

Historical Saltbox Design Stays True to its Roots



CASE STUDY:
April 2011



SHREWSBURY, MASSACHUSETTS

Introduction

At the end of a quiet residential street, bordered by a forest and a colonial-era, stone wall made about 1740, stands a saltbox design home currently undergoing a complete exterior and interior makeover. The homeowners are clearly fascinated with United States history, and wanted their remodel project to be an authentic recreation of a circa 1750 home. The Cedar Shake and Shingle Bureau ("CSSB") was privileged to have the opportunity to visit this jewel of a project. Of all the projects the CSSB team has seen over the years, this one stands out due to the homeowners' relentless drive for quality and historical accuracy.



A welcoming entrance

Pursuing History with a Passion

As most people are aware, a home renovation is akin to adding another full time job to one's existing schedule. Both homeowners work full time, and they opted to live in the house while the renovations were being completed. Naturally, a speedy completion date was imperative, however, not as important as top quality design, materials and workmanship. As the homeowners so aptly stated, "...disposable housing and shoddy workmanship were not our vision." When the CSSB team interviewed this delightful couple, the homeowners' enthusiasm for a period recreation was quite apparent; their kind nature, willingness to learn as well as an appreciation for craftsmen's skills all combined to make spectacular results possible.

A Dream 26 Years in the Making

The homeowners built this house nearly three decades ago and have been its full time residents for 26 years. These hard working people are now at a stage in their lives where they can afford to add desired high quality historical recreation elements to their home. Keeping the scale of the overall project small allowed them to use top notch materials and detailing that otherwise would not have been possible.

Originally specified for southern yellow pine roofing shingles, with a solid roofing deck covered in rubberized eave protection material, this project underwent a complete transformation right from the design stage. Internet research led the homeowners to CSSB District Manager Tony Bonura, who was contacted before the project materials were finalized. His in-depth knowledge played a key role in achieving the homeowners' vision. It was Bonura's initial advice that proved critical to understanding cedar roofs and



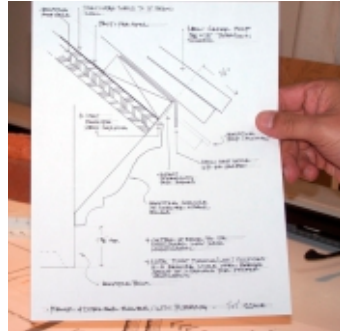
A well-worn, internet-downloaded CSSB New Roof Construction Manual was an integral part of the design process

ultimately which led to the best solution: choose the best material possible, work with the best installers you can find, and follow the best practices for installation. The homeowners stated that, "...the CSSB made information that was otherwise very hard to find or even known to exist, readily available to guide our design specification. We just would not have known what to ask for."

Teamwork Results

Francis Harvey & Sons, the selected contractor, has been in business since 1925, and has developed a reputation for doing the job right. Neal Harvey, owner of this family-run company, embraced this project from the moment

Certi-label™ cedar fragrance filled his warehouse, right through to the end of a highly detailed installation program.



Detailed drawings, self-created by homeowner



Talented craftsmen brave the cold temperatures to install the Certi-label™ roof

A talented group of craftsmen worked on this job site; a sense of "quiet pride" is noticeable. One of the homeowners is trained in Fine Arts and created a volume of architectural drawings to assist with the design process. The CSSB team was astounded at the painstaking details that were carefully hand drawn for each feature. Marius J. St. Laurent, Lead Master Carpenter from Francis Harvey & Sons, stated, "This was a great project, it was intense and we needed to use all



Window molding detail

our skills but it was wonderful to work with such beautiful material. It wasn't difficult, it just took patience, and at the end of the day, we guys would look up and say, *Wow, we did this! It's beautiful!*"

Intensive consultation with the craftsmen working on site resulted in a much improved final product. This is a best practice other design/build associates can learn from this case study project. The job site still boasts a number of small mock ups that serve as models for various renovation details. Extensive research was performed to get even the smallest detail correct. Once the CSSB team was on site and had a chance to speak with both the homeowners and the craftsmen, it was abundantly clear that this is a project that has captured the heart and minds of everyone involved.

Selecting the Roofing Material

The Certi-label™ western red cedar used on the roof of the house took an interesting journey to arrive at its final destination. The homeowners worked with log supplier David Haight, of Rejo Cedar, who was most gracious in accommodating their requests for information and specific wood types. He sourced tight grained cedar from cedar trees found on the forest floor; this is one of the ways cedar shakes and shingles prove their worth as an environmentally friendly product. Haight also recommended A&R Cedar, Inc., a CSSB member manufacturer. Haight called the mill and asked for custom historically accurate dimensioned shakes and band saw cut surfaces. Certi-Sawn® tapersawn cedar shakes were the product of choice. One of the homeowners pulled out a sample, unused 75 year old cedar shake he had located in his father-in-law's barn. He was impressed to see that the quality hadn't changed in 75 years and admitted he was even having trouble throwing out the scraps from the job site! He continued, "...after all these years, the quality is still the same. How many products can you say that about?"

