

Professional Remodeler

DECEMBER 2008

CHALLENGING THE INDUSTRY'S BEST

2008

Best of the Best

DESIGN AWARD WINNERS / 17

www.ProRemodeler.com

Hiring a Business Coach / 12

Smart Marketing and Steady Growth / 40

Historic Restoration
by Gardner/Fox



Revisionist History

UPDATING THIS HISTORIC HOME REQUIRED BLENDING THE PAST WITH CONTEMPORARY LIVING



Before

PHOTO BY HOLLY CHARLES, GARDNER/FOX

By Michael R. Morris, Editor in Chief

COMPLETELY RESTORING A 115-YEAR-OLD, shingle-style Victorian in a historic neighborhood is complicated enough. When you throw in a two-story addition on a tight setback, a full boat of long-needed mechanical updates and extensive structural remediation to save the whole shooting match, the odds of everything coming together in award-winning fashion are about as high as they get.

But that's exactly what happened when Gardner/Fox Associates took on the renovation of a two-and-a-half story 1893 home in the South Wayne Historic District of Wayne, Pa., 13 miles west of Philadelphia, beginning in May 2006. Over the next year and 11 months, the Bryn Mawr, Pa., design/build firm orchestrated a complete transformation of the Wynhurst estate — winning this year's Best of the Best Design Award competition as the judges' overwhelming choice for project of the year.

To pull this off, Gardner/Fox paired one of the firm's top architects, Alex Rice, who has a passion for and background in historical preservation, with a talented team of craftsmen and artisans to turn the estate into a dream-come-true reality for its clients, a family of five that had recently purchased the home.

"You get a handful of projects like this, but you don't get these

Gardner/Fox Associates transformed this 1893 shingle-style Victorian into a contemporary home for a family of five without sacrificing any of its historic charm and character.

HISTORIC RESTORATION
Remodeler: Gardner/Fox Associates, Bryn Mawr, Pa.



By carefully dismantling the home's former arched stone entryway, the Gardner/Fox team was able to power-wash the stones and use them to match the exterior on most of the two-and-a-half car garage addition.

every day, and I understood that," said Rice, who worked in the historic preservation field for 11 years before joining Gardner/Fox. "Projects like this is why I do this for a living. If you can't get excited about this, you're going to have a hard time getting excited about any job."

The design process took the better part of six months, as Rice had to deal with numerous issues, including how to harmoniously blend a large two-story addition onto the existing home's asymmetrical elevations without ruining its historic character and charm, which included a prominent three-story turret on the corner. The original acreage had been subdivided over the years and left just 13 feet of buildable space in the back where the addition was to go. This forced Rice to come up with a creative design that he approached less as a traditional addition but rather a deconstruction of the original structure and creation of a distinct new overall composition.

(To listen to a podcast with architect Alex Rice; see before and after floor plans; and view an extended slideshow of the photos of this project, log on to www.ProRemodeler.com/designawards.)

A BRAND NEW INTERIOR

Because the home's interior was designed for a family in the late 1800s, many of the existing spaces needed to be redesigned to suit the needs of a contemporary family. For example, the sec-

ond floor sewing room and adjacent sleeping porch were turned into a master bathroom and dressing room.

The first floor was reconfigured to have a more contemporary open floor plan than the original. The kitchen was completely renovated and opened into the new family room addition, as well as a breakfast area and pantry. The team converted the original butler's pantry into a convenient computer area next to the kitchen.

A fourth bedroom was added to the second floor to group all the bedrooms there, along with a laundry room and home office. The second floor was just two rooms deep, with an elongated hallway running the length of the house. The bedroom and home office addition above the garage added 30 feet to that length, so Rice incorporated alcoves and vestibules to break up the space and make it feel more intimate.

"What I tried to do was break up this long corridor to create thinner vestibule transition spaces so that at no point was the run too long," said Rice. "At one space, you're at two of the girls' bedrooms. At the next space, you're at the bathroom and the laundry room. And ultimately at the end, the last knuckle in the corridor, I created a two-story space with transoms and clerestories up above so that natural light poured down on this end destination point in the corridor. Now, as you're making your way down the long hallway, you're kind of drawn to those last rooms by natural light."

The renovated third story now includes two guest bedrooms; a

guest bathroom; an arts and crafts room; a children's study area; and a playroom in the top of the turret.

