

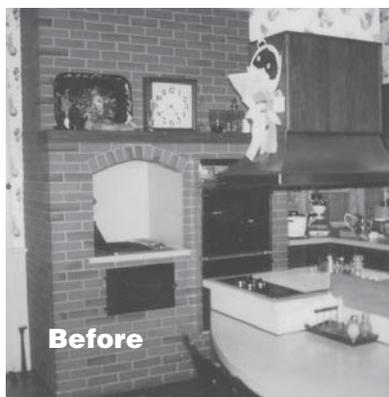
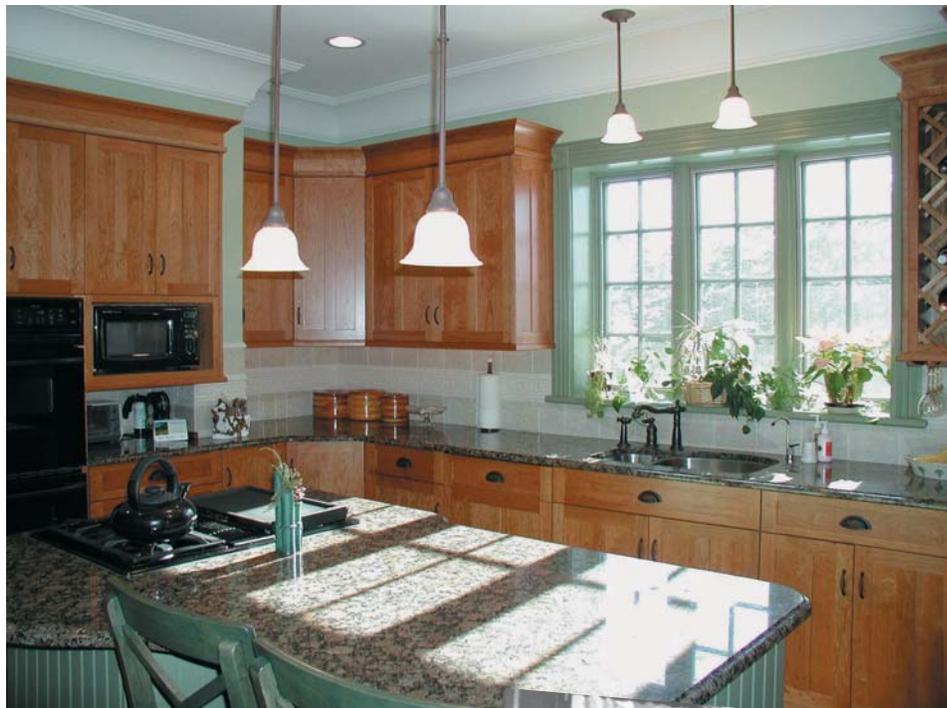
Before & Afters

Kitchen remodel a long-awaited dream

Story and photos by Jules Constantine

As a young carpenter eager to establish his own business, my husband Joe Constantine was very excited to work for a local doctor who owned a beautiful Queen Anne Victorian home built when Amsterdam played an active role in the Industrial Revolution. The various families who owned the house throughout the years, much to their credit, kept this masterpiece true to its original design. Our client continued this tradition, with the exception of the kitchen, which they had remodeled in the 1970s using the yellow, oranges and greens that were so popular then. The cabinets were very dark and the hood for an island-mounted Jenn-Air blocked most of the natural light coming from the window over the sink.

Joe's first meeting with the doctor was in the kitchen, though that was not what he was hired to remodel. He dreamed of the day when he might remodel it to reflect a more traditional Victorian design. More than twenty years later, as a well-established remodeler and home builder with many projects under his tool belt, he got his wish. Our client is a friend who attended a party I throw for my girlfriends to chase away the winter blues. After the party last year, she sought out Joe in his office and said the time had arrived. Her daughter was to be married in the



Constantine Builders turned a 1970s kitchen in a 100-plus-year-old Victorian home into one that complimented the period, yet served the current homeowner's needs.

summer and she was anxious to get it started, even if it couldn't be completed before the wedding.

We all agreed the main focus was to tie the room in with the theme of the rest of the house. Our client was very flexible and trusted my husband and me completely to design this space for her. It would need to resemble kitchens or at least styles of the period. Victorian kitchens were mainly utilitarian, so our only guides were materials and colors. Her only requests were to

use granite surfaces, and make the room much warmer and full of light. She also asked that a media center be worked into the design. (A TV and sound system was installed above the bottom-freezer refrigerator.)

Another factor that went into the design was the size of the kitchen, which was somewhat limiting. Traffic flows through the kitchen to the back door, which is the direct exit to the garage and driveway, limiting usable space. Furthermore,

to accommodate visiting family members the kitchen needed an eat-in area, but there was no room for a separate eating space. So an island was designed to accommodate service and dining.

For warmth we installed a radiant-heat system in the floor. The cabinets were a natural finish American cherry with a simple mission-style panel. Spiral-designed black wrought iron knobs and utilitarian pulls were selected for the doors and drawers. Joe and I wanted to accent the wood by painting some portion of the cabinets. The island was the focal point of the kitchen, and so it was painted to match the wainscot, trim and crown molding. The crown molding and ceiling were designed to follow the dramatic style in other rooms of the house. The wainscot would swathe the lower half of the walls. The upper wall would be painted to accent. We milled the trim using an exact template of the original.

Schrader and Company joins the team

We decided on custom cabinetry to allow us more flexibility in the design, layout and color choices and selected Schrader & Company for the job. The company's reputation of craftsmanship more than met the standard of quality our client

expected, and it could handle the custom touches unique to this kitchen. All the appliance surfaces had to be faced with cabinet panels. We had to work around a chimney and brick hearth that could not be removed. Our client had ovens she wanted to use. Custom millwork would be needed to integrate these challenging features. Schrader and Company met all the challenges.

For countertops we chose a granite whose natural features exhibit a green ring throughout the hematite stone. It was a soothing color and would enhance the warmth and natural ambiance of the kitchen. We were delighted to discover it was a surprising match to the color unearthed on the hearth. The backsplash was also a gift — we found a tile that had a crackle finish and a border that was closely related to many other designs in the original bathroom and hearth tiles throughout the house.

Though the first choice for flooring was tile, try as we might we couldn't seem to find a tile that would bring the room together. We searched for period reproductions, but all seemed inappropriate for the limited space and were cost-prohibitive. Exhausting all other options, we decided upon hardwood, because it would greatly add to the warmth. We matched the style to



the hardwood used throughout the rest of the house and also complemented the cabinets.

Simulated divided light Pella windows from Crawford Door and Window Sales helped create a period feel. Panes on the inside as well as outside looked original to the house's design without compromising energy efficiency.

Jules and Joe Constantine are the principals of Joseph M. Constantine Jr. Builders, based in Amsterdam, NY. (518) 842-9820.



Custom cabinetry and detailed millwork blend to create a period look in this Victorian home's kitchen, which serves as a service and dining room for the owners.

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