

Concepts



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▲ It's summertime, and the living is easy in this exquisite Long Grove home, designed and built by the Orren Pickell team. What makes this house great? The details! Not just the architectural and building details, but also the intangible details, as described by Orren in his article, below.

It's all in the details

by Orren Pickell

If you're thinking about or are in the process of building/remodeling a home, you probably have your heart set on certain features. They may be a bluestone front walk, an arched art niche in the hallway, handcrafted bookshelves in the Great Room, or granite countertops in the gourmet kitchen. In this newsletter, you'll see photos and read articles that highlight such details. They help make your home truly one-of-a-kind!

Please keep in mind, however, that there are thousands of details we can't show you in a newsletter—finding the right school system; the right community; the right site; walking the site and placing the home on it to take advantage of hills, trees, ponds, etc.; the solid foundation your home sits on; the quality of the mortar work behind the mosaic tile in the master bath; and the extra effort it took to painstakingly sand each layer of paint to create impossibly smooth walls. I call these details "intangibles"—features you can't see, but you can certainly feel. While every client appreciates the tangibles—those things you see, smell, hear, taste, and touch—I urge you to remember that the intangibles are equally significant.

For example, look at customer service. Say that your dream home turned out to be more beautiful than you ever imagined. But, along the way, there were unexpected costs that sent the

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- Turned posts and display nook give the refrigerator an armoire appearance.
- Custom stucco hood with handcarved applique.
- Spice niche.
- Furniture piece island with butcher block top and open shelf below.

▲ Details make the kitchen, and the kitchen makes the home! Here are a few you may not readily notice in this photo, but our clients love in their new Lake Geneva home!



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Details

Period details abound in this turn of the century charmer

Any architectural enthusiast appreciates an historic home. The reason lies in the details—beautiful woodwork, interesting floor plans and a special ambience and charm that simply can't be duplicated. This is why Orren Pickell Designers & Builders decided to take a near-century-old Kenilworth residence in tear-down condition, completely restore it, and name it The Turn of the Century House, the company's fifth concept house and the first to showcase the talents of its Remodeling Division.

When the Pickell team started out, they knew that salvaging this home would be more laborious than building new, from the ground up. Yet, the home had "good bones"—a sound foundation, magnificent mahogany trim and oak floors, and an exterior with great potential, not to mention good views of Lake Michigan. To bring the home into the 21st Century, a master bedroom suite and Great Room needed to be added (eventually accomplished through the use of an addition), but the ingredients were there for a truly one-of-a-kind residence.

The work that went into restoring the house's details was immense. Carpenters came in to delicately strip the trim and folding French doors layer by layer and steel wool the beautiful old hardware. The plaster walls were salvaged by applying Glidwall, which sealed the cracks and made them monolithic. As they reconstructed and restored the entire old house, architects labored to maintain the home's original style. They even added period details such as white beadboarding in the master bath in the new addition. On the exterior, Pickell mason specialists painstakingly tuck-pointed the brick work while the original slate roof was repaired with copper to give it another 100 years of life. Moving the entire driveway to the south end of the house and adding a bluestone front porch gave the residence spectacular curb appeal.



▲ New tuckpointing, a restored slate roof, and a new driveway highlight the front exterior of the Turn of the Century House.

Most important of all were the structural repairs. As with any restoration, there were many "unforeseens" that came up along the way. Every wood slat going into the masonry walls had to be checked for rotting, and sagging beams underneath the house were replaced with steel by jacking up the house one-thirty-second of an inch at a time for over a month. Completely new sewer, heating, cooling and electrical systems had to be installed. The basement was especially labor intensive—craftsmen ripped up the entire floor and dug down so that drain tile could be laid.

We're happy to report that a wonderful family has now made The Turn of the Century House their home. With four bedrooms; six bathrooms; a spectacular Great Room; cozy living room; sun room; gourmet kitchen and breakfast room; butler's pantry; upstairs office, sewing room and storage area; plus a three-car garage, this is a home they can enjoy for the rest of their lives.



▲ **Top:** This photo is taken from the old, restored and remodeled portion of the Turn of the Century House, looking into the new addition. You can't see the difference, in this photo or from 2 inches away, because of the level of detail provided by our carpentry divisions.

Bottom: A new vanity placed into the old section of the home. The original floor in this section was raised 1/32" per day for over a month to level it.

Right: This is a portion of the new Great Room in the Turn of the Century House. Mahogany cabinets and entertainment center, plus quarter sawn oak floors, match the woodworking in the original house.





▲ **Top:** The mahogany trims and windows in the living room and sunroom of the original home were painstakingly restored.
Left: The master bathroom is completely new, yet created to look a part of the turn of the last century! CabinetWerks used beadboarding, quarter sawn oak floors, and exquisite sinks/vanities to achieve the effect.

Kitchen details: pulling it all together

While cabinets are what set the stage in any kitchen, it is the details that pull it all together and give the room real style. Fortunately for the designers at CabinetWerks, there are more products than ever before available on the market, and as a result kitchens have become more functional, beautiful and imaginative.