EXTERIOR COHESIVENESS

The exterior design provided a number of challenges for Gardner/Fox. The home's existing gothic stone arched entry had eroded from years of water damage, so it and the porch needed to be dealt with. They were replaced by an open, covered porch and custom balustrade, which, although traditional in style, blends well with the shingle-style Victorian home and allows more natural light to fill the interior space than before.

"It tied in the first and second floors just as we needed it to," said Rice. "We didn't try to overdo the front porch. There are a lot of elements where we did kind of go for it, but the front porch we kept simple."

The existing cedar shingle siding on the second and third floors was removed down to the wall sheathing and new building wrap was installed. Then, the team installed a new western cedar shingle siding, hand-dipped in stain on site.

Because the original stone on the first floor exterior was so unique, it was difficult to find matching new materials anywhere on the East Coast to cover the addition. For that reason, every stone removed from the front entry was power-washed and reused to cover the addition. Even then, the rear of the addition had to be covered with a similar stone that was not an exact match. The rest of the home's existing stone was also power-washed to bring out its original beauty.

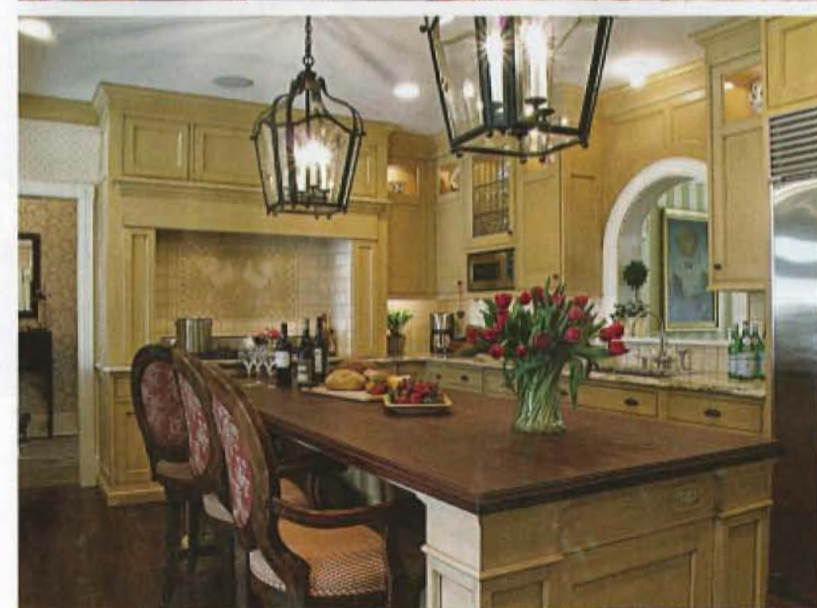
For the two-and-a-half car attached-garage addition, the decision was made to turn the garage toward the side of the property so it would open to a new circular drive and be hidden from the street view. Period-accurate windows, which were incorporated throughout the home, were installed on the street-facing side of the garage to disguise it as living space.

The existing warped roof sheathing and shingles were removed to make way for new sheathing and architectural shingles. A comprehensive system of gutters and downspouts now alleviate ice-damming. There are new rake boards and moldings throughout.

STRUCTURAL AND MECHANICAL SOLUTIONS

Structurally and mechanically, Gardner/Fox had many problems to solve as well. Water infiltration had taken its toll on much of the original stone masonry construction, especially on the turret, where the mortar had turned to mere powder over the years. The original structural wood framing was also failing in many spots and had to be replaced to support the weight of the addition.

"There were numerous structural issues," says Rice. "In general, the house was soundly built, but there were definitely areas



The original stone hearth (top photo) stands in the entry foyer as a nod to the home's historic past. The kitchen, however, was completely remodeled with contemporary amenities and an open floor plan that unites the family room, pantry and breakfast area.

where bearing lines and bearing points didn't line up and were off center. And over 100 years, there were parts that were failing. There were no imminent catastrophic failures but a number of spots where we had to reframe."

The home's mechanical systems needed massive upgrading as well. There was no air conditioning in the existing home, and the heating system was a hybrid of four different methods: radiant steam gravity-fed, hot-water radiators, electric baseboard and hydronic floor heat. These were replaced with an energy-efficient forced air heating and cooling system separated into six zones to handle the more than 10,000 square feet of space. Anti-qualified plumbing and electrical systems were also replaced throughout the home. **PR**

By Michael R. Morris
Editor in Chief

THE BEAUTY OF GREEN

Best of the Best Design Award winners prove green design can also look good

If there's one thing this year's winning projects in the Best of the Best Design Award competition proved, it's that form and function can come together with beautiful, award-winning results.

