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Third in a series

Renovating Arts & Crafts Style Homes

TEXT BY KATE EASTON PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICK COLUMBUS

Arts & Craft or Craftsman homes are charming, well designed, and built to last. The existence of so many of these homes a hundred years later is a testament to the timelessness of the design and to the craftsmen who built them. On the other hand, age and exposure can cause even well-built homes to require repair. Like any renovation project, assessing the existing condition is the first step. Before beginning repairs, evaluate the entire house to determine the extent and breadth of the work. The evaluation may reveal that the project is a major or minor renovation project. Some things to consider in your initial assessment are structural soundness (interior and exterior), internal infrastructure systems, finishing elements, and overall style and appearance. Addressing and correcting problems in these areas first will allow for many more years of comfortable living in the home, and it may also save you money in the long run.

Structural Reliability

With homes that were built around a hundred years ago, structural soundness is the first consideration. The condition of

roof, eaves, walls, flooring, external siding, window and doorframes, and porch supports are indicators of the size of the renovation project. The wide roof overhangs typical of Arts & Crafts homes not only helped to keep interiors cool in hot climates, they protected the siding from exposure to weathering. The eaves were often supported by rafters that extended out, past the exterior walls. The rafter ends need to be checked for wood rot or other damage. Foundation cracks and settling that can cause windows and doors to be out of plumb are also common. Although many porch supports had bases of stone, concrete, or concrete block, the upper parts tend to be wood, which is another area exposed to weather that can cause damage. Interior walls were usually lath and plaster construction and original insulation rarely meets current building codes.

Some Arts & Crafts homes have additions that are inconsistent with the original architecture. If completing a restoration to the original, removing the addition or remodeling it, or adding a space may be part of the renovation plan. As with any remodel, ➤

especially those that affect structural members of the building, consult knowledgeable and experienced remodel experts, including an architect knowledgeable in art history and the Craftsman style. It also helps to engage both an architect and builder early in the project who can work together, complementing the other's area of expertise. In keeping with the original Craftsman style, plan the remodel to use locally available materials and experts. The Home Builders Association of Kitsap County offers remodel expert referral services (www.kitsaphba.com).

Traditional Colors of the Style

Sometimes just a new paint job is all that is needed. There are many resources available in libraries and online that describe the technical and artistic aspects of a historical building or paint renovation consistent with an architectural style. The Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation cautions about using corrosive or other methods of paint removal that could damage the underlying wood and recommends using the most gentle of approaches to achieve the desired results. This method also minimizes the disposal of hazardous materials. Many times cleaning and light sanding of existing paint is all that is needed prior to applying new paint. If new paint is part of the renovation, the next step is determining the color scheme. Traditionally, Arts & Crafts homes have been painted outside and in with an earth tone color palette. The Detroit Historic Commission researched historical paint



color schemes according to architectural style and published this information at www.ci.detroit.mi.us/historic/colorguide/color_e.htm.

Traditionally, three colors are used: a main shade for the siding or body of the house; a contrasting shade for door and window trim; and an accent color for architectural details. Darker colors were used to emphasize recesses and lighter colors were used on protruberances. Dark green, brown, red and black were typical on sashes and shutters but not used as the main color. White was not on the color palette; however, lighter shades of yellow, green, and brown were popular as accent colors. If the body of the house is brick or stone, then only trim and sash or shutter colors need to be chosen to complement

or harmonize with the main material. Choosing color combinations that work can be both fun, and time-consuming. However, most contemporary paint manufacturers have online color design tools, including proven color combinations for specific architectural styles. And then, there are always the paint chip cards in the store for those with an artistic flair. For those who are "color-challenged," professional designers will be happy to assist.

Windows were often wide with rows of small panes across the top and placed to allow maximum outdoor light to enter the room. Sometimes the small pane window glass was beveled glass or stained in primary colors, sometimes an entire section was leaded stained glass depicting a scene. Window frames and sashes were constructed of wood and double-hung windows used rope to operate window opening. Check both frames and sashes for signs of damage and wear, inside and out. If they need to be replaced, consider using the new low E, double-paned windows.

Internal Systems

Once the main structural elements have been assessed and renovated as needed, other internal infrastructure systems are evaluated. The electrical, plumbing and heating systems are the next items on the list. Many older plumbing systems used ►

