

Bear Creek Lumber will be closed for Labor Day September 1

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www.bearcreeklumber.com

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26 Years and (Who's) Counting



Pictured at far left: AYC tongue and groove with VG fir clad beams.
Pictured left: Clear WRC 1 x 6 T&G siding and trim, fir door
Above: Mahogany stairs take you from the front door up to the living room.

My house is a story in itself. It started out as a chicken coop on a forgotten orchard lot. While we waited to build “the house”, we thought why not use the chicken coop (cleaned out of course) for storage? After we fixed up the coop, we could make it into a guest house, or so the plan went. The ever improved chicken coop was absorbed by first one and then another addition, both of which eventually were remodeled, added on to, and then remodeled again. One room grew into fourteen, as more children came along. In 26 years, the little 10 x 12 chicken *house* grew into almost 4,000 sq. feet of remodels. At a certain point, unnamed in history, we decided that we were not going to actually ever build “the house” . We might as well finish what we had. The plan was to put in a front door, and a living room, two details that had never made it into the remodels of the past. We also thought a nice new kitchen would be fun. Sure, we could handle 6 more months of kitchen remodeling!

Thus began the Remodel to end All Remodels.

First came the demolition. Like an archeological dig, parts of the original chicken quarters, briefly, saw daylight again. With the walls exposed, new foundations were poured, with a completion date before winter. Or not. In the time honored tradition of remodeling, everything seemed to move at glacier like speed. There was a roof and walls by the first snows of November, but little else. Winter saw progress but it was spring before you knew it, and the completion date was still unknown. Contractors and sub-contractors came and went, coming late and leaving early, most of them leaving to go off on vacation. Our project always seemed to be the one they would get back to. After months of decision making on everything from door knobs to the kitchen sink, everything we had decided on was either backordered 90 days, or discontinued. Substitutes were ordered, compromises made. My hair was whitening more daily. Finally, 14 months later, the house was done. Well, not exactly done, but close enough. The pictures of the finished product can be seen in this newsletter and visited on our website www.bearcreeklumber.com.

Was it worth it? You bet! While I am still getting use to having a front door, and with all my appliances now digital, cooking is a learning experience everytime I try to cook.



Above: Kitchen addition looking back into “chicken house” origins. This is the third remodel of this part of the roost.

After raising four children in less than half this much house, it feels strange for two of us to have so much room. Does that mean we are done adding on? Are you kidding? There’s the barbeque patio, and the sauna, maybe a room for waxing skis and...Some habits just can’t be broken and remodeling seems to be our way of life. Is that a rooster I hear in the distance?



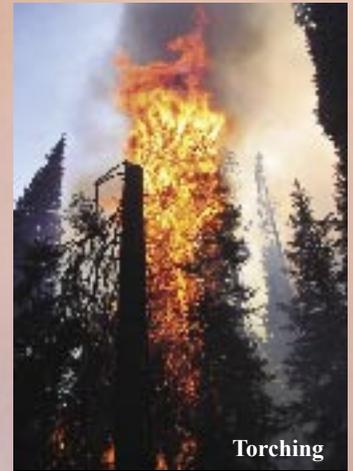
Remodeling superhero Pete Edwards, right, discusses one more change order in the never ending remodel. As lead man on the project, Pete’s list never gets shorter, but the results, thanks to an eye for detail, have been gorgeous!

Wildfire

Up Close and Expensive



The plume of the Farewell fire (on left) as seen from space in the middle of July 2003. The Glacier Park fires in Montana can be seen on the right.



Torching

From the US Forest Service Website

In 1929 and 1930, stand replacement fires burned in the area of the Farewell fire. Those fires are documented by notes from firefighters in the era, and old fire scar histories can still be seen on old stumps. A drought occurring at the same time, further complicated the great depression here in the United States. Large fires occurred through the west. Following those fires, timber stands in this area returned as lodgepole pine and spruce. The life cycle for these species, usually lasts about 80 years. Toward the end of the 80 year cycle, the stands are attacked by insects and disease. When fire weather and fuel loadings are right, the stands “cycle” themselves with fire. The beetles have been working their way through the stands since around 1980.



Repellant drop

Although this summer was not the worst fire season ever, here in Winthrop, it was a long hot one. A fire that began on June 28 lasted most of the summer until fall rains finally snuffed it off. Unfortunately, those same rains came with a huge thunderstorm that ignited more fires. The original Farewell fire did no damage to private property, with the credit given to controlled burns and thinning of



Fire races over the top of a ridge

Current Situation

In the fourth year of drought, we are setting record highs for dry conditions. All fuels, even the larger ones, are so dry that any spark or ember will start a fire. The lightning that caused the Farewell fire occurred in an area that had no safety zones or escape routes for fire fighters. All of the factors combined to prevent putting out the fire when it was small. Now the fire is well established and burning in a sea of dead trees (see on right). For more information, check www.pnw3.com/fawnpeak/

past years. The fire was easily contained where there were roads and burns had already occurred. Instead, the fire blazed into the unroaded and wilderness areas, including some that had burned only a few years ago. It was fought much of the time from the air. 1,500 ground personnel, a small army, for this town of 300, was used to fortify the attack force. Lines were built east, west, north and south to contain the fire before it spread into Canada or the bug-killed state lands to the northeast. The cost for this one fire, as of this writing, has been over \$32 million dollars. In early August, the Forest Service announced it was officially out of money and would be “borrowing” funds from other ac-



Fuels

counts to keep fire efforts going. This is a perennial problem. The government underfunds the Forest Service until it reaches catastrophic levels and then, ironically, uses emergency funds from its fire prevention account. The fire destroyed 80,000 acres of timber, most of which was in wilderness areas, where firefighters were prevented from attacking on the ground work because of the lack of roads.



