

# 19th Century meets the 21st

## the blending of renovating and remodeling



**David Rader**  
Independent Kitchen Designer

**O**n the corner of Fruitville Pike and Buch Ave in Lancaster sits an unassuming farmhouse and barn that dates back to the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. A property that is now a ten-acre farm previously was a much larger tract of land, encompassing most of the current Wetherburn Development.

The house had been uninhabited for many years and it needed significant restoration. This is when Stacey and Lois purchased the property. Their desire was to find a farm to plant an orchard and potentially experiment with hydroponic farming. The property was a perfect location and fit, but was in need of some major work.

One of the first areas of the house that needed to be addressed was the kitchen. They decided to get some professional help and called on Jemson Cabinetry in Ephrata and experienced designer David Rader to assist in the overall design, remodel, restoration and installation process. Within hours of their property settlement, the new homeowners and

David met at the house to discuss some details and ideas. The following observations were made.

When entering through a side door of the back porch, David noticed several things right away. He stood in a room that housed a white painted kitchen with Formica countertops along one wall with a range setting on a wall by itself. The kitchen was probably last updated in the 1950's or 1960's with laminate countertops from the 1980's. To the right was a doorway that led to a dining room. From the thickness of the doorway, it was obvious that this was the original back door and he was standing on what was once the back porch.

Through a doorway to the left, was an early American-style fireplace. About 6' tall, 8' wide and 4' deep, this fireplace would have been the workhorse in its day. As he walked through the area, another observation was that the back section where the fireplace was located was at one time a separate building—most likely the summer kitchen. The current kitchen area was built to connect the house to the summer



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**David Palm**  
Owner, Jemson Cabinetry, Inc.



Photos by Elizabeth Henderson Photography



kitchen. That addition (connecting the back porch with the summer kitchen) was more than likely done during the 1920's or 1930's based on the construction and materials discovered during the renovation process.

With this information in hand, David needed to discuss what ideas and concepts the homeowners had in mind. To them, it was important to keep the feel of an old style space while updating the services and appliances to the modern era. They spoke about the cabinetry and what would work well for them. Keeping all the above information in mind, they decided to use an inset style cabinet with exposed finial hinges and oak wood. *Showplace Wood Products* was used. They are a semi-custom cabinet line with abilities greater than most to modify products and give a custom look and feel. The other item discussed was the countertop material. They quickly eliminated laminate and Corian. This left them with wood, granite and soapstone. They eliminated granite based on the fact that it would not have been readily available in the mid 1800's. Wood was a real possibility, but might have been overpowered by the amount of wood in the cabinetry and flooring. So that left Soapstone. *Vermont Soapstone Company* has been around since the mid 1800's and would definitely fit the need.

Soapstone usually doesn't get consideration for a kitchen project of today because it takes some maintenance. However, it is minor and not long-term maintenance. In order to understand the soapstone product, David took a small sample piece which is grey and chalky in appearance and applied a small amount of mineral oil to it. It immediately turned to a very dark and beautiful piece of stone with white veining throughout.

So with that, the design process began. Blending the old (renovation) with the new (remodeling) was the objective. Ultimately, the idea of removing the wall between the current kitchen area and the original summer kitchen area would open up the space and allow a design that would flow and give ample space for a growing family.

The preparation for the new design would prove to be the greatest undertaking. With most of the plumbing removed by previous owners and the well on the property no longer functional, the house was connected to the municipal sewer and water. Heating, ventilation and air conditioning all were added as well. The concrete floor in the current kitchen space and summer kitchen were not level and had a 4" difference from one end of the room to the other. Removing the floor enabled the ability to run elec-

tric and plumbing to allow for the new design. New radiant floor heat was installed at the same time.

Custom windows were ordered and installed to match the original style and design. The result that was achieved was a modern kitchen with the look and feel of an older farmhouse. The clients were amazed and pleased beyond what they had imagined.

So the next time you pass the intersection of Buch Ave and Fruitville Pike, take notice of the improvements that will be ongoing with the house, barns and property. You will see a piece of history reclaimed and a continuing story yet to unfold. And, if you have a new kitchen or cabinetry project in your future, stop by Jemson Cabinetry's beautiful and idea-inspiring showroom in Ephrata.

R&A



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