



CRAPTSMAN DESIGN & RENOVATION: A FOOT IN THE PAST, AN EYE TOWARD THE FUTURE

By Stacy Green

His own nightmarish experience as a client inspired Wade Freitag to found one of Portland's most respected design/build firms, Craftsman Design and Renovation. An architectural designer at the time in 1994, Freitag hired a general contractor to restore his 1907 dream "fixer" home but ultimately finished the job himself.

Experiencing firsthand the need for professional contractors who understand and respect older homes and have the highest standards for craftsmanship and customer service, Freitag knew he could fill that niche and opened Craftsman Design and Renovation in 1995.

"Our primary goal is to give the client the best quality, age-appropriate product within their budget," says Freitag. "We take pride in our relationships with clients, how we listen to their needs, educate them about their homes' history, and then jointly work on plans that incorporate modern comforts with design integrity."

While furthering their knowledge of every genre of historic home building, Craftsman Design employees also keep apprised of modern innovations in historically appropriate products, from plumbing and lighting



Above: Mid-Century kitchen combines restored and new cabinets to retain its original detailing.

Top: Arts and Crafts kitchen integrates period style cabinets with the latest appliances for a timeless design.

fixtures, flooring, cabinets, and millwork to exterior siding, trim, windows, doors, and roofing.

Knowing what products are available, where to get them, and whether they are appropriate for their home is beyond most homeowners' knowledge, Freitag says, as well as that of many designers and builders unfamiliar with the nuances of a house's genre.

A kitchen or bathroom that has been remodeled with an eye on the home's historic details and materials will never go out of style, because the room fits its surroundings. A kitchen remodeled after the latest design trend will naturally feel out-of-date in a short time because it isn't anchored in its context. Freitag says all homes, from Queen Anne Victorians to Mid-Century ranch-styles, have a history and a design language that need to be understood to appropriately renovate or restore them.

Craftsman Design and Renovation prides itself on bringing older homes into the 21st century. But an even greater satisfaction comes from developing a business whose reputation is spread by enthusiastic clients as much as by awards or mention in publications.

"We love it when a client's friend or neighbor comes to us, because they know what to expect without any trepidation," says Freitag. "On the other hand, proving to a client how rewarding not only the results but the experience — the creative collaboration — can be is what got me here in the first place."

Sharing A Sustainable Vision

A long-time supporter and past board member of the Architectural Heritage Center (AHC), Freitag's name or that of his company can often be spotted in conjunction with the center's many events advocating the preservation of Portland's historic homes and buildings.

On May 9th and August 1st, 2009 Freitag will present workshops at the AHC on older homes and "green" building practices (see page 5). As he sees it, sustainable construction today is a return to the practices originally employed in the building of Portland's historic housing stock. For example, without modern air conditioning in early 20th century homes, those with smart design benefited from the cool-

ing effects of cross-ventilation in the summer months.

Craftsman Design has employed many such practices not as acknowledgement of a trend, but as a natural consequence of concern for historical integrity, environmental responsibility, and the client's budget.

In many cases, Craftsman Design can save a client money while preserving their home's character by "repairing" rather than replacing. For example, doors and windows can be saved and repaired for less than replacements, and valuable resources are thus diverted from the landfill. If replacement is required, doing it right the first time with high-quality products saves the client money in the long run.

Repurposing materials isn't only economical for the client, it's the right thing to do design-wise and for the planet, Freitag says, pointing out that "green" building practices are inherent in historically appropriate renovations, when done right. Wood floorings, plastered walls, milk-based (casein) paints, linoleum and cork flooring, locally produced tile, wood, metal, and stone countertops — all these are natural materials traditionally found in historic homes.

"Green building isn't a particular style, and it shouldn't be thought of as a fad," says Freitag. For 12 years, he has practiced reusing materials and finding safe, environmentally friendly materials and products as a fundamental part of his design and building practices. "For the most part, the way it was done a century ago still works today." ■

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Top: The front porch and strong horizontal planes brings out the home's Prairie Style origins while anchoring the house to the landscape.



Left: Sterile white ranch lacked detail and style.



Above: A new butler's pantry provides current life style needs while restoring a feature lost in a past remodel.



Left: Bungalow bath combines fresh lines with period appropriate details and finishes.