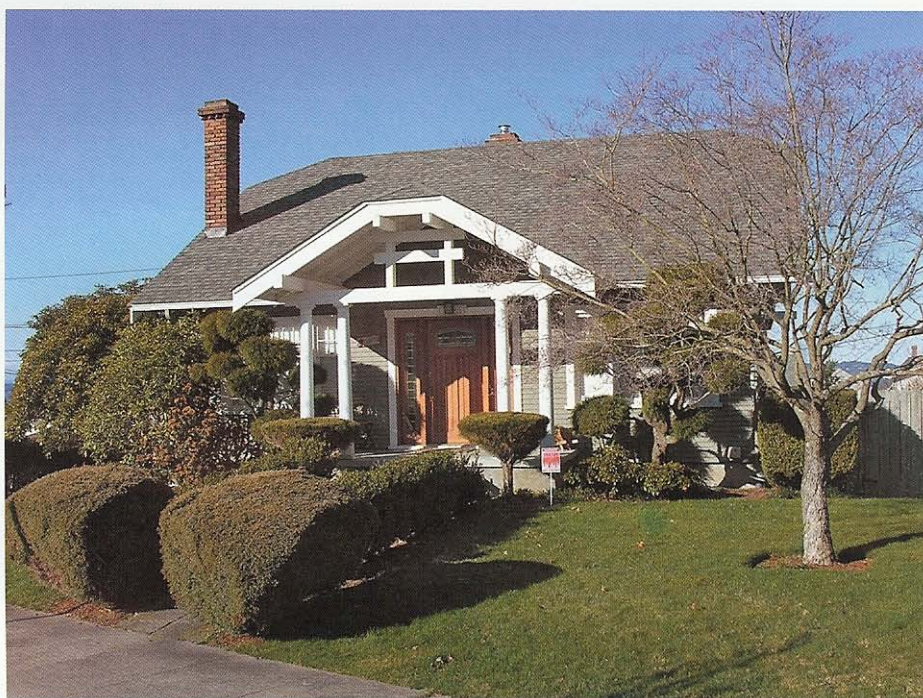


Traditionally, three colors are used on Arts & Crafts homes.

cast iron pipe for stack systems and other large plumbing fixtures. Working with cast iron pipe requires a thorough knowledge of the sealing mechanisms (oakum and molten lead) and the equipment necessary for repairs. Stem faucets were common fixtures in Arts & Crafts homes and are likely to drip when the washer gets worn. Replacing the washer is an effective and easy fix. Many older homes use a drum trap instead of P-traps that are common today. Drum traps are very prone to clogging, so you may want to consider replacing them. In some cases where a major renovation is desired, it may be easier and more cost-effective to replace all plumbing with the current PVC or copper equivalent.

Many early electrical systems were knob and tube or armored cable type. Knob and tube used individual insulated wires held in place by porcelain insulator tubes in floor or ceiling joists. Armored cable (sometimes called BX for a trade name) is insulated wires encased in a spirally wound, flexible steel armor. If your home had electricity added after construction or was remodeled in the 1940s, it may use nonmetallic sheathed cable (Romex), which is a cable consisting of insulated wires enclosed in a fabric sheath treated with moisture-resistant and fire-retardant compounds. Sometimes the wire inside each of these systems was tin or aluminum instead of copper. Also, many of these older electrical systems do not have the capacity for modern appliances or new branch circuits. Addressing the capacity issue requires adding or replacing the circuit breaker load center. Depending on the extent of your renovations, you may be required to replace the existing wiring and bring it up to current building codes and safety requirements. A licensed electrician is a must for major electrical system renovation or replacement.

Many Arts & Crafts homes were heated by fireplaces or coal or oil furnaces typically located in a basement. Many coal furnaces were converted to oil or gas systems in the 1930s and 1940s. Some converted coal systems may have ducts covered in asbestos. The services of



special contractors may be needed to safely remove or repair the asbestos insulation. Older oil furnace systems use gravity to distribute warm air through ductwork. Many times one room will always be colder with this type of system. Other homes used steam or hot water to heat radiators in each room. Regardless of the type of heating system, evaluate it for soundness and energy efficiency and replace any failing parts (if they can be found, see Resources). Part of the assessment for heating systems is determining to keep or replace it. In either case, consulting an HVAC specialist is recommended.

Finishing Elements

Interior floor plans were designed to allow easy flow between rooms and allow families to share the day. The center of the home was the main living room entered directly from the front door. The living room focus was usually the brick or stone fireplace. Fireplaces need to be checked for adequate ventilation and cracks in the firewall box. Both aspects must be in excellent working condition to prevent fires or carbon monoxide build-up during operation. Sometimes rooms had paneling or ➤



Renovating and additions to Arts & Crafts homes are common, although many times, they do not follow the original style of the house.





wainscoting. Evaluate the paneling or wainscoting to ensure it is in good condition, or if it masks structural problems. Wallpaper also enjoyed a revival with the William Morris designs and others. Many original William Morris patterns are now becoming available again.

Most homes had 4-6 inch wide hardwood boards on the floors, which have a tendency to cup in the middle. These hardwood floors could be buried under layers of linoleum and/or paint or carpet. Restoring hardwood floors is usually just the application of labor to strip, sand (and sand some more), and apply new finishing. Dining rooms often contained built-in side boards or china cabinets or buffets built using glass inserts. Renovations could include leveling drawer bottoms to ensure an easy slide, replacing drawer and door pulls, or replacing glass inserts. There are several sources for reproduction and antique cabinetry parts.

