. He gathered the countless samples, laid everything out and then he and his wife made the final selections. Unlike many customers, he devoted the time required to complete this vital step.



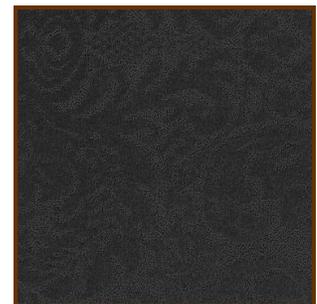
From the Brazilian Cherry floor in the Kitchen and Family Room to the diagonally laid walnut Travertine tile in the Mudroom and Powder Room, the flooring would set the tone for all of the other material selections.

Bone Yellow Travertine tile was selected for the Master Bathroom floor, with carpeting in the Master Bedroom and office areas. The selection of black carpet for the office



Walnut bar top

provided the stage for a brotherly disagreement. I felt the dark color would show all of the white office dirt, but they both fell in love with it and nothing else was quite right. Even though my brother has never admitted it, to this day I know I was right.



Black Office carpet

## Fire and Nice



Gas log set

A new TruFyre gas log set with a custom soapstone surround and a Premier "Georgetown" wood mantle was installed in the existing fireplace in the Kitchen eating area. The choice of gas logs will allow the fireplace to be easily enjoyed on those cold winter mornings.

All the custom cabinetry would be designed, fabricated and installed by Roger S. Wright Furniture, Ltd. After making and remaking door samples, this job forced Roger to develop a

new cabinet style that he has since named "Refined Country". The Powder Room vanity top would be Polished Giallo Vincencia Dark granite, while a custom shaped walnut top anchored the bar area. The polished Pocono Green granite countertops in the



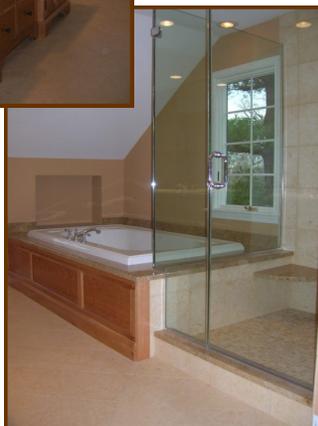
Powder Room vanity

Kitchen and the polished Kashmir Gold granite in the Master Bathroom would be a fitting cap to these cabinets.



Master Bath vanity

The access panels for the Master Bathroom whirlpool tub were fabricated to match the vanity. A matching window seat with a lift up top was added under the new Master Bathroom dormer window.



Master Bath whirlpool tub & shower

Of all the painful items that drove this renovation, the old Powder Room that also served as the coat closet was at the top of the list. Phase II handled this issue with a new Mudroom which included built-in storage cubbies and separate closet flanking the entrance to the new Powder Room.



Mudroom Cubbies

# *Tile, tile, I love tile!!*

Tile played a very important part of this project and after countless trips to every tile showroom this side of the Schuylkill, an assortment of materials were secured. A tile shower using Bone Yellow Limestone on the walls and Artstone Yellow Tumbled Travertine on the floor was built in the new Master Bathroom. This private shower was finished off with a custom fabricated clear glass frameless enclosure. The whirlpool tub deck was wrapped in granite to match the vanity top and extended seamlessly into the shower on one end and into a niche at the other. Just one more special space to play with the senses.



A Niche for the tub



Master Bathroom shower

The focal point of the kitchen is definitely the tile backsplash, which was installed by Monappella Tile. The field tiles are Anticato Giallo Aniquco antiqued tile, and the tile insert above the cook top is a Anticato Giallo Aniquco frame surrounding gold and silver leafing images. The gold and silver leafing images are repeated in a diamond pattern throughout the backsplash. The tile inserts and frame were supplied at a material cost of \$500/sq.ft. Yes, you read this correctly, \$500/sq.ft.! Other tile was considered, but the selection always returned to this tile, as it reminds my sister-in-law of her Middle Eastern heritage.



