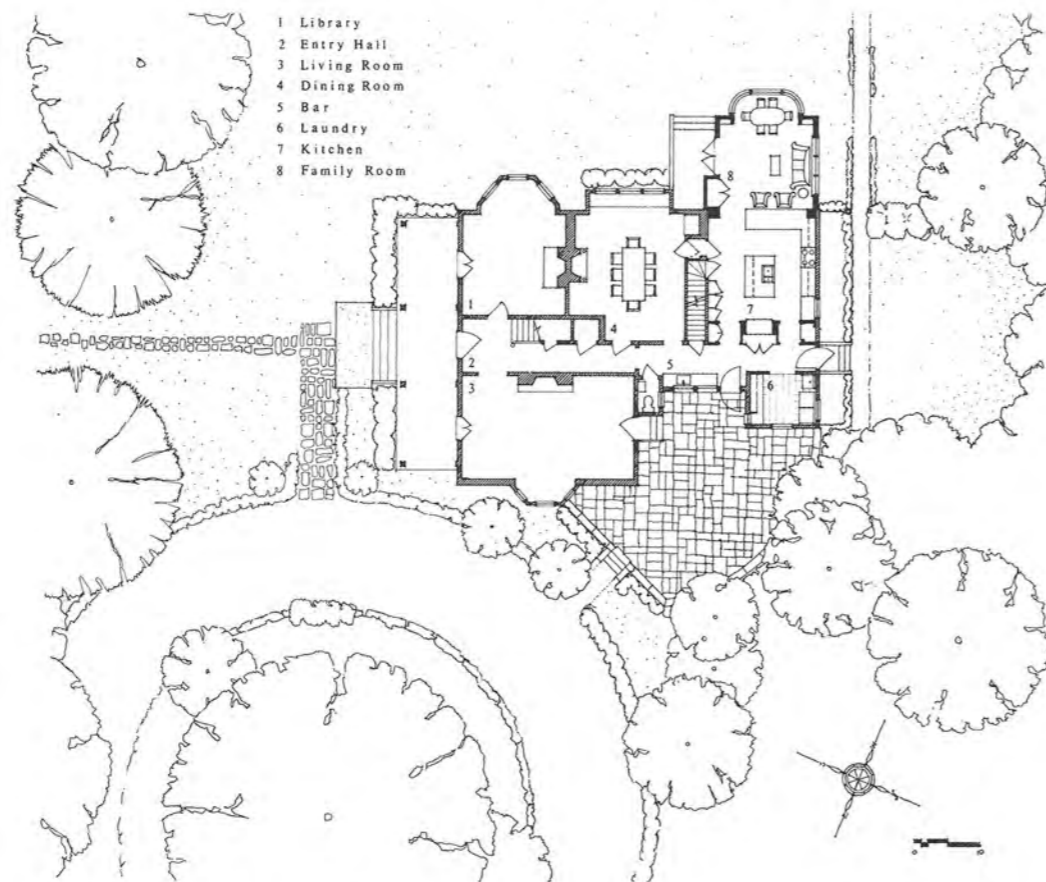


ple realized that their clogged circulation patterns would be solved by the new loop around the existing kitchen and dining rooms. Perhaps most important, our new entry porch dealt with the three levels between the driveway, back yard, and first floor—access from auto to mudroom was vastly improved.

In this project, simplicity was again critical to success. Following the patterns established by the original architect/builder, we were able to create an extension that is perfectly consistent with the language and form of the historic house. Room modules, roof shapes, historic details, and an intelligent site plan were the key. Was the addition too obviously a “copy” of the original house? The client didn’t think so. In order to give clues to future owners about the date of our work, we were careful to alter the details of the new rear porch to delineate the difference from the large front verandah. Recognizing that the work was exemplary, the local American Institute of Architects Design

Jury gave this project a gold medal in 2009. Our client was pleased with both the award and her new family room.

The Philadelphia Chapter of the AIA found the modest Radnor addition designed by Voith & Mactavish Architects



Voith & Mactavish Architects planned their addition to a historic Main Line house from the site inward. The new kitchen and breakfast room are at the upper right. (Courtesy of Voith & Mactavish Architects LLP.)

impressive enough for an Honor Award, just one of many that the firm has garnered over twenty-plus years of practice. In this project they made the most of a relatively small addition, not only rationalizing an unsightly rear facade but also providing just enough additional space for a kitchen/breakfast area. As a family house, the 1870 stucco residence provided plenty of space for bedrooms and living and dining rooms, but the “service” side was underdeveloped. Cooking in a small kitchen designed for Victorian servants was frustrating at best.