All designers and architects know that style and substance are not mutually exclusive, but in the specific realm of green design, the focus for most remodeling firms is on the building science component of green. A less-publicized but highly relevant aspect of green, especially for remodelers, is reusing materials and installing sustainable products.

Green innovations have been made in many building product categories that affect the aesthetics of a project, from flooring to countertops to cabinetry and more. With this increasing number of beautiful options that are produced with sustainable materials, it makes more sense than ever to specify these products in a project. Rarely does it take a life-cycle cost analysis to sell these features, because they cost little or no more than any of the non-green options.

Reusing materials has a dual positive impact on a remodel. Because the materials don't get shipped off to a landfill, it's good for the environment. And because new materials are not purchased for the renovation, it saves money for the client and reduces the overall demand for the production of new building products, which uses our natural resources.

Nowhere is reusing materials more appropriate or readily encountered than in historic restoration projects. In this year's project of the year (see page 18), Gardner/Fox Associates removed many materials from the 1893 shingle-style Victorian and then reused them to complete the whole-house historic restoration.

Gardner/Fox reused the original stone that formed the historic home's gothic arched entryway to build part of the addition for the project. Although architect Alex Rice would have preferred to keep the stone structure part of the new design, structural engineers determined that years of run-off from an open downspout had eroded the existing mortar to dust, rendering it near collapse. So, the entry was carefully dismantled and the stones

were power-washed and used to construct the front and side elevation of the 30-foot garage addition (see photos at right). Gardner/Fox actually didn't have enough of the original stone to complete the addition, but fortunately they had enough to make the turn from the front of the house to the side before using the closest matching new stone they could find for the back of the addition.

Another example is the second floor sleeping porch, which had been neglected over the years but was restored to its natural beauty as a master dressing room using original materials.

"I knew that we were going to get a lot of bang for our buck if we took the original details and puttied them and painted them and restored the sleeping porch to how it was originally," said Rice.

"It's probably the best detail in the house, and we got a lot of pressure just to cover it with new windows. But you have to kind of hold your ground on the important items, but not irresponsibly."

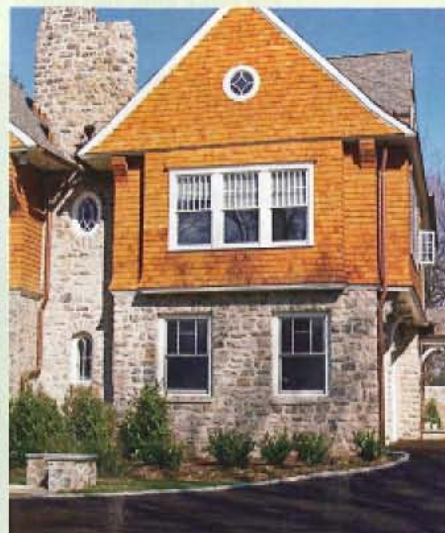
Reusing materials doesn't always have to be confined to historic restoration or even the same project. Remodelers can look for opportunities to salvage materials from older homes they're remodeling to save and use in future projects.

Eren Design and Remodel makes it a standard practice to reduce the impact of their work on the environment whenever possible. That was apparent in their Platinum Award-winning kitchen (see page 27), in which the company created an island countertop from salvaged wood from the floor of a 1790s schoolhouse.

Eren's owner, Janice Donald, is on a mission to educate her clients that green can be beautiful.

"When clients talked about green, there was nothing about beauty; it was all about smartness, whether it be capturing rainwater or the type of insulation or windows," said Donald. "It was never about pretty product, because frankly they didn't

>> If you have ideas or comments, e-mail the author at michael.morris@reedbusiness.com.



Gardner/Fox Associates reused the stone from the original arched entryway (left) to construct part of the two-and-a-half car garage addition (right).

know there were any."

Another Platinum Award-winning remodeler that incorporated reused materials with significant aesthetic and environment impact was Orion General Contractors. Orion used 90 percent of the barn's original materials for its whole-house green remodel including a kitchen island countertop made from the slate removed from the patio on the property. **PR**

FIND OUT MORE

For more on the ongoing innovation in the marriage between residential green design and aesthetics, visit these sites.

- Architecture for Humanity
www.architectureforhumanity.org
- GreenByDesign.com
www.greenbydesign.com
- Inhabitat.com
- Treehugger.com
www.treehugger.com/design_architecture