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A Bungalow Refined

By Megan Wong – Menlo Park Almanac Staff



It was Ana Picazo and Graham Churchley's daughter's first birthday. Out-of-town relatives were staying with them in their two-bedroom, one-bath Palo Alto bungalow. The experience made them a bit anxious for the future.

There was already one child sleeping in their bedroom, where would they put out-of-town guests or additional kids down the line? More rooms were in order.

Then, about six months after the couple decided to expand, they got a major surprise: Picazo was pregnant with twins. Now, they really needed more space.

There wasn't a lot of room to work with on their 5,000-square-foot lot, as 1,100 square feet were already eaten up by the house. "We knew we had to go up, not out," says Picazo.

The plan was to add two additional bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs. An overarching priority was to maintain the original Craftsman look and feel of the home.

"It's not uncommon for a second floor addition to look like it's been dropped from a helicopter onto the existing house," says Marc Lindsell, the architect for the project. "We went into detail to make sure it looked like an original Craftsman-style home, instead of a Craftsman home with an early 2000 addition sitting on top of it."

Initially, Picazo and Churchley budgeted about \$250,000 for the remodel. However, during the permit process, they encountered several unexpected issues they had to address that significantly increased the cost. First, they discovered that all the outer walls, as well as select interior walls, would have to be retrofitted to bring them up to code.

Second, they were told they'd have to fill in their basement because they were in a flood zone. And third, the ceiling over the ground floor sustained serious water damage while the roof was off the back of the house (in preparation to add the second floor), so they decided to just replace the entire roof and repaint the exterior of the house all at once.

It was a good thing they had already planned to move out into a nearby apartment for the duration of the remodel. "There was no way we could have survived in here," says Picazo. "For something of this magnitude, it would have been too much."

In addition to the visible changes, the advanced age of the pipes and the added energy requirements of the new upstairs necessitated redoing the plumbing and rewiring the electricity. But at least that part of the project wasn't a surprise to them.

In the end, they pushed into the backyard by only about 11 by 15 feet, enough to make room for the new stairwell and a landing leading to the back door. They also added a below-stair storage closet - much needed after losing their basement.

Brand-new hardwood floors span most of the house. They replaced the floors in the living room and back landing, and refinished the existing wood floor in the kitchen to blend in. "It's easy to clean, looks nice, adds to the value of the house," says Picazo of their choice to go for wood vs. carpet.

One of Picazo's favorite changes is that the laundry area is now much more accessible. Before, the washing machine and dryer were down in the basement through an external trap door. Now, the laundry room is right next to everyone's bedrooms upstairs.

In the upstairs bathroom, they chose white tiling for the counter and shower to keep with the 1920s feel of the house. "It's more vintage-inspired. We didn't want to do the whole marble countertops thing."

Above all, the couple appreciates how well the addition was integrated with the original part of the house. "It's not an eyesore," says Picazo. "It's a bigger house now, but it's not like one of those McMansions. We feel like it integrates well into the neighborhood."