

The image shows a living room with a black leather sofa in the foreground. Behind it is a tall, dark wood bookshelf filled with books. To the right of the bookshelf is a dark wood pedestal holding a white ceramic urn. A window with a radiator is visible in the background on the right. The floor is made of light-colored wood.

old house new home

STYLISH MODERN LIVING IN A PERIOD SETTING

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*with photography by
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classic single

LEFT and ABOVE A well-proportioned reception room with high ceilings makes this compact, one-bedroom, purpose-built apartment seem bigger than its actual square footage. Carefully chosen furnishings, such as the glass coffee table and the slim-legged chairs, sofa, and dining table, help to magnify the floor space. Timothy Whealon added the panel moldings to give the room a hint of classical grandeur.

"These apartments were made for bachelors and bachelorettes and, being a bachelor myself, this one suits me perfectly," says interior designer Timothy Whealon. It seems that the needs of the single urbanite have changed little since 1922. The block was designed by renowned American architect Emery Roth and built by the improbably named firm of Bing & Bing in the heart of Greenwich Village. Each apartment has a generous living room, a bedroom, a bathroom, and a tiny kitchen. Presumably then, as now, single urbanites dined out more often than in.



However, despite being a compact nine hundred square feet (ninety square meters), there are plenty of built-in cabinets and the ceilings are ten feet (three meters) high. When Timothy Whealon bought the apartment, it had been modernized with a new marble bathroom and white Formica kitchen units. The arrangement of rooms, however, had not been tampered with because, as Whealon says, "the original layout was perfect." He should have said almost perfect. He made two structural changes to improve on its perfection, raising the height of the doors to match the height of the windows, and adding a pair of double doors linking the bedroom to the living room. "Raising the doors," he explains, "helps the proportions, and the new double doors when left open expand the space in the bedroom and the living room by giving a view through from one to the other."

The living room is in restrained classical style with a row of three sash windows, a central fireplace, and elegant wall moldings. Timothy Whealon restored and replaced the wall moldings and exchanged the wooden chimney piece for a simple, bolection limestone surround, which he felt was more in keeping with the formal qualities of the room. "I tried to keep to the spirit of the 1922 architecture but bring it a little bit up to date."

Where later additions ran counter to this spirit, he removed them. Ugly radiator covers were pulled out and replaced by ones that match the original moldings. The bathroom was restored to its prewar glory, copied from bathrooms in the same building that had never been changed. Tiling is in cream "subway" bricks, the faucets are nickel-plated, and there is a fixed showerhead over the bathtub



FAR LEFT and CENTER LEFT The apartments were designed for single people at a time when the middle classes rarely cooked for themselves at home. The kitchen is only just over nine by seven feet (three by two meters). Timothy Whealon has made the most of this limited space by building in cabinets that stretch up to the ceiling. The floor is the original cement, scored into squares and polished to look like stone paving. A built-in wooden banquette provides comfortable seating with storage below, next to a tiny table just big enough for a modest breakfast for one.

LEFT The exquisitely sophisticated color scheme of palest grays, off-whites, and honey-browns, with studied accents of charcoal and black, ties the rooms together. Furnishings are a confident mix of contemporary and antique, including unusual and eye-catching pieces such as the 1940s shell-shaped plaster wall sconces. The traditional shape of the sofa is given a contemporary edge by the choice of a rough linen sacking upholstery, smartly finished at the edges with rows of close nailing.

the size of a dinner plate. Early 20th-century American plumbing was sophisticated and luxurious even by modern standards, so this old-fashioned bathroom is as practical as it is handsome.

In the diminutive kitchen Whealon took out the Formica, which looked "too new" and put in white-painted wooden cabinets. The old cement floor was intact under later tiling, and he was able to restore and polish it. Despite the stainless-steel oven and extractor fan, this room, like the bathroom, has a vintage feel.

Timothy Whealon has worked hard to respect and enhance the architectural legacy of Emery Roth. He has been careful to retain and restore all the features of the apartment that have survived the decorating enthusiasms and fashions of subsequent decades, and his own alterations and additions are in keeping. But the result is far from a museum piece. Thanks to the way the rooms are decorated and furnished, the apartment is fresh and contemporary.

"I wanted the spaces to flow into one another," he says, "and I wanted to make it as light and airy as possible." Walls and woodwork are painted throughout in shades of palest gray and cream. Light reflects from the old red oak flooring, which has been bleached, washed with paint, and polished to a shine. Decorative links between the separate rooms include the use of fabrics such as an eau-de-Nil linen, which appears as cushions in the living room and the bedroom, and as a shower curtain in the bathroom. Furnishings are a stylish assembly of "pieces I love," and juxtapose 18th-century elegance with quirky 20th-century finds such as the 1940s plaster wall sconces. Emery Roth would surely approve.



LEFT and ABOVE One advantage of living alone is not having to close doors, and when the doors between rooms are left open, the apartment feels more like an open-plan space. Timothy Whealon enhanced the sense of spatial flow by raising the door heights and by adding double doors that link the bedroom with the living room, allowing a view from the desk in the window of the bedroom through to the fireplace and vice versa.

RIGHT The original designers of these apartments sensibly allowed plenty of space for closets. There are two large ones in the entrance hall, freeing up space in the bedroom for a capacious armchair and a desk so that it almost feels like an extension of the living room. The cabinet in the living room has been converted into a bar, in effect adding a small extension to the kitchen.

