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RENOVATOR

Buyer's Guide

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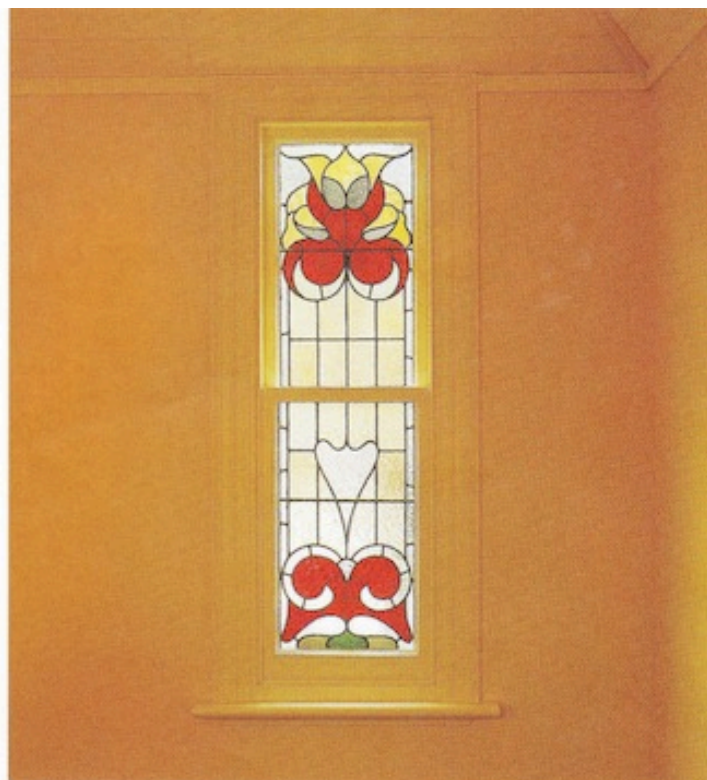
PATIENCE REWARDED

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It isn't surprising that this Federation house was chosen as PHR's Home of the Year for 2000, given the extraordinary lengths its owners went to, to ensure the house gleamed afresh with authentic period detail.

ABOVE Amongst a handful of houses in the street, all designed by Usher and Kemp, this was the only one with a double verandah.
RIGHT Antique urn from Graham Geddes. The front fence was re-built using the same profile as the verandah.





ABOVE With the emphasis of allowing the old to gleam anew, all the timber work was stripped back to prepare for its new lease of life. ABOVE RIGHT One of two original leadlight windows found in a Williamstown demolition yard and placed in the stairwell.

Simon and Terri were delighted to find this large Federation home designed in 1903 by Ussher & Kemp, a leading architectural firm of the period. It was in virtually original condition in one of the most sought after leafy streets in Melbourne. It was also, fittingly, a stone's throw from the church where the couple were married and their children christened.

One of the hallmarks of Ussher & Kemp's designs was the interesting use of angles as they steadfastly rejected symmetry, and this house confirms this in its plan and in the layout and shape of its rooms (none are square). Characteristically, fireplaces are located off center or at an angle. This gives the house a dynamic and warm feel, for all its large rooms, rather than a stiff formality.

At every step, Terri and Simon sought to preserve and restore the original, or replace with original from the period, rather than reproduction. A time-consuming and costly procedure, it has paid off with a sense of solidity and truthfulness that pervades the home.

Extensive research of the period was a crucial factor. Their zeal for authenticity led them to visit several other Ussher & Kemp residences in order to become more familiar with the various features and techniques they employed. In particular, the new mahogany staircase is a scaled down version of one in the nearby Gables Reception Centre, also originally designed by Ussher & Kemp. The vaulted timber ceiling over the stairwell is also a distinctive detail often used by Ussher & Kemp. When the upstairs room was created in the roof void by a previous owner, a narrow staircase had been built in what was a hall cupboard, jutting out awkwardly into the hall.

Terri and Simon reinstated the hall cupboard and relocated the stairwell in a more accommodating position. "We had the staircase French polished, rather than polyureth-

aned, as scratches and nicks are more easily touched up."

At the back of the house, a series of service rooms needed to make way for a new family room, meals area and kitchen. An ensuite added in the 1970s was too small and needed to be re-built. Upstairs, they wanted to create two bedrooms, a bathroom and rampus area for children Georgie and James.

The extension was designed by Peter Jackson Building Design, and his award winning design (Best Heritage Design and Best Residential Alterations and Additions for 2000, awarded by the Building Designers Association of Victoria) was sympathetic to blending the new areas with the existing period features.

For the family room extension, the owners wanted to create a sense of partition between each of the meals, the kitchen and the family room areas. To achieve this, a huge second vaulted timber ceiling (nicknamed 'the velodrome') has been installed over the bay window, defining the meals area.

A fretwork arch that spans the entire width of the room (matching the fretwork arches on the external verandas), separates the family room and kitchen from each other. A walk-in pantry has been incorporated in the space located under the staircase. "The pantry is so spacious – about the size of our previous very compact kitchen – that initially I would just work inside it. Simon would joke that I was allowed out!" says Terri. Polished Sydney blue gum flooring has been used throughout the extension for its hardness and rich colour.

Terri and Simon had been anxious to find a builder who would empathize with the project. Kieran O'Donnell of Hardran Industries had plenty of experience with period home restorations, and sensing that they were now in good hands, Terri and Simon set about searching demolition yards and second hand dealers for additional items.



ABOVE The master bedroom in Dulux Sapphire. The light is a restored original from the room. ABOVE RIGHT The vaulted timber ceiling defines the meals area, while the large bay window creates a conservatory-like ambience. BELOW The fretwork arch separates the kitchen from the family area. The kitchen cupboards have been French washed in pale yellow. Jarrah flooring was used in the new area for its dense durability and rich colour.





Early finds in a demo yard in Williamstown include two sets of leadlight french doors (c 1910) and a pair of matching leadlight sash windows in completely original condition.

The house was in basically sound condition but in need of a substantial amount of work to restore its life. The original western red cedar doors were taken down and 90 years of accumulated paint was heat-gunned off; all the skirtings and architraves were similarly taken back to bare timber.

The ceilings of the formal rooms were restored to preserve the original strapping and hand made cornices, whereas elsewhere the ceilings were replaced. The door locks were removed, stripped and restored, as were the cast iron door hinges.



Only a few of the original door handles and backplates remained, however further excursions to various second hand dealers were rewarded with the required number of matching handles. These were then restored and re-lacquered.

The house originally boasted five fireplaces, but all had been boarded up. Terri and Simon became regular visitors to

ABOVE LEFT *The formal sitting room in soft muted green tones: Dulux Grey Green with Swan White trim. FAR LEFT Detail of the window box seat which was created in the formal sitting room. ABOVE Some of the original leadlight windows in the formal dining room. RIGHT The downstairs bathroom has been re-created using fittings and tiles from Schots. The bath however is a restored original.*





