

BY LINDA ANDERSON

Remodeling a historic or old home presents its own challenges and unforeseen problems. Dealing with knob and tube wiring and lead plumbing is bad enough, but try matching unique moldings or cabinetry, or recreating a coved ceiling.

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Wade Freitag, Craftsman Design and Remodel, Portland, Ore., has been remodeling and restoring historic homes for eight years. The Oregon Remodelers Association in 2004 recognized his work restoring a historic 1905 Arts and Crafts-style home that is on the National Historic Register.

His appreciation of older homes led him to buy a 1909 Dutch colonial “beater” in the early 1990s for his own home. It had been home to the same family for some 50 years before being converted into a five-unit rooming house in the early 1970s. Although the home was old, it was not on the National Historic Register, which made Freitag’s job easier. “If a house is on the historic register, you can’t make any exterior modifications,” he explained. “You pretty much live with what you have.”

Freitag began by removing a tacked-on front bedroom, under which he discovered a wrap-around porch. He found a support pillar in the bedroom wall during demolition, and moved another from the back of the porch, in order to have four matching supports across the front of the house.

He removed the asbestos siding covering the upper half of the house and replaced it with cedar shingles, distinctive to the peri-

od of the house. He retained the V-grooved cedar siding on the bottom half.

On the second-floor, Freitag replaced leaky single-pane windows with Marvin wood and double-hung tilt-packs with a dropped ogee typical of windows of the early 1900s. On the lower floor he kept the original windows since they had been protected with storm windows. “The windows have old wavy glass, which we wanted to retain,” he says.

Freitag replaced old galvanized plumbing with Wirsbo flex-tubing, which he uses exclusively in remodels. “We have no joints in the wall and can run continuous piping. Where plumbing is exposed, we use copper connectors,” he says.

He was told there was little water pressure in the upstairs bath and upon inspection discovered why. “There must have been 60 feet of pipe going across the basement to the kitchen, back to the basement water heater, back to the kitchen and then upstairs,” he says. “It had been reconfigured when a water heater was added to replace the original wood stove in the kitchen that was used to heat water. We were able to eliminate at least 80 percent of that piping. Now we have plenty of pressure.”



A charming wrap-around porch was uncovered during the remodel of Freitag's 1909 Dutch Colonial



Wade Freitag transformed this Portland, Ore., "beater" into his own home with extensive remodeling

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work included restoring the exterior and a six-color exterior paint scheme, restoring the exterior rear deck and porch, interior woodwork, electrical, and plumbing, gutting and remodeling the kitchen, renovating one and a half baths, replacing the second and third floor windows and installing new windows at the front of the first floor, and refinishing all floors and painting the interior. He retained a clawfoot tub in the upper bath but installed new period style fixtures in both baths and reroofed the house with architectural asphalt shingles.

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"Before we make a proposal, we bring in all the subs and do a walk through," Freitag says. "To have as few surprises as possible

is our goal. Our prices remain stable that way, with changes amounting to only 3 to 5 percent at most." "I'll do a preliminary design, document existing conditions and do a floor plan," he says. From there he's able to present clients with a preliminary price. "I want to remove as many surprises as possible for the client," he says. He estimates he eliminates 80 percent of the unknowns before even beginning the project. As home prices continue to increase and home equity loan rates remain stable, remodelers should be kept busy. According to the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University, home remodeling accounts for 2 percent of the U.S. economy.

"All the lights were on pull chains and the only switches were for two hall lights," Freitag says. Since he planned to sheetrock over the ceilings, he created a channel on each side of them and ran electrical the length of the rooms. "We could put ceiling fixtures wherever we wanted at that point and then fished wire to outlets and switches."

He installed reproduction push-button type switches, which can be purchased in different configurations, including dimmers. He explains that sheet rocking over an existing ceiling is common practice in older homes, given the weight and mess of removing old lath and plaster.

To increase energy efficiency in the home, wherever there was an open wall Freitag installed rigid foam insulation between the 2x4 studs. In walls that were not open he blew insulation in from the bottom and top. "We removed the base molding and cut holes into the wall in order to blow insulation up into the cavity," he explains. Then from the attic he blew insulation down into the cavity. "By blowing insulation down you're better able to see the blockages you're sure to encounter," he says. Freitag estimates the project would have cost a homeowner about \$250,000, and most likely taken two to three months. The

Freitag installed new cabinets to include a deep drawer for tea boxes, a built-in spice rack, baking area and pantries with pull-out shelves.

