

# A Porch Becomes a Bath

A defunct space is transformed into an Asian-inspired master bath

BY DONNA WAX

When looking for a home for our family, my husband and I did not shy away from houses in need of updating. This historic home certainly fit the bill. Our house dates to 1910 and is known as the Pipes Family Home, historically significant for being the family home of Wade Pipes, a prominent local architect famous for his residential work in many Portland, Ore., neighborhoods.

Typical of the Craftsman-style homes designed at the turn of the century in Portland, the bedrooms were small, and the entire extended family shared the one bath in the house. The Pipes house had a similar layout and had survived previous homeowners' minor remodels. It still needed to be brought into the 21st century, however, by enhancing the functionality and comfort of existing spaces. High on our to-do list was adding a master bathroom that would simultaneously create a



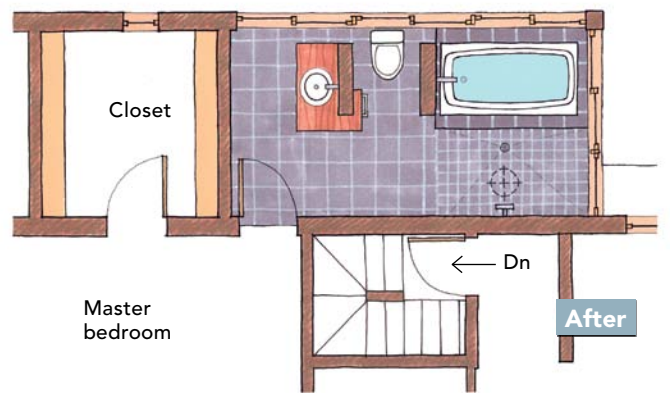
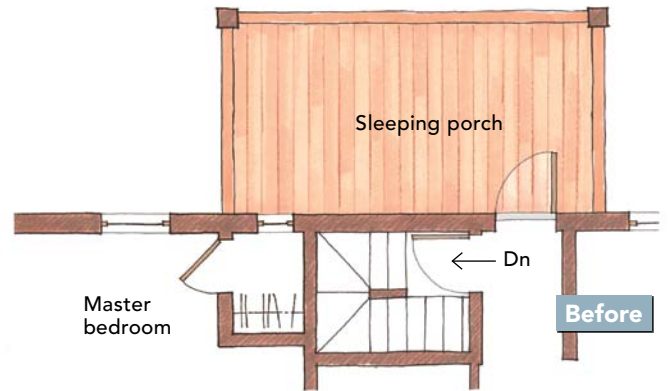


## Redesign the interior, and preserve the exterior

With respect to the surrounding historic neighborhood, the goal was to have as little impact on the exterior elevations of the home as possible while improving the usefulness of the existing floor plan.

To create a private master suite, the author blocked the hallway entrance at the top of the stairs, eliminated a closet in the existing master bedroom, and created a new doorway to the bathroom. This new doorway created the suite she was looking for and made the entrance to the bath less intrusive on the circulation areas within the bath. The bathroom windows, which fill the voids of the old sleeping porch, are of a proportion reflective of the other windows around the house. A new, larger closet inhabits the top half of an 8-ft.-sq. two-story addition.

All this work was done in an effort to maintain continuity on the exterior and to improve functionality and comfort in the interior.



0 2 4 8 ft.

**Architect** Donna Wax, DonnaWaxArchitect.com

**Tile contractor** Todd Robinett, PortlandCementCo.com

**Cabinetmaker** Eric Wolf, WolfandSon.com



**Exterior impact.** New sliding windows fill the old openings in the sleeping porch. They're designed to blend into the existing home by maintaining the original look of the exterior elevation.

## A curbless shower improves function and flow

Curbless showers are an incredibly efficient way of integrating a separate shower and tub arrangement into a small space. When the shower rain head is not in use, the shower disappears, in essence, and the area simply serves as circulation space around the bathtub. The author reduced the size of the floor tiles from 12 in. by 12 in. to 4 in. by 4 in. in the shower area to obtain the proper slope to the floor drain.



master suite and relieve the congestion in the home's sole bathroom.

### Reinventing the porch

On the second floor of the house, I combined two small bedrooms to make a master bedroom large enough for a king-size bed and a sitting area around an existing fireplace. The seldom-used sleeping porch adjacent to the master bedroom was the perfect size for a master bathroom. To capture this space, I eliminated the existing porch access from the common hallway and added a doorway in the master bedroom.

The footprint of the old sleeping porch was an elongated rectangle measuring 8 ft. wide by 15 ft. long with a finished floor 6 in. below the existing second-story floor. The difference in floor levels created an opportunity to install radiant heating in the bathroom and to build a curbless shower, which makes the bath feel larger than it is.

With little need for privacy between the various functions of the bathroom, I had 3-ft.-long walls built to separate the areas for the vanity, the toilet, and the shower. I stopped the walls 6 in. shy of the exterior windows to allow the sliding windows to run continuously along the bump-out and to preserve the lines of the original sleeping porch. Not only do these walls define functional zones, but I also used them as chases for the plumbing supply and drain lines and for the HVAC ducts. As a result of this arrangement, the bathroom space feels continuous even though each bathroom element has a clearly defined area.