Intricate moldings and inlays are very popular right now as they help achieve the unfitted look that is so popular today, evident in many if not most of the kitchens we've recently completed. In a Lake Geneva residence, an arch placed over the cabinetry surrounding the refrigerator creates an armoire-like effect. Decorative feet and legs transform The Transition House's kitchen island from a functional storage unit into what looks like a piece of free-standing furniture. Even cooktop hoods become eye-catching focal points, as seen in several other new residences, when interesting carvings or ceramic tile are added.

Of course, no kitchen would be complete without all the bells and whistles—warming and crisper drawers, spice niches, built-in knife blocks, pot ladders—that make the room both fun and convenient for the homeowner. One place you see many of these features is the kitchen island, where people want tools and appliances at just an arm's length away. The Lake Geneva residence has not one but two kitchen islands, made possible because we were working with such a large space. The islands still function as storage units and one as a snack bar, too. Yet, they also include many modern conveniences, such as a prep sink and second cooktop, which for the homeowners was especially important as they both wanted to be able to cook at the same time.

Current trends in hardware and fixtures reflect the recent popularity of the Old World and French Country styles. In The Transition House, basket hardware with a rusted finish compli-



◀ The rich, reddish-brown finish of this carpentry brings out the warm tones of backsplash tiles and of the custom hood. The entire color scheme blends well with the stainless steel appliances.



◀ The kitchen in the Turn of the Century House, featuring Wood-Mode fine custom cabinetry, has a great vintage feeling. It features a working, butcher block topped island, an open dish rack, pasta bins, and a farm sink.

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CAB

Details (from page 1)

project way over budget and workers who were disrespectful and never on time. Moving in would be more of a relief than an occasion for joy. The value of top estimators, who go that extra mile to get you the very best price available anywhere, and of a



polite, respectful, hard-working staff, are immeasurable. Try thinking of it this way. You go to a very popular restaurant. The chef does an outstanding job—the food is delicious, the presentation exquisite, the wine just right. But, because of an incompetent waiter, the coffee is cold and the wine is never refilled. You will end up dwelling not on the wonderful flavor of the meal but on the poor service. The great meal is ruined by the bad experience.

One way you can avoid such a scenario when you design/build is to choose a company with a large enough staff to execute your project—and remember, these layers of services are incredibly complicated and interwoven. A small firm may employ a fine architect, but what happens when they get another couple of projects? And what about all the other talent needed to complete the home? Believe me, subcontractors alone aren't a substitute for an entire team of highly skilled professionals working hand-in-hand in your behalf. Design/build firms with the crew, time, and resources to attend to *all* the details will keep your budget in check and your project on course.

I call this my "Value Line Formula": **Quality + Service + Timeliness + Cost = Value.** If you've ever worked with us, you know that this defines my version of real value—service, time, and cost, as well as an excellent product. I can tell you that at our company, we never stop challenging ourselves and improving our capabilities for our clients. One example of this is Solutions-On-Site, a web-based electronic marketplace (set for launch later this summer) that will enable our customers to view, research, and select from thousands of products—tiles to faucets—from hundreds of manufacturers around the world. This is all accomplished by simply touching a keyboard! It is a huge evolution for the selections process. I've been working on it for the past year and a half, and it's all to help our clients, to make their lives easier and their experiences better. It is these types of details and services that make all the difference as they lead to true customer satisfaction.



▲ Just a few of the people behind the details (left to right, top to bottom): Carol Lee Wax, Sales Associate; Craig Wolski, Chief Estimator; Kent DeReus, Architect; Tim Turpin, Foreman; Dave Heigl, Division Manager of CabinetWerks; Greg Schaar, Field Manager, Remodeling Division.

Kitchen Details (from page 3)

ments the warm pine cabinets. From Arts and Crafts to Art Deco, there are now hundreds of styles available. These features can instantly change the look and feel of a kitchen; even the most modern doors can take on a vintage appeal with just the right knobs and pulls.

Mixing colors and textures is another way designers are adding detail, interest and dimension to kitchens. The unfitted furniture look means that cabinets no longer have to be all the same color or even made out of the same wood. The cabinetry surrounding the fridge may have an off-white finish while the island is a stand out because of its rich, dark cherry stain. The same can be said for countertops and backsplashes. While polished granite surfaces were used on The Transition House's kitchen island, honed granite was used on the perimeter.

Summer maintenance tips

by Warren Schwartz and Mitch Roper

Summer may be the season for outdoor fun, but while you're enjoying the warm weather don't forget to attend to these all-important home maintenance jobs:

- ▶ Seal asphalt driveways to prevent cracks and increase longevity.
- ▶ Change exterior light bulbs—a job you definitely don't want to do during harsh weather!
- ▶ Wash exterior windows to get rid of dirt and grime that has accumulated over many snowy, windy and rainy months.
- ▶ Power wash and seal wood decks. They'll look nicer and the wood will last a lot longer, too.
- ▶ Have concrete flat work sealed. Salt can do a lot of damage over the winter.
- ▶ Check windows, bricks and the entire exterior to make sure caulking is still intact. This is a tip we gave you for the spring, but it needs to be done in summer as well.
- ▶ Replace smoke detector batteries. In fact, do this every time you change the clocks!