Bedrooms were few and small, as was the kitchen. Some homes did not include interior bathrooms. Given the needs of today's families, a renovation may include modifying the interior layout to provide more kitchen space and upgrading to modern energy-efficient appliances. Bathroom upgrades may include adding a skylight or well-light, exhaust fan, and improved light fixtures.

Many Arts & Crafts homes have built-in features such as window seats, shelving

and storage. Interior cabinetry was made of quarter sawn wood with mortise and tenon joints and finished with stain or oil-rubbed to allow the beauty of the wood to be center stage. Cabinetry drawer pulls of metal or wood were simple and functional in design. As part of the assessment, evaluate these features of your home to determine if the renovation should include repairs to these items also.

Making a House a Home

Once the structural and infrastructural systems are assessed, the homeowners can turn their attention to the things that personalize the home, such as interior paint or wallpaper, types of doors, cabinet and drawer pulls, light fixtures, etc. Exterior doors were typically wood with one or more small glass panes in the upper half. Original interior doors often were frosted or pressed glass to allow light to penetrate the interior. Light fixtures were typically wood, copper, brass, bronze or iron in simple, unadorned styles. There are many companies that produce light fixtures that are reproductions or new designs in the Craftsman style.

Tile was not just functional in the Arts & Crafts home; it was a work of art in itself. Tile could be found in kitchen and baths, on fireplaces, walls and floors. Individual tiles may be one shade (earth tone, of course) or depict a nature or landscape scene. Sometimes tiles were laid in patterns, much like a quilt, that combined

to create a different kind of picture. Several tile manufacturing companies are reviving the Arts & Crafts style with new designs and modern materials and processes to create traditional hand-crafted products. Others are manufacturing reproductions.

Other adornments included rugs and window coverings, many designed by Morris. Pottery was not just for containing liquids, they were often displayed as part of the décor. Furniture designed and manufactured by William Morris, Gustav Stickley and others were showcases of craftsmanship, functionality and style. Although original pieces of their work may be difficult to find, contemporary furniture manufacturers are creating reproductions and similar new designs.

Although a simple house renovation can become a huge project, the value added is well worth the expense and time. Recent studies by the National Association of Realtors indicate that renovations to kitchens and baths return the most on your investment.

From Inside to Outside

Now that the home is renovated, it's time to start thinking about renovating the outside landscape to complete the seamless flow from inside to outside. The National Association of Realtors study also revealed that landscape renovations can return up to 120 percent of the cost. The next issue will discuss the landscape renovation process and considerations. ♦

Resources

- Bungalows: Design Ideas for Renovating, Remodeling, and Building New (Updating Classic America series) by M. Caren Connolly and Louis Wasserman (Taunton Press, 2002).
- Arts & Crafts Style and Spirit, by Chase Reynolds Ewald.
- In the Arts & Crafts Style, by Barbara Mayer, Rob Gray.
- The Arts & Crafts Companion, by Pamela Todd.
Bungalow Style, by Treena Crochet.
Bungalow Details, by Linda Svendsen, Jane Powell.
Inside the Bungalow, by Paul Duchscherer, Douglas Keister.
- Bungalows, by M. Caren Connolly.
The Beautiful Necessity, by Bruce Smith, Yoshiko Yamamoto.
In Harmony With Nature: Lessons from the Arts and Crafts Garden, by Rick Darke (Metro Books, 2003).
- Bungalow Colors Exteriors, Robert Schweitzer.
- Bungalows: Design Ideas for Renovating, Remodeling, and Building New (Updating Classic America Series) (Taunton Press, 2002) by M. Caren Connolly, Louis Wasserman, Caren Connolly.
- Bungalow Basics: Bathrooms, by Paul Duchscherer, March 2004, ISBN: 0764927779
Presents a survey of the charming bathrooms of bungalow-era homes in America.
- Practical Homeowner published several articles on renovating homes in the 1970s and 1980s, many of which have been compiled into reference books by Rodale Press.
- <http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/pacificnw/2002/0908/living.html> Seattle renovation example with pictures.
- www.historichouston.org/newsite/ See photos of a Craftsman renovation in Huston, Texas.
- www.remodeling.hw.net/industrynews.asp?channelid=55&articleid=49572&qu=bungalow example of remodel in Wash, DC suburb- pictures and text.
- www.monarchrenovation.com/473%20front%20entrance.html Denver, Colo. remodel photos - good example of interior details.
- www.ragtime.org/Ragtime_Resources.html On-Line Arts & Crafts Movement Resource Directory.
- www.ambungalow.com/Ambungalow/home.htm American Bungalow (periodical).



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