The homeowners initially met resistance when they requested hand driven nails; they refused to budge and ended up making believers of the installers! Hand driving nails gave the installers more confidence in finding that "sweet spot" into the sheathing and allowed them to better control the installation process. As the



A&R Cedar, Inc.'s Certi-Sawn® shake product at the jobsite

homeowner picked up his dog-eared CSSB New Roof Construction Manual with a satisfied smile he said, "I'd be nowhere without this."

Downloaded from the internet early on in the design process, it was filled with notes from intense conversations held over many, many months of planning.

Copper Skylight Design

Renaissance Conservatories employed 175 lbs of copper to custom manufacture two skylights that sit on the back slope roof. The homeowners, who readily admit that their home is not a mansion, were pleasantly surprised that their smaller sized project was given the same care and attention as a larger one. In fact, Steve Pearson, Program Estimator, stated, "We will take the same care with your two skylights as we do with a \$700,000 solarium placed on top of a Tudor mansion." Now that's true customer service!



Copper skylights provide a unique, historical look

Fastener Fascination

The Jackson House in Portsmouth New Hampshire was being renovated and the homeowners happened to be visiting that day to conduct historical building research. When they discovered that the 18th century, wrought head nails were being discarded, they took a few home for reference. Modern fastener reproductions made by Tremont Nail were purchased; they look just like the 250 year old nails from New Hampshire. The homeowners loved the look and consider it a detail so important to houses from this era.



18th Century nail

Unique Chimney Design

A standard brick chimney was redesigned with custom mortar and handmade brick from Old Carolina Brick Company. These bricks have been used in the restoration of Mount Vernon, Monticello and other wonderful old buildings. Art Burkhart, representative of the Old Carolina Brick Company, helped the homeowners understand historic masonry and select the right brick. To make sure they got the pattern right,

the homeowners took multiple trips within the New England area to research brick chimney design. They then worked with a local mason, Bob Shay, Francis Harvey Roofing and Masonry Consultant, who did several mock ups on site. They even went so far as to build a chimney out of pink housing insulation foam, paint it red and gray, and stagger bricks for the exact pattern they wanted. This mock up was used by the mason as he reconstructed the chimney layer by layer. Step flashing was installed with precision and a focus on mechanical function to properly channel water. Shay was on site the day the CSSB team interviewed the homeowners and his dedication to the task was quite apparent. Project Master Mason was Dave Phaneuf. It is interesting to note that twice in conversation with other tradesman, Phaneuf related how, "The chimney looked great, but it really came to life when the cedar roof was put on!"



Above: Chimney mock-up used on job site. Right: Note detail pattern on new chimney



An outdoor brush pile provides refuge for small birds and chipmunks

Celebrating Nature

The homeowners are nature lovers and this is one of the reasons they used environmentally friendly, renewable, recyclable wood on their home. The neighborhood is peaceful and filled with wildlife. Cheeky chipmunks, inquisitive squirrels and a multitude of chickadees, sparrows, cardinals, wrens and goldfinches populate the area. A dense brush pile in the back yard provides shelter for the little birds when the omnipotent hawk flies in for a look. A native species Elm

tree is planted nearby to offer moisture control to the lawn.

A small row of apple trees line the other side of the house, and one species, *Esopus Spitzenburg*, was known to be Thomas Jefferson's favorite. The green English Boxwood bush leading up to the back stairs is off a sprig taken from Mount Vernon, and is also the same kind grown by President Jefferson.

Conclusion

When the entire on site crew retreated inside from the drizzling rain to view project drawings, a couple of curious onlookers made themselves known. Zoe and Granville, the two lovely resident short hair Persian cats, were slightly amazed at the c o m m o t i o n around the job site. Their initial skepticism was soon replaced by relaxed lounging that was, as the crew believes, largely due to the comfort provided by their new, insulative Certi-label™ cedar roof!



Zoe the cat

As with any building or renovation project, the more specific the homeowner can be with desired outcomes, the more pleased she/he will be with the end result. The extremely high level of dedication these homeowners gave to their project and its craftsmen, coupled with their relentless perseverance of top quality materials,

made for a stunning recreation of a circa 1750 saltbox home. This a good model for any recreation project. Everything is aptly summed up with the homeowners' comment, "There is such genuineness about wood." True enough, it was spoken by wood aficionados, however, the accompanying photos prove it's a reality. The homeowners readily admit this project consumed far more time than they initially expected. However, they have a beautiful home that is true to American history and the Georgian saltbox style they adore. Their home also garners compliments every day. And people aren't just saying *nice house*... everyone who looks says *it's beautiful*.



View from the backyard



Written by:

Lynne Christensen is the CSSB's Director of Operations. She has worked for the CSSB since 1998 and is involved in a variety of departments with a focus on marketing. Christensen holds a Master of Business Administration degree as well as the Certified Association Executive credential. She resides in British Columbia.



Photos by:*

Tony Bonura is the CSSB's District Manager, Northeast. He has over 40 years sales and marketing experience in the forest products industry and shares his immense knowledge with a wide range of marketplace participants. Bonura is the current Chairman of the Joint Forest Products/Coatings Committee, headquartered at the Forest Product Laboratory in Madison, WI. He resides in New York State.

*Photos also provided by homeowners and Lynne Christensen

Do you have a Certi-label™ project that qualifies for a case study article?

Email Lynne Christensen, Director of Operations, with more details.

While we can't promise to profile every project brought to our attention... we do try our absolute best!