The fire explodes in mid-July, consuming 40,000 acres in a day.

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), the 211,000-member trade group, has revised upward its forecast for 2003 sales of new single-family homes to 985,000 units, about 1 percent above last year's recordbreaking 973,000 units.

"For home builders, the early part of this year was complicated by unusually large swings in weather conditions and uncertainties related to the buildup to war with Iraq, yet sales of new homes held near a million-unit annual pace and residential fixed investment accounted for about one-third of total GDP growth in the first quarter," said Kent Conine, NAHB president.

"Home sales actually have strengthened in the wake of the war, and are now on track to beat our previous forecasts and support the economy over the balance of the year," he said.

Expenditures on residential remodeling and repair have reached an all-time high, according to trade groups. It appears that when all the numbers are in, Americans will have spent more than \$163 billion on home improvements, maintenance and repairs. That's up from the \$157.5 spent in 2001 and from the \$150 billion spent in 2000. **More than one out of every three U.S. homes valued at a million dollars or more could be found in California** at the start of this decade, according to NAHB analysis of 2000 Census data.

"It's no surprise that California has cornered the market on million-dollar homes," said Jerry Howard, CEO and Executive Vice President of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB). "However, the sheer concentration of million-dollar residences in just a few states may be greater than most people had realized."

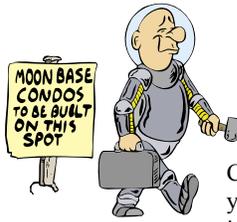
The Lost Art of Timber-Framing Grows In Popularity

The timber framing revival began on the East Coast in the mid-70's and has caught the eye of many a skilled craftsman. Timber framing is a type of post-and-beam construction that predates machined nails, and which uses wood joinery rather than metal fasteners. It wasn't abandoned as a construction method without reason. A timber-framed home will cost at least 10% to 25% more than a similar stick-framed home. However, there are customers willing to pay the premium. According to the Timber Framers Guild Business Council there are currently about 3,000 timber-framed homes built annually in the US and Canada.

To cut down the cost, a builder can easily combine timber framing with other construction methods. Somebody who does not feel they can afford an entire frame can have the entry, great room, kitchen and dining area timber framed but the bedrooms, bathrooms and other private rooms can be conventionally framed. A builder may use as little as three timber-framed trusses for the entryway of a conventionally framed home.

90% of a timber framer's work is done in the shop, where all the joinery is laid out and cut. But a 'raising,' when the most frames are actually put up, is the most exciting portion of the work. Some shops will send a full crew, some send just one or two men to assist the main contractor.

Timber-framed structures appeal most often to clients who are building a custom home - usually in rural settings. Large timbers, as large timbers become more scarce, appeal to some buyers as a statement of wealth. Often the buyers are simply people who love good craftsmanship.



Industry News

Building Trends For The 21st Century

Custom home builders reported that their high-end customers in recent years have been veering away from some of the traditional characteristics of the American home, according to builders from the National Association of Home Builders. The biggest evolutionary change is the standard dining room and living room.

Lucy Katz, of Katz Builders in Austin, TX said that her company is building a dining room for a family that is concerned about the resale value of their home without one. But they plan to use it for billiards. Instead of dining rooms, her clients, who are largely well-paid workers in the hi-tech industry, are using the space for entertaining guests and nurturing the family.

Outside Chicago, Scott Sevon, of Sevonco in Palatine, Ill., said that he is abandoning the dining room in roughly half of his homes. And in the homes where he is still building them, they are not as large as they used to be and they are located adjacent to large hallways or vestibules so that they can be expanded into more space when it's time to have a big dinner or throw a party.

Ted Visnic, of Mitchell and Best Home Builders, Rockville, Md., a Washington, D.C. suburb, said that dining rooms are still the standard in his up-scale houses, but they are becoming square instead of rectangular to accommodate less formal round tables.

Living rooms have also found themselves on the chopping block. In Visnic's homes, they have survived, but more as overflow space for parties than anything else. His buyers are more interested in computer space for the kids and offices adjacent to the kitchen.

Sevon said that he started omitting the living room in his homes a decade ago as the emphasis turned to more leisurely living. The space is now being used for convertible areas that can serve as media rooms at the flick of a few switches or as a reading room with special reading lights and bookshelves. Some of his customers are investing in cement safe rooms that provide fire-proof refuge from tornadoes and other disasters.

On the West Coast, Griffin is using his living rooms to accent the great outdoors in an area where the ocean and mountains are the natural amenities. His bedrooms typically provide access to the outside.

High-end home buyers also seem to be moving down a bit to home sizes in which they feel a little more comfortable. Katz said that her Austin homes used to be 10,000-20,000 square feet in size, but today people are "right sizing". They found that "A very big house was too big," especially for families who saw that the parents would gravitate to one end of the home and children to the other. Visnic reported that his company is building the same 5,000 - 7,000 square foot house it has been building for all along, but more dollars are going into the specifications, including cabinetry that's as good as furniture: closets with everything from ironing board to packing tables and safes and products that are generally better built and longer lasting are among the new standards for custom-built homes. *from Nation's Housing News*

Timberline

Sage Bannick Feature Writer
Ela Bannick Editor

Alaskan yellow cedar from Bear Creek Lumber was used to frame this fence in Redmond WA. Pictures submitted by Eric Lehnert. Seattle are seen below.