### A Craftsman look with an Asian twist

The new bathroom is influenced by Japanese architecture in its use of space, light, and materials. In this case, the Japanese aesthetic helps to create a modern interpretation of Craftsman interiors and to distinguish new construction from old, which I thought was important.

The sleeping porch had large openings on two of its walls, which made privacy from the neighbors and the street a challenge. My solution was to fill the voids with obscure-glass windows much in the way shoji screens are used in Japanese architecture. The windows are oper-

able sliders placed 30 in. above the floor. When the windows are fully opened, the tub area simulates the experience of being in an open-air hot tub while maintaining privacy for the bather. I selected stock Marvin sliders with double glazing that had been acid-etched on the inner face of the interior glazing. The frames are made of pine, but I had them stained to match the Douglas-fir ceiling and trim in the rest of the bathroom.

I made an effort to save the original painted-fir ceiling of the sleeping porch, but not enough of the material was salvageable. I ended up having a new Douglas-fir beadboard ceiling installed and put the salvageable portions of the old ceiling to use in new exterior soffits.

I chose to tile the two interior walls of the bathroom—those that share a wall with the main house—with 8-in. by 16-in. honed Jerusalem limestone tiles that were cut from 16-in. by 16-in. tiles. The narrower tiles play up the horizontal lines of the space. I used complementary rubble-limestone tiles on the screen walls. On the floor, tub deck, and exterior walls, I opted for black Brazilian slate, another nod to Japanese architecture.

The master bath has increased the livability as well as the resale value of our house. While the space has clean lines, the light and warm interior finishes make for a calm, inviting space. The only downside of the renovation lies in the extra effort it now takes us to leave the bath. It has become something of a family retreat in our house. □

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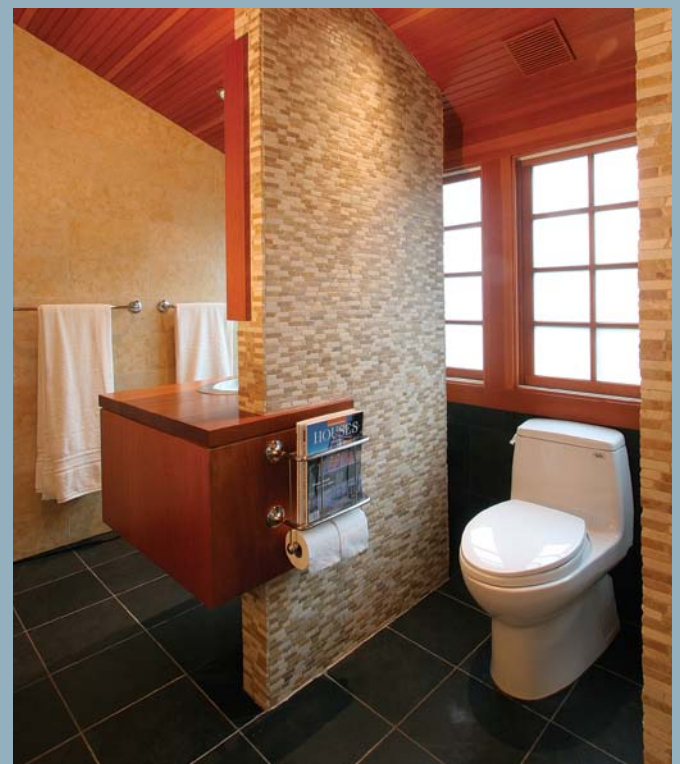


## Woodwork displays Japanese and Craftsman influence

Historically, Craftsman architecture borrowed heavily from the Japanese vernacular. Both Craftsman and Japanese architecture emphasize materials and the skill of the builder. The wood in the bathroom is a combination of pine, Douglas fir, and Honduras mahogany. The conversion varnish used on all the wood highlights its beauty and helps it to withstand wet locations.

The custom mahogany medicine cabinet and floating vanity wrap the screen wall to which they're anchored—a detail that highlights the artistry in the construction of the space.

**Built-in joinery.** The floating mahogany vanity and the mahogany medicine cabinet wrap the screen wall to create an elegant detail that is also functional. A combined magazine rack and toilet-paper holder is easily mounted to the back of the wood vanity.



### Notable elements

#### Windows

Wood Ultimate Glider  
Marvin.com

#### Wall tile

Jerusalem honed limestone  
OregonTileandMarble.com

#### Screen wall tile

Chinese rubble limestone  
PrattandLarson.com

#### Shower fixture

12-in. rain head  
Opella.com

#### Tub

Amiga  
Jacuzzi.com

#### Toilet

Carlyle  
TotoUSA.com

#### Floor tile

Brazilian black slate  
PrattandLarson.com

#### Faucet

Designo series  
KWCAmerica.com

#### Sink

Stainless-steel Rhythm  
Kohler.com