

Spaces: A new Craftsman in Alamo Heights

BY CHRISSIE MURNIN, FOR THE EXPRESS-NEWS : JULY 12, 2013 : Updated: July 15, 2013 1:17pm



Photo By Danny Warner/For the Express-News

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A painting hangs over the bed in the master bedroom of Steve and Trisha Frank



Hearing someone say their house looks old comes as a compliment to Steve and **Trisha Frank**. When they built the Craftsman-style home two years ago, they intended it to look like one of the original bungalows built in the 1930s in the Cottage District of Alamo Heights.

The Craftsman was a departure for Steve, president of Burdick & Frank, a home builder known for grand Mediterranean, Old World and Spanish-style mansions. But he was following Trisha's lead on this project.

"She's followed me for about the past 30 years from neighborhood to neighborhood while I built custom homes for us to live in, and she said, 'It's my turn,'" Steve said.

Tired of the daily commute from their home in Canyon Lake, Trisha wanted to be closer to family and work. She drove the streets of Alamo Heights, Monte Vista and elsewhere on her lunch hour looking for a place to remodel or tear down. Her yearlong search ended at a small lot off Broadway, occupied by what she terms a ruin.

The 1930s building had been a church parish hall. One owner tried, but failed, to turn it into a home. It was well-known to Alamo Heights officials because of numerous violations of city codes.

City officials had no objection at all when the Franks sought permission to demolish the structure and replace it with a house that fit with the neighborhood.

Trisha, researching Craftsman style in books and online, gave input to architectural designer **Ron Geyer**, who produced the design for the four-bedroom, 3,200-square-foot house with a three-car rear garage on a 55-by-150-foot lot. A typical Craftsman has the living room at the front, the dining room in the middle and the kitchen at the rear of the house.

Construction took six months, a speed Steve attributes to the simple nature of the Craftsman style. The couple moved in two years ago.

Their intention was to be true to the 1930s style, achieved outside with tapered columns, a gable above a trio of dormer windows and a deep front porch.

Inside, hardwood floors are cherry, the same wood used on the stair rail and balusters. The rest of the wood trim, and there's lots of it, is painted. Built-in cabinets and shelves flank the fireplace. Arched openings allow easy transitions to the dining room and kitchen.

While the Franks kept furnishings, fixtures and built-ins true to the period, they did make exceptions.

"I have a contemporary streak," Trisha said, noting a leather sofa and Barcelona chair in the living room. A painting of the Alamo by the couple's artist son, **Matt Frank**, hangs in the living room near a sculpture, "Three Sisters," by friend **Phil Evett**.

A striking Italian chandelier in the dining room was something Trisha put on her must-have list after seeing it in a model home.

"It's a centerpiece and a focal point," Steve said.

The Franks expanded on the traditional Craftsman kitchen. A pot rack custom made by Mission Restaurant Supply hangs over the island. Colorful paintings bought on the street in Brazil brighten the kitchen.

Inspired by the small white European bathrooms she encountered on travels, Trisha chose white marble tops for the vanity, blending with subway tile, a claw foot tub and a frameless glass shower.

When their \$100 utility bill arrives each month, it validates the investments they made in energy efficiency.

That is something not original to the 1930s Craftsman houses in the neighborhood.

Chrissie Murnin is a San Antonio freelance writer.

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Steve and Trisha Frank built their home to look as if it were one of the original Craftsman-style homes in Alamo Heights. He goes over the defining characteristics of a Craftsman home.

Shotgun: Steve says Craftsman homes usually were on narrow lots, so the house is oriented more front to back, not side to side. Typically, the living room is at the front of the house, the dining room is in the middle and the kitchen at the rear.

Detailing: Usually the houses have a gable front with some gingerbread, which is the filigree or the wood detail on the front, Steve explains.

But not too much: Too much ornamentation out front, and the house starts looking Victorian, Steve says.

Lots of wood: True Craftsman homes have wood floors and wood moldings on the walls.

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