

Home Improvement

Exterior changes to the Belisles' home on Osceola Avenue include new landscaping, fencing and siding.



Gilding a Gilbert

Remodelers Showcase includes Summit Hill home made more appealing both inside and out

BY DAVE PAGE

Robin and Brian Belisle were living in a duplex near Lake Phalen with their two children in 1984. Wanting more space, they began shopping for single-family homes. "We looked everywhere," Brian said. "Hudson, Stillwater, all over St. Paul. We must have walked through 100 houses."

When a real estate agent drove them to 839 Osceola Ave. in the heart of the Summit Hill neighborhood, the Belisles did not even want to get out of the car when they saw the 1890s Victorian wrapped in aluminum siding.

"The Realtor finally convinced us to go inside," Brian said. "We went in, fell in love with the layout and made an offer that night."

With the recent completion of a more historically accurate exterior and new landscaping, the home is now as appealing on the outside as it is inside. Those who are interested in having a look will get their chance during the 25th annual Fall Parade of Homes Remodelers Showcase on September 28-30. The Belisles' residence is one of 89 homes that will be open for viewing from 1:00 to 7:00 p.m. that Friday and from noon to 6:00 p.m. that Saturday and Sunday.

While researching what the house might

have looked like originally, the Belisles discovered that architect Cass Gilbert, who designed the state Capitol, had signed the original building permit. "I don't think it's well-known that Cass Gilbert designed this house," Brian said. "Besides, it didn't look very good, so no one was going to make a point of it."

Though hoping at some time to return the house to its former glory, the Belisles did little with the property until 1997, when they converted the third floor to a master bedroom suite. A year and a half ago, the couple decided to replace the aluminum siding and their 1970s kitchen. They hired architect David Heide to give them some ideas about updating the house while remaining sensitive to the period. Heide drew up plans for a new back porch, basement stairway accessible to the outside, mudroom, powder room and breakfast nook. He also designed an updated kitchen, including Victorian-era accents drawn from other parts of the house.

Heide had already been working with Nathan Shanklin, owner of Next Level Designers & Builders, on a project next door to the Belisles and introduced the couple to him. "We really liked working with Nathan," Brian said. "He was always receptive to our ideas."

Six months ago, Shanklin and his workers

tore off the aluminum siding and found all the old detail work underneath. "It was just as cheap to replace it as restore it," Shanklin said, "so we took photos and ripped off the original siding, shakes, soffits and molding."

The siding was replaced with low-maintenance cement board, but cedar shakes were used to replace the originals in the gables. Visitors will note the sawtooth cut on the bottom row of shakes as well as the unique dentil molding under the eaves. "We made a pattern from the old molding," Shanklin said, "then replicated it."

Stucco was removed from the stone foundation and new lattice panels were installed under the front porch, which has a new bead board ceiling to match the soffits.

Earlier, when the Belisles were removing some wallpaper in the room over the kitchen, they noted the date 1927 written in the plaster. Since the back of the house had a gambrel roof, they figured that was the year an addition was constructed.

"We weren't sure if there was a fire or what," Brian said. Even though Shanklin and his crew stripped the kitchen down to the studs, it was still difficult to figure out what the original footprint may have looked like.

Following Heide's plans, workers put in

custom-made maple cabinets enameled in off-white. Raised diamond patterns in the cabinets echo details from the exterior of the house. A cutout diamond pattern under the farmer's sink also gives it a Victorian feel.

New Marvin windows, granite countertops, a Wolf range and Sub-Zero refrigerator were all installed. The kitchen floor is a combination of plane and rift sawn white oak. The kitchen light fixtures are all antiques that were replated and rewired.

The spacious breakfast nook with built-in table affords plenty of space for meals. The mudroom gives family and friends a place to sit, remove their shoes, and store their coats. The large, elegant new powder room off the kitchen provides a convenient place to freshen up. And the new back porch leads to a landscaped back yard, which boasts a new privacy fence and patio.

The Belisles are happy to put their renovated home on the tour for others to enjoy. "We love the house," Brian said. "We love the neighborhood. We've never thought about moving."

Other local homes that will be open for viewing during this year's showcase include:



Nathan Shanklin of Next Level Designers & Builders sits in the updated kitchen of the residence his firm remodeled for Roblin and Brian Belisle at 839 Osceola Ave. The firm's work will be featured during the annual Fall Parade of Homes Remodelers Showcase on September 28-30. PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER

13◀ REMODELERS

St. Paul

683 Portland Ave.—A three-story addition to this Summit-University home has an art studio, main-floor laundry/mud room, and a cozy wine cellar with tasting room. McDonald Remodeling made the improvements in collaboration with architect David Herreid.

284 Selby Ave.—Shapes and styles from the Cathedral of St. Paul, which can be seen from the dining room, provided the inspiration for this Arts and Crafts town-home remodel by the Inspiration Design Center. The new kitchen boasts an open floor plan, tall cabinets that make use of the 10-foot ceilings, increased storage and cork flooring. A new beverage center, glass tile backsplash, under-cabinet lighting and granite countertops add elegant finishing touches.

95 Mackubin St.—Perhaps the most comprehensive green historic home restoration ever completed in the Twin Cities, the remodeling of this 1883 Ramsey Hill home gives visitors a chance to see an award-winning Minnesota GreenStar Type IV Gold Certified project created by Building Arts Sustainable Architecture & Construction. Geothermal heating/cooling, cellulose insulation, recycled floors and tile, energy-saving appliances and lighting, cement siding and much more give this 19th century home 21st century livability.

Minneapolis

4812 39th Avenue S.—Ever thought about tearing the whole house down and starting over? The owners of this house along Minnehaha Creek did just that with the help of Quartersawn Design Build.



The refinished hardwood floors shown in the dining room above and outdoor improvements were part of a recent remodeling project at 839 Osceola Avenue by Next Level Designers and Builders. PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER



is free, except for a Dream Home in Golden Valley where visitors will be asked for a \$5.00 donation to benefit the Builders Association of the Twin Cities Foundation, which helps house families in need. Remodeling company representatives will be on hand at each home to answer questions.

Free copies of the showcase guide are available at Holiday stations. For details, call 651-697-1954 or visit www.paradeofhomes.org.