

Designer: Burdette Keeland Jr., Project Architect: Tom Vallie,
Contractor: B. W. Keeland, Assoc., Inc.

10 Burdette Keeland hadn't planned to remodel this old house and garage (see before pictures). He bought the house, on a double lot, to build four townhouses. But construction money was tight and interest rates were high. A moratorium on sewers limited the proposed townhouses to one bathroom per unit, and that threw the townhouse plans out the window. Keeland, an architecture professor at University of Houston, went back to the drawing boards. He sliced off one side of the house and divided the lot into three separate plots. One piece sold as a home site. The garage and quarters above (which were at the back of the house) were remodeled by Keeland into a carriage house, which he sold. That left him with the house to remodel for himself.

The original house was typical 1930s, complete with impossible closets, unattractive fixtures and, in Keeland's opinion, a "too flat" facade. Ailing plumbing and sagging floors made the situation worse.

Now, drastic changes in the front of the house — rough cedar siding, a new and interesting walkway and gate, plus a bamboo screen — reflect his remodeling philosophy. A remodeling job which requires changing part of the character of the house should be carried all the way through, Keeland feels. "Don't allow existing windows, doors or hardware to be left in only one or two rooms," he advises. His house is now contemporary architecturally. But his furnishings, some old and some new, add whimsy and warmth to discourage a stark feeling.

Wherever possible, rotten, double-hung, wooden windows were replaced with aluminum, sliding patio doors. They allow needed light for the small rooms. The dining room has two such openings now. The other door in that room was simply removed. The kitchen of the house remains almost as it was. Paint in bright colors adds a fresh look.

It's hard to tell where the inside ends and the outside begins from the living room. The wall in that room is covered with the same cedar as the exterior. Large expanses of glass

Below: A living room wall is covered with the same cedar as the house exterior. A portrait of the Keeland family painted by Gertrude Barnstone dominates the wall.

See how to frame an interior wall on page 106.

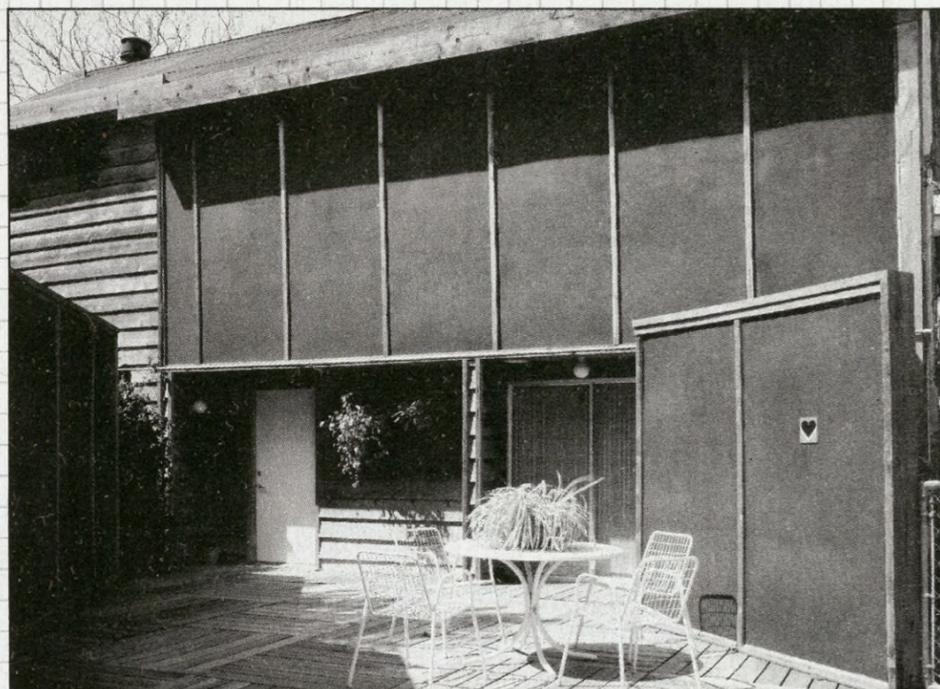




The original house, typical of the 1930s.



"It's hard to tell where the inside ends and the outside begins."



DRASTIC CHANGES

Although Burdette Keeland found that he could not build four townhouses on his new property because of a sewer moratorium, he still managed to split the land into three separate parts which are now owned by three separate people. He's in the original house — though you'd never recognize it.