“Our clients wanted to open the kitchen on both sides, build a family/breakfast room addition, and reinforce the connection to the rest of the house and garden,” says partner Cameron Mactavish. He notes that the house had a garden setting that was beautiful but not exploited to enhance the experience of viewing the exterior from the major rooms. When considering their addition the architects were intent on bringing the outdoors inside with big glass openings, but the style of the house did not permit window walls. Their solution was to study bay window designs common during the late nineteenth century and modify them to suit the twentieth. Another inspiration was the characteristic “jerkinhead” or “nun’s hat” roof on the existing house—a hip roof style that was popular during the late nineteenth century in English cottages and their American offspring. Sometimes repeating a quirky design motif can spoil the original, but in this case the one-story addition offered a smaller-scale version of the main roof, as if to suggest a generational lineage.



The rear of the house before the renovation (top)—a flat, characterless facade that wasn’t meant to be seen. The rear of the house after the addition of a small projection with a “jerkinhead” roof (bottom). (Courtesy of Voith & Mactavish Architects LLP.)

Circulation through the original house, as is typical in late Victorian plans, was awkward once the servants weren't around to use the butler's pantry and back stairs. Though the main stair hall extended to the original back of the house, auto circulation had reoriented the site perpendicular to this axis, making the original side entrance a primary access to the kitchen and laundry room. The architects used the side door to create a new axis connecting the old hall with the new kitchen and family room. The original front porch now faces an expansive lawn, but is no longer the public face of the house for visitors. This "flipping" of formal and service



Above and opposite: Views of the new kitchen and dining space show how much can be gained with just a small "bump out" if the planning is skillful. (Courtesy of Voith & Mactavish Architects LLP.)

zones is very common in old house renovations, but is seldom handled with the creativity displayed in this design. A comprehensive garden design strategy was in place during the schematic design process, ensuring a coordinated result.

This addition was designed in 1990, before the ubiquitous "great rooms" and kitchen/family room monstrosities common in McMansion developments became a fad. When a society changes its expectations for space usage, as Americans did in the 1980s, it is futile to argue over the merits of the change. The formal rooms that Ma and Pa cherished are now relics—many dining rooms and living rooms col-



lect dust waiting for the old folks at Thanksgiving. Families live in the informal rooms formerly reserved for eating and food preparation. The kitchen is often the social locus of the house. It is now very common to see additions to fine historic houses with combined kitchen/family/breakfast areas, generally as an el to the back of the house.

Voith and Mactavish were not only ahead of the curve in this project, they also created a new room that is more beautiful, more functional, and more interesting than most designed during the past twenty years. As it unfolds from the hall, the new room does not yield its secrets all at once. A clever change in ceiling height and color distinguishes the new family room/breakfast space from the more neutral kitchen. The light entering the bay window is modulated by both wall colors and the "boxes" that catch it: a curved bay window and a segmental eyebrow high in the gable. The kitchen, a middle-ground space, is experienced both as a discrete room and as a volume attached to two other rooms, owing to the openings in thick walls that separate the three. Many designs make the mistake of removing old walls to create entirely open rooms that traverse old and new realms, mocking the order created by the original builders. This one gets it just right.

Last but not least, the Radnor addition made an ugly duckling into a swan—the former rear



The circulation system of the house was vastly improved with the addition of this small vestibule, on axis with the main stair hall. (Courtesy of Voith & Mactavish Architects LLP.)



The rear of the house at dusk shows how much more light flows in and out with the new addition and French doors to the garden. (Courtesy of Voith & Mactavish Architects LLP.)

facade went from an afterthought to a garden attraction. The oblique photograph of the rear shows how effectively the projecting bay and roofed volume turns the corner, while giving scale and coherence to what was once a service area. Although the bay window sounds a distinct and differ-

ent note from anything in the 1870 house, its location under the nun's hat maintains a consistent tonality with the original building. As in a Charles Ives composition, the marching band passes by while a church organ plays a familiar hymn. Once the moment is over we remember that we're in church.