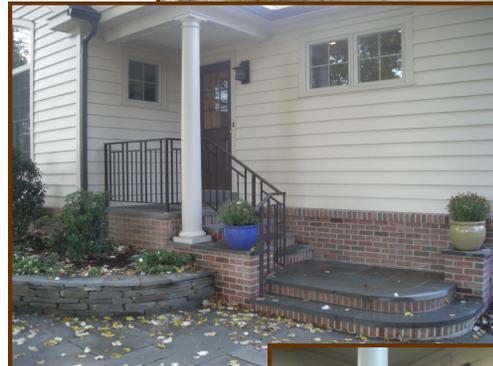
Kitchen backsplash with accent tile inserts

# The first impression

Like many homes, the everyday entrance to this home was not through the front door, but instead right into the Kitchen. Knowing that this was not going to change, the goal was to just increase the level of detail that greeted you as you entered the new Kitchen. The choice to match the existing house details and use brick steps with flagstone caps was very easy. The brick veneer would then continue around the

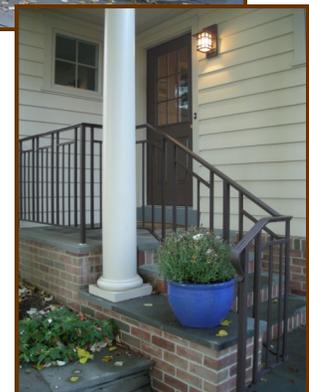


front of the addition and end into the new front porch. Phase II designed



a unexpected detail of where the column was to sit and although difficult, it really turned out cool.

The final touch to the side entrance was the custom Frank Lloyd Wright inspired metal railing with it's sweeping turns.



Brick steps & railing

The front porch now needed to compete for relevance with this side

entrance and the addition extension. The goal was to extend the porch out far enough to greet a visitor and entice them to want to come to the front door. The overall scale and details of this barrel vaulted porch were carefully planned and executed flawlessly by our lead carpenter, Jerry.

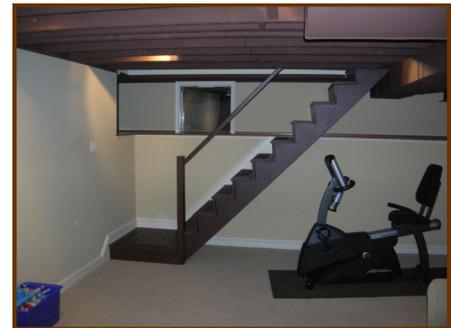


Front Porch extension

# One last thing before you go . . .

From the first budget and continuing during the entire project, my brother spoke of how they wanted to finish the basement to create a play area for the children, but it would need to wait. As the time grew closer and closer for them to move back into the home, he realized that he would not want dirty work to be done right below his brand new space. So, Stage 3 was born – finishing of the basement.

Several discussions were held to determine the best course of action for completing this work, especially since my brother is tall, and the ceiling height in the basement is not. The favored concept created an open feel in the basement simply by painting the existing pipes and ducts a dark color, rather than installing a suspended ceiling. The existing laundry area from the first floor was moved to the new finished basement



Open stair design

area, and storage closets were constructed around the utility entrances. Walls were built to conceal the existing pipes and meters. An adjustable shelf unit was built in the corner which would hold the children's books and games.



Corner shelf unit & train shelf

Being a creative person and a little left of center, my brother wanted to have a shelf created where he could set up his train set and a little town. In this town there would be two windows opened up into the desert built



Track lighting

in the crawl space. This desert space would replicate a terrarium and was to be lit with tiny spot lights on a switch. Much to my nephew's disappointment, this utopian space has yet to be realized, but there is always this Christmas.



# Greezed Grooves

*"The world is moving in greezed grooves. This is what John Steinbeck said at the end of a book called Cannery Row. This is how I feel since we moved back into our house. Greezed grooves. When we moved back in there were so many new things to fall in love with that I can't remember them all. There are the obvious things: new Family Room, the beautiful new Kitchen, and perfectly functioning Mudroom, but it is the little things that I love the most. But the thing I like best is the quality workmanship. Everywhere I look, at every detail, I see quality. Your most impressive skill is not your ability to get the project done - its your ability to understand what people want. Somehow you knew that I wanted quality everywhere and I have it everywhere I look."*

Perhaps our company mission statement says it best:

*"To complete new construction and renovation work at a fair price with the highest level of quality and professionalism. To embrace new technologies and remain flexible to changing customer needs. Above all, to exceed our customer's expectations and to provide unsurpassed customer service."*

Reading my brothers comments, I feel pretty confident that we met our mission statement, and the best thing is that we are still talking to each other. Sometimes working for family is not so bad after all.

One last item that needs to be mentioned is how the cost of a project of this scale and magnitude relates to the final appraised value of the property. Due to the Main Line address of this home, and that it overlooks the eighth hole of the Philadelphia Country Club, the value was not only maintained, but exceeded<sup>1</sup>. My brother and his wife were very pleased to find out their newly renovated home could now sell for more than their total investment.

1) These results are unique and can not be guaranteed for every project.