By shaving about 14 feet off the existing porch and den (see before plans), he was able to liberate one-half of the original property to sell as a new home site. Then he replatted the remaining property in such a way that the garage/servant quarters, remodeled into a separate townhouse (see above), could be sold separately by leaving driveway access along the side.

Unfortunately, Keeland couldn't persuade local bankers to finance a mortgage for that because to them it still looked like servants' quarters. He finally got financing from an out-of-town bank. He called it a townhouse — which it most certainly is, and a dramatic one at that — and did all the negotiating by mail. "It worked out well," he recalls, and he sold it shortly thereafter.



Left top: Keeland drastically changed the front of the house, modifying its "too flat" facade and re-siding with rough cedar.

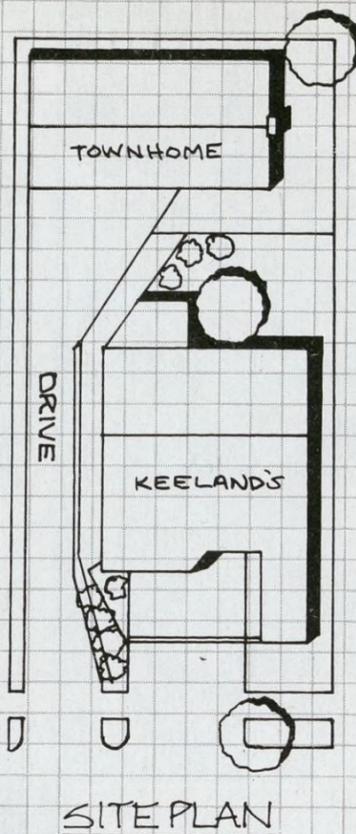
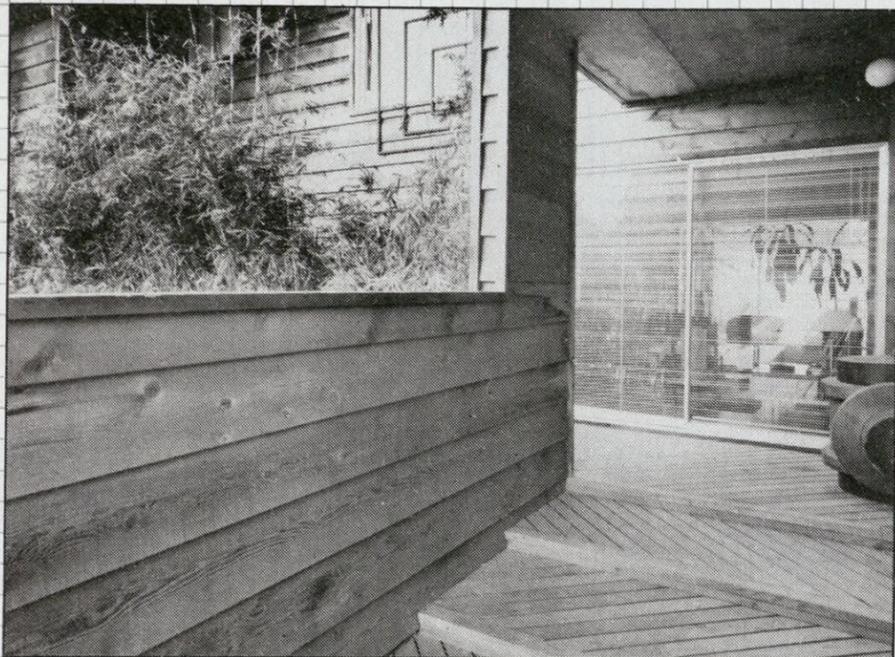
Left middle: Only minor changes were made in the kitchen. Paint makes the difference.

Left: An English walnut table sits catty-cornered in the dining room.

