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Ingrid and Jerry Wiess
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Re: Components "behind" sheetrock

Dear Ingrid,

In response to your query about the actual "bones" of your home I would like to give you a short summation of events and an overview of the decision processes that occurred. I will start with the structure itself. My first visit to your home revealed a charming Victorian with substantial visual damage from settling and seismic activity. It was clear that engineering was job one. When it came time to start retrofitting the building the first thing the engineer told me was that he would require communication and site visits at every turn because he felt there would be many decisions based on unique conditions. He was correct.

The first job was the foundation and a new "spread" footing plan was in place. The entire building was held up off the ground while excavation commenced. A site visit to the excavated area resulted in a new plan, drilled piers. The soil condition was not acceptable at the depths of the spread footings. This required remote drilling rigs and hand digging and conveyor belts to remove the spoils as heavy equipment could not access the site. The result was a substantial and truly acceptable foundation plan.

Once the foundation was complete the next project was to "tie" the entire structure to the foundation. We started opening walls to determine the extent of the work required. By the time we got to the top floor it was clear that the entire structure would need to be re-engineered top to bottom. The result was sheer walls throughout the center of the building, hold downs tied through exterior sheer walls and re-framing of all floors, walls and ceilings, with the exception of the kitchen that had been beautifully and solidly rebuilt with system upgrades in '89/'90.

In addition to this the entire roof structure required re-building and the masonry fireplace system needed to be removed top to bottom and replaced with an acceptable substitute. One of the most interesting problems to be tackled was the porches. Clear evidence here showed the effects of earthquakes on a structure of that era. The decks and their corresponding roof coverings were separated from the building and the damage had been hidden visually by the flexibility of the shingle exterior. This required gaining access to the interiors of the deck coverings and drawing back and securing the decks to the new

structurally sound building. Evidence of this work can be seen in the living room in particular where there is now a soffit to hide the structural retrofitting where none was planned at the onset. The structure now is as sound as any I've seen in my line of work. The engineer had more communication with me during this project than during any other job in my history. Every "retro fit" was unique in some way often resulting in a sketch on paper to first see if it could be done.

The resulting demolition of almost the entire interior to accomplish the structural changes required that the building be brought up to code from a mechanical position. New plumbing, heating and electrical were now required, as was a new fire suppression system. The homeowners also took this opportunity to install alarms, sound systems, and insulation, including sound walls.

It was at this time that the true nature of the homeowners intent became clear. "There will be no work on this structure unless we are all convinced of the most appropriate approach with state-of-the-art/top-of-the-line fixtures, fittings, finishes and cabinetry constructed and/or installed to the highest standards in the industry". As the homeowners got to know the construction crew now working in the home they came to realize that the capabilities of the carpenters were of "cabinetry" standards. Many of the details in the finish work originally set for others outside the home were thus able to to be done in place. This accomplished two things: First, the home owners got to see the pieces evolve, which gave them the opportunity to "adjust" details to insure that the finished product would live up to their standards along with the historic considerations. Secondly, the work held true to the way craftsmen would have built the home in the era it was originally constructed. Eric Ainsworth Construction welcomed this approach so readily that we cut our cost margins to the bone to insure we could complete the work in this manner. This kind of restoration project comes along rarely and it was to be a joint effort and fun for all.

In summary let me say that in all my years in this business, building some incredible projects, I have never had the design support from a homeowner of the magnitude that I experienced here. This was truly a labor of love and it shines through at every turn. When it came to interior finishes like hardware, paint, and woodwork there was no compromise. Every detail was painstakingly worked through with the homeowners, designers, engineers, subcontractors, the City, the preservation society and the contractor all working towards the same goal. This is the centerpiece of my resume.

Sincerely, Eric Ainsworth 8-3-07