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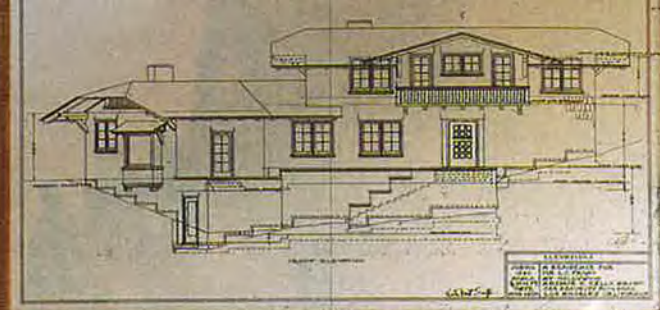


In a Hollywood canyon, film producer Monty Montgomery has restored a 1909 Arts and Crafts house designed by Arthur Kelly. ABOVE: The Swiss-influenced balcony was a request from the original resident, Dr. Lowell C. Frost.

HOLLYWOOD ARTS AND CRAFTS

A CAREFUL RESTORATION REVIVES
THE WARMTH OF AN EARLIER ERA

ARCHITECTURAL RESTORATION BY MARTIN ELI WEIL INTERIOR DESIGN BY ROGER L. CONANT WILLIAMS
TEXT BY MICHAEL WEBB PHOTOGRAPHY BY DOMINIQUE VORILLON



OPPOSITE: An early design for the house, framed in wood from the original front screen door, hangs in the study. Kelly also oversaw the subsequent additions to the house—a sleeping porch and a sunroom. Gustav Stickley designed the leather-topped desk.

LEFT: Montgomery chose vintage appliances for the kitchen, which is highlighted by maple counters and floorboards. The double sink dates from the 1920s. The dishwasher is concealed in the cabinet to the right of the stove.

has helped Weil develop an intuitive sense of what can and should be done. "And since Monty knew exactly what he wanted and had restored several houses before this, very few drawings were needed," he says.

For Weil, the objective was to upgrade the house while preserving what he calls its patina. Old shingles were removed to allow insulation and new wiring to be inserted, after which they were power-washed, treated with fire retardant and replaced. A fireproof library that had been attached to the house in the 1940s was demolished, and new shin-

gles were fabricated to cover the scar. Artisans added hammered copper details, built-in bookcases inspired by old photographs, and a gate with a butterfly grille. Indoors, floors were sanded, woodwork and ceilings were cleaned, and the original burlap laid over the walls' wooden boards was restored. "As much as possible of the original that could be reused was reused," notes Williams.

Montgomery was initially hesitant about taking on so ambitious a project. His choice was driven by the array of fine Craftsman furniture Williams had found for him over the

years, much of which was waiting for a suitable home. Frost had brought some Stickley pieces from Buffalo, but he had mixed them with family heirlooms. The designer's selection is more refined and matches the spirit of the house exactly.

Each room provides an education in the subtle variations of the Craftsman style, which Williams describes as a rejection of Victorian ostentation and a return to early American roots. "There was a deliberate simplification and a new respect for materials," he says. Standouts include a Roycroft Morris chair of bird's-eye and tiger

Montgomery named the house Mariposa, after a poem about the butterfly flowers that share the canyon with deer and coyotes.

maple, an oak chest of drawers designed by Harvey Ellis and a chestnut dining table and leather-seated side chairs from the Onondaga Shops. A log Ali Baba bench came from the Roycroft Inn, near Buffalo. These originals are complemented by reproduction period light fittings and a sofa and club chairs in distressed leather that Williams adapted from a turn-of-the-century design.

"This is an eastern Arts and Crafts interior, down to the spindles on the banisters," Williams notes. But he has chosen turn-of-the-century Navajo rugs in vibrant patterns of red and gray to animate the space, observing that Frost's contemporaries used them for decoration long before they were collected as works of art. He has also added natural linen roll-up blinds at the windows and furnished the broad front deck with wooden armchairs that evoke a summer cottage in Newport. Even the kitchen and baths have been retrofitted with vintage fixtures and plumbing, and the owner relies on the original boilers and movable electric heaters upstairs. No one would call the house sybaritic, but Monty Montgomery finds that it gives him a sense of security, warmth and comfort whenever he returns from a long trip.

The same sense of period style pervades the garden. "I took my cue from Alexander Pope: 'Consult the

Genius of the Place,'" explains landscape designer Sarah Munster. She found the property overgrown, "full of gnarly hibiscus hedges that obscured the view and old camellias, azaleas and other plants that were popular in the 1920s." Many hours were spent pruning the undergrowth, removing dead trees, adding walls and enhancing the exuberant cacti. Munster took it as a compliment when Montgomery told her, "People think the garden has been here forever and that you must be dead."

It is remarkable that a shingle house has survived almost a century of the brush fires that devastate some of the tinder-dry canyons of southern California almost every fall. The cacti that surround Mariposa provide a first line of defense, but Kate Tufts remembers at least one narrow escape: "Father had installed a spigot with two outlets on the roof," she recalls. "When the fire roared in from the next canyon, we covered ourselves in thick towels, hosed each other down and stayed up there, spraying, until the fire had passed."

"Not many Los Angeles houses have survived unchanged for so long, and in the ownership of the same family," says Williams. "Most of the old properties have been subdivided, but Kate insisted on preserving the estate and sold it only when she knew it would be kept intact." □

"Lots of people complain about the drabness of Arts and Crafts interiors—all woods and natural fabrics," says Williams. "I love the contrast between maple and mahogany." RIGHT: The master bedroom and the sleeping porch are upstairs and feature such Gustav Stickley pieces as an oak bed, an oak bookrack and a Morris chair, which has its original leather cushions. The floor lamp is a reproduction of a Gustav Stickley design. The rugs are Navajo.

