

Take one big old house in need of some TLC, add a fun-loving family and a creative mom who loves to thrift, and you have the makings for a happy ever after.

writer **JODY GARLOCK** photographer **DAVID TSAY** producer **JESSICA THOMAS**

you make me SMILE



opposite: Grace Mitchell masked problem spots on old wood flooring in the playroom with a wide green stripe. "I just started painting and hoped it would look good," she says.

this photo: A roll of kraft paper in the kitchen allows Grace to leave herself notes and the kids to doodle.



Groceries
-milk
-tortillas
-salsa

GRAB 'N GO
Use a wall planter to keep fresh herbs at hand. Prop books on top so the planters double as display.



this photo and opposite top: Hardwood floors, white cabinets, and brass cup pulls contribute to the old-school look in the remodeled kitchen.

opposite bottom: Hail ruined the 1919 foursquare's existing clay roof, so Grace did a little sleuthing. She found the original tile color and maker on the house plans, then tracked down homes in Fort Worth with the same tile. "I went door to door to find a scrap, and then had the new concrete tile color-matched to it," she says.



THERE'S A LOT OF HAPPY

in Grace and Kent Mitchell's 1919 Fort Worth, Texas, home. From a decorating standpoint, fun hits of color and pattern are prominent. There's old furniture that Grace, an interior designer with some serious DIY cred, brought back to life after snagging bargains on Craigslist and scouring estate sales almost every Friday. And, always, there's the yellow-painted front door. "That was the first mark of happiness for this house," Grace says.

When the couple moved in nearly seven years ago, they had a humongous to-do list (along with spotty heat and AC). After their then 3-year-old son called it a sad house, Grace painted the door yellow. It has stayed that color through good times (they welcomed their fourth child in the first year) and bad (an upstairs bathroom fell through the floor). "It's been quite the adventure, but at the same time really good for our family," Grace says of the six-year renovation. "We're teaching our children that not everything new and shiny is the best thing."

Grace has always been drawn to old things—crystal chandeliers, a shapely vintage chair, even basic wooden hangers she uses to display art—because they have a story. "I want a home or a room to feel like it has stories that unfold in it," she says. "All of the layers of things you've

collected and that have meaning to you make a room interesting."

Her DIY skills and a knack for finding affordable ways to knock off expensive items have come in handy. For example, she concocted chic cabinet pulls and a stair railing from acrylic rods and brass pipe clips, and she turned brass curtain rods into oversize closet door pulls. Also key: a passion for honoring an era that prided itself in craftsmanship. "Old houses are special," Grace says. "There's something spiritual to me about taking something that is neglected and giving it new life."

FOR RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 92.

