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Details, details

By RAY ROUTHIER, Portland Press Herald Writer

John Calvin Stevens is one of Portland's most celebrated architects, having designed hundreds of the city's more handsome homes between 1884 and 1940. He was also, probably unbeknownst to him, a big advocate of good Feng Shui.

"Any good designer does that instinctively, creates a house where the energy flows well, a house that is welcoming," said Werner Brandmaier, a Feng Shui consultant and resident of a John Calvin Stevens-designed home. "He definitely did that here."



Even if you don't know a thing about Feng Shui - the 5,000-year-old Chinese philosophy explaining the relationship between people and their physical environment - it's hard to ignore the warm, welcoming vibe of Brandmaier's home.

Brandmaier and his wife, Faye, own the Howard Winslow House in Portland's Deering Center neighborhood.

CLASSIC CRAFTSMAN DETAILING

The house was built in 1910 for Winslow, then president of the Deering, Winslow Lumber Co. on Commercial Street. The house was designed by Stevens and his son, John Howard Stevens. It's a fairly modest (compared to some of Stevens' West End homes) shingle-style bungalow, with Colonial Revival elements on the outside.



Inside, the eight-room home is a wonderful example of classic Craftsman detailing. The home also follows the Craftsman philosophy: abundant natural light brought into the home by rows of windows in several rooms, and great warmth provided by stained woodwork throughout.

"By 1910, both (Stevens) and his son were actively embracing the Arts and Crafts style, and they used it in a number of other commissions," said Earle G. Shettleworth Jr., director of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. "What's so nice about (the Howard Winslow House) is that it's so totally intact, and that is rare."

The Brandmaiers say neighbors told them that a series of owners kept the home's interior intact. No one has had to do any major restoring, to their knowledge. Shettleworth, who has been in the Winslow House, is researching an inventory of Stevens-designed structures in Deering Center and other Portland suburbs.

And Deering Center was definitely a suburb of Portland when the house was built in 1910. Deering was originally its own town, separate from Portland, until the small city annexed its roomier neighbor in 1899.

An electric streetcar line, and the coming of automobiles, helped Deering grow rapidly after the turn of the century. When the Winslow House was built in 1910, new home construction in Deering was news.

The Daily Eastern Argus of Portland ran a picture and story about the house in September 1910, saying that "every week almost within the past year one or more houses have been begun." Of the Winslow House itself, the article stated that it "is one of the prettiest homes that have been built."

INTERIOR TOUR A TREAT

With a welcoming porch, hip-roof dormer and plentiful windows, the house is aesthetically pleasing. But getting to see the inside is the real treat.

After entering through a vestibule, one is greeted by a built-in wood bench and stained-glass interior window. On the other side of that window is a tiny first-floor lavatory, original to the house and rare in 1910.

The entry hall expands to the right, leading to a wide staircase with slightly rounded steps at the bottom. Halfway up the stairs is a landing, with another stained-glass window.



So after entering the house and following the hall to the right, one can go upstairs or into the kitchen and the rest of the first floor. That kind of flow, believe it or not, is good Feng Shui. "When you go into any store, any supermarket, the flow is always towards the right, it always starts to the right," Werner Brandmaier says.

The home has dramatic Craftsman elements, including 3-foot-high wooden wainscoting on every downstairs wall, stained with a caramel color and carved into a panel design.

One wall in the living room has an 8-foot-long row of three large windows, providing great natural light. The floors are honey-colored wood, as they are throughout the house, and sometimes the pieces are laid in various designs.

In one corner of the living room there's a wooden mantle surrounding a fireplace with sand-colored brick. The room itself is not huge. There's a TV in one corner, and a couch and chaise lounge angled to accentuate the fireplace.

Over the mantle the Brandmaiers have placed a furry moose puppet head. That's just a small example of how livable the Brandmaiers and their three children find the house.



A swinging door leads to the dining room, which has another bank of windows and a built-in china cabinet. Currently Werner Brandmaier uses this room for his office, so the family eats in the kitchen.

The Brandmaiers painted the kitchen walls a bright, rich yellow, which stands out against the almost reddish woodwork in that room. The eating area sticks out from the rest of the room, with another row of three large windows.

Most of the counter space is in the butler's pantry, which is where the stove is now. Though originally it was not.

Because people weren't big into counter space in 1910 - they didn't need a place for toaster ovens, coffee makers and espresso machines - a previous owner added a granite-topped island. Also downstairs is a small office off the entry hall, which Faye uses as her home office, for her work as a biofeedback technician. The room is small and was probably a den or music room when originally built.

ORIGINAL FINISH ON WOODWORK

Upstairs are four bedrooms plus a linen room big enough to be used now as the bedroom for 5-year-old Julian. One whole wall of that room is honey-stained built-in drawers and cabinets. The drawers are neat because not only do they pull out, but the faces pull down, so you can just slide stacks of folded clothes in or out.

The bedrooms are fairly modest, though the room the Brandmaiers use themselves has three huge windows, all with the original stained woodwork, bringing in tons of light.



The fact that none of the woodwork in the house has ever been painted over is fairly amazing, since stained woodwork fell out of vogue for quite a while. The original stain on some of the wood has slightly bubbled, giving the wood a shiny, beaded look. Almost like dew.

The upstairs hall leads to an unfinished attic, with plenty of storage. Though it's unfinished, the attic has the feel of the rest of the house. There's even a stained glass window in the attic stairwell. "Even in the attic you have these design details," said Werner.

HOUSE BIO

THE HOWARD WINSLOW HOUSE was built in 1910 in Deering Center, then a fast-growing suburb of the Portland peninsula.

THE HOUSE WAS DESIGNED by well-known Portland architect John Calvin Stevens, in partnership with his son, John Howard Stevens. They built it for Howard Winslow, president of the Deering, Winslow Lumber Co. on Commercial Street in Portland.

THE HOUSE'S TYPICAL Craftsman elements include stained wainscoting, built-in cabinets and linen storage and stained-glass designs on windows.

THE EIGHT-ROOM HOME'S exterior also has shingle-style and Colonial Revival elements, including the use of rounded columns on the porch."

FROM THE EXTERIOR, it's a shingle-style bungalow, but the interior woodwork is in classic Craftsman style," said Earle G. Shettleworth Jr., director of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. "It's a fairly modest, suburban house, but with very fine Arts and Crafts features."

LITTLE HAS CHANGED in the house over the years, except for the kitchen floor, where newer sheet-type flooring has been installed. But none of the home's woodwork, including wood floors and window frames, has been touched.

FAYE AND WERNER BRANDMAIER, the present owners, moved into the house with their three children about five years ago.

CRAFTSMAN-STYLE HOMES were popular from the early 1900s into the 1930s, and were born out of the Arts and Crafts movement. That movement emphasized hand-crafted workmanship, natural materials, and a harmony with nature achieved through generous windows and sunrooms.

SOME OF THE COMMON features of a Craftsman home include windows grouped together, exposed roof rafters and brackets, front porches, low roof lines and dormers. Interior features include built-in cabinets and bookcases, window seats and dining nooks. There is usually a lot of exposed woodwork - stained, not painted.

THE TERM "BUNGALOW" is often used in conjunction with the Craftsman style. A bungalow is generally a home from that same period, with Craftsman details, but no larger than one and a half stories.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, go online at the Web site of American Bungalow magazine, www.ambungalow.com