



Joe Bartsch

# Legacy reborn

*Tips for Remodeling a Period Home*

BY BRYAN HENSON

**S**anta Barbara is home to a rich architectural legacy and as a result we are often approached by homeowners to preserve and restore our county's historical treasures. Renovating a historic or period home can be a very rewarding experience as you unearth the history and original architecture. However, that is not to say it is without its fair share of challenges. Here are our top three tips if you are considering renovating your period home:

1) Take the time to preserve, match and source historic details and materials.

The charm of older homes are often found in the details – the unique hardware, tile, woodworking and plaster finishes.

We sometimes uncover beautiful brass or iron work that has been painted over so many times that the original detail was lost. We've also found historical hardware matches on eBay. One of my favorite stories from a recent historic remodel is when the owners were browsing a local antique shop and discovered a fireplace screen that matched their home's ironwork. Upon returning home, they looked at old house photos from the previous owners and realized that the piece was original to the home, so they went down and bought it right away.

2) Take care to update the home's layout without sacrificing the original "feel". Some older homes are more compartmentalized than the current trends for more open layouts. You can bring more space and light into the home while keeping the architectural integrity by enlarging a window, adding a shower to a master bath, or extending a roofline for a small addition. If you have access to old photos or blueprints, use them to guide your design. On one project we discovered that an original design of two enclosed porches were never built. Once we discovered this the new owner authorized the building per the original intent.

### 3) Expect the unexpected.

Working in and around materials that you're trying to preserve can impact your project's schedule and budget. Unforeseen challenges sometimes lie hidden behind the walls such as dry rot, decayed pipes, decayed lumber, asbestos piping, or asbestos in the walls. When done correctly, the work requires specialty designers, builders, trades and craftsmen/women that are familiar with the type of products and level of finish required.

Despite the challenges, we've found that preserving history is incredibly rewarding for homeowners. A variety of pleasant surprises and discoveries await you along the way, as do stories about the home's inhabitants over the years and what makes original fixtures and features so special. Best of all, however, is ensuring that your home can be appreciated for generations to come.

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