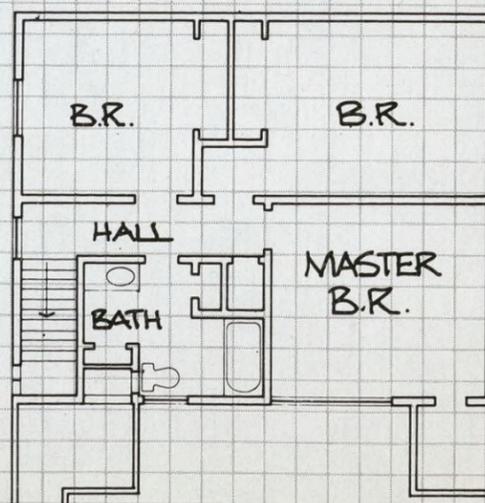
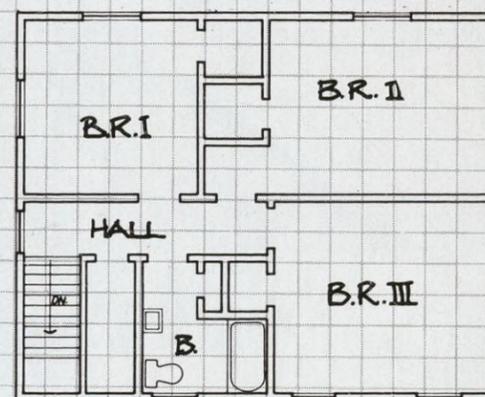
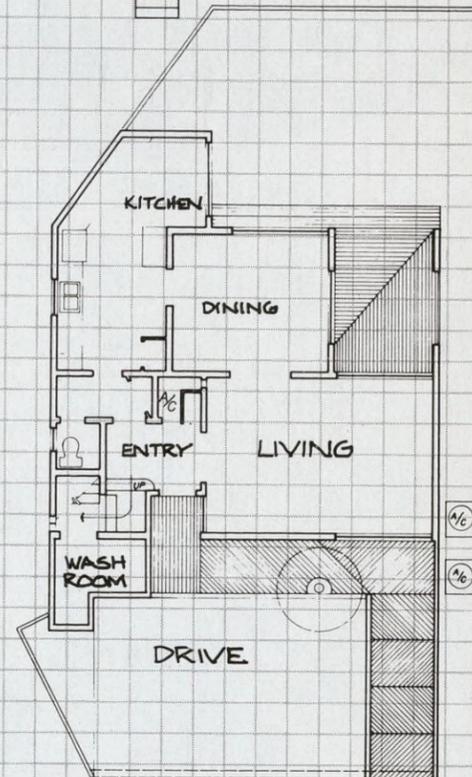
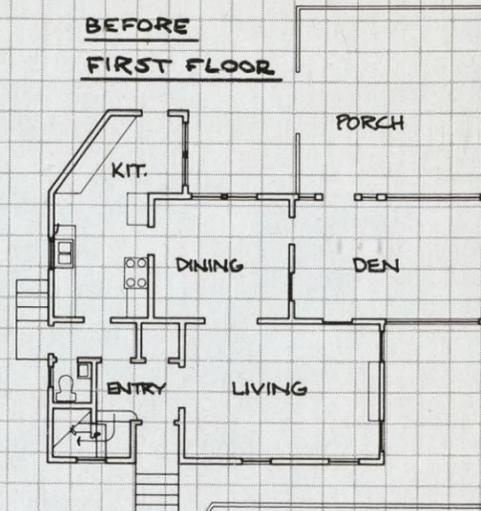
REMODELING

Below: The wooden walkway and a screen of bamboo make the approach to the front door visually interesting.

Bottom: The small backyard is enclosed with an 8-foot fence made of homosote. The portion along the back (not pictured) was painted white to reflect light back to the house.



PLANS



and extended decks just outside each opening encourage the inside/outside feeling. The back courtyard is enclosed with a homosote fence, painted white to reflect the light back into the house.

Closets designed in the '30s, Keeland notes, are essentially useless; there's little hanging space. And as a result of the remodeling project, each bedroom now has a roomy closet. Although the bedrooms are unchanged in size, they work better with the more convenient closets, Keeland says. Expanding into one of the useless closets also gave an added dimension to the upstairs bathroom. The cramped room nearly doubled in size.

In spite of a flexible floor plan, the Keelands find that there is not quite enough living space in the house. Their next project will expand the wooden-floored porch, including adding a fireplace on the outside wall. The patio glass doors will be reused to square off the house in back.

Keeland's son was the remodeling contractor for his project, and he offers these tips for anyone buying a house of this vintage. Says B. W. Keeland, "Before you start any work, make sure the floors and foundation are level." If they sag, you may have to call a foundation contractor to jack them up, he says. Try not to relocate stairs, water and sewer lines, or the electric meter. Replace all bathroom fixtures. Fixed-up old ones will eventually cause trouble.