



THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE
OF ARCHITECT
Custom Residential Architects Network

CRAN CHRONICLE



Letter from the CRAN Chair

By James A. Walbridge, AIA

Hello,

This is our second edition of the Chronicle for 2015 and we are very excited about our CRAN Communications team and their current vision regarding the Chronicle. They have envisioned and implemented a fantastic editorial calendar and have taken the planning for content to the next level. We hope you enjoy this current edition and we look forward to your comments and contributions for future editions.

As May is looming upon us so is the 2015 AIA National Convention which will be held in Atlanta, Georgia from May 13th through the 16th. This annual event is the "E-Ticket Ride" (some of you "seasoned" folks may remember this colloquialism from long ago) for the Institute consisting of Educational Sessions, Networking, Social and AIA Business events on both a large and small scale. It brings together about 18-25 thousand architects, vendors, AIA Leadership and Staff for a few very intense days of activities. I have been fortunate to have attended quite a number of conventions, I stopped counting after ten. The national convention is held in a different city each year and the location also changes geographically. However, only a few cities have the resources to host this event and due to that, most of the same locations come back on rotation about each ten years or thereabouts.

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Project Profile

Two Families, One House

By Dawn Zuber, AIA / [Studio Z Architecture, LLC](#)



In 2002, I was contacted by a couple in Ann Arbor, Michigan, who was expecting their first child. Their home was a fairly large Cape Cod, but none of the existing bedrooms was really suitable for use as a nursery. The couple decided to finish the existing attic over the garage, adding a small dormer to the front of the house to match the existing dormers, and adding a shed dormer to the back to make the space much more usable.

*Front of house in 2006,
after the carport was constructed.*

[Learn More](#)

Architect: Dawn Zuber, AIA

Features

Recycling, Reusing, Repurposing

Recycling and reusing doesn't just limit itself to materials or things, it can also apply to ideas. This issue of the CRAN Chronicle centered around the recycling of everything including past articles featured in the Chronicle. All issues of the Chronicle can be found at <http://network.aia.org/cran/home/cranpub/>, however in this issue we wanted to remind readers of one particular article. "Man-Made and Nature" by Marcy Giannunzio, AIA, was originally published in our spring 2013 issue.

[Read more](#)

Thresholds to the Hearth: Living with the Natural Environment

By Edward J. Cazayoux, FAIA / EnvironMental Design | Breaux Bridge, LA

Henry David Thoreau wrote in Walden, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."



Read more

A Tailor's House



By Stuart Narofsky, AIA, LEED AP | [Narofsky Architecture](#)

be·spoke bi'spōk / "Made to order."

This phrase is central to the success of a prominent Brooklyn tailor whose company is world renowned for the finest handmade custom suits. When he and his wife approached us to design their home on a beautifully landscaped site on the North Shore of Long Island, "made to order" became the driving force in a collaboration that resulted in a very personally defined dwelling.

Read more

Building Blocks Series: "Have You Talked with the Builder Today?"

By John Altobello | [John Altobello Architecture](#)

(part 2 of 2)

JA: Describe the workings of a typical job site meeting in which the principal participants were present.

SP: The day before the meeting, our Project Manager will have emailed a proposed agenda to all the attendees, asking for agenda additions. Once at the site meeting, our PM will run through the agenda.



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In the News

Available for Purchase! *Houses for All Regions: CRAN Residential Collection*



House for All Regions: CRAN Residential Collection is the first in a series on international residential architecture published in partnership with the American Institute of Architects' Custom Residential Architects Network (CRAN).

Projects are divided into four climate zones - arid and semi-arid, temperate, arctic, and sub-tropical and tropical - each illustrating how architects adapt their designs to accommodate the challenges posed by the local topography and variations in climate.

Purchase

Apply to Join the Home Design Trends Survey (HDTs) Panel

Participation in the [HDTs](#) benefits the entire custom residential architecture community. High level media coverage of the HDTs helps educate homeowners about trends they may want to explore and allows residential architects to position themselves as the most knowledgeable professionals in the home construction and remodeling industry. You can see recent media coverage of the HDTs in Philadelphia Inquirer [here](#). The HDTs panel is open only to principals, partners, and other firm leaders of AIA member-owned firms with a residential specialization. Apply to join the HDTs panel by completing a brief background information form on your firm [here](#).

Join the CRANversation

Housing Stock – Retain & Reuse

By David Rausch, AIA | [David Rausch Studio](#)

According to statistics prepared by the Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research (1), over a 32 year period from the mid 1970's, the number of existing single family homes in the United States increased by 67 percent while the US population only grew by 40 percent. Simply put, this data illustrates more individual households with fewer actual occupants occupying larger homes.

Read more

Nooks and CRANNies: Local Chapter News

► **Editorial Note:** Do you have exciting CRAN activities planned for your chapter? The CRAN Chronicle is interested in your local CRAN events, news and stories. Consider contributing by emailing cran@aia.org. You can also email your most recent chapter contact information to cran@aia.org to be sure your information is up-to-date.

Charleston

The Charleston chapter of CRAN played an instrumental part in a recent Habitat for Humanity house. They were recognized for their efforts in a local journal, [The Summerville Journal Scene](#), the article can be accessed.

Central Valley

By Josh Divelbiss, AIA

In California, it seems that everyone is talking about the next start-up. It is only fitting, then, that the AIA Central Valley (AIACV) explore its own version of a start-up through the creation of a new local CRAN.

[Read more](#)

CRAN in the News

► *The following article features interviews and/or quotes from AIA CRAN members in national media.*

Recently, Capitol Area CRAN member, Julia Caswell Daitch of Caswell Daitch Architects, was featured in The Washington Post. Her article "[How To Live Large In A Tiny House](#)," discusses many design features she incorporated into her own small home.

Upcoming Events

Participate in a Lively Discussion at the CRAN Forum



AIA Convention 2015
May 14–16, Atlanta

EV210: What Can CRAN Do for You: Advocate, Educate and Support for the Residential Practitioner

Thursday, May 14, 2015 \ 4:00 PM - 5:30 PM \ Georgia World Congress Center Room B208 \ Fee: \$10

Join the AIA Custom Residential Architects' Network (CRAN) and our sponsor for a lively, interactive, and collaborative forum over cocktails. During this moderated exchange, we'll share insights and anecdotes regarding the challenges and triumphs faced by today's residential architects. CRAN provides support, advocacy, and education to everyone involved in custom residential design.

Register Now

EV214: Reception for SPP, CRAN and Housing Knowledge Communities- SOLD OUT

Thursday, May 14, 2015 \ 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM \ Park Bar; 150 Walton Street NW \ Fee: \$0

Enjoy a relaxing evening with your peers in an intimate setting at a local venue. Join architects, leaders, small firm owners, and AIA members with diverse interests ranging from small projects to custom residential design to affordable housing. The informal reception will provide opportunities for networking and sharing of best practices.

Special Thanks to the Reception Sponsors:



Save the Date! 2015 CRAN Symposium

Mark your calendar for **September 19-23, 2015** and join AIA CRAN in Minneapolis, MN. Please look for more details to follow at a later date.

FREE Upcoming KC Webinars

New Tomorrows for Today's Buildings: Existing Building Commissioning

Thursday, April 23, 2015 | 1:00 - 4:00pm ET | **Earn 3.0 AIA LUs, 3.0 GBCI** | [Learn more](#) | [Register now](#)

Sponsored by AIA Technical Design for Building Performance / ASHRAE

Registration fees: **Free**

Design Principles for Smaller Dwelling Units

Monday, June 1, 2015 | 12:00 - 1:30pm ET | [Learn more](#) | [Register now](#)

Sponsored by AIA Housing Knowledge Community

Registration fees: **Free**

Achieving Collaborative 'IPD-ish' Delivery with Basic D-B, P3 or CM Contracts: Yes, There Is a Way...

Wednesday, June 10, 2015 | 1:00 - 2:00pm ET | **Earn 1.0 AIA HSW LUs** | [Learn more](#) | [Register now](#)

Sponsored by the AIA Construction Contract Administration

Registration fees: **Free**

The Architect's Role in Mitigating Climate Change

Wednesday, June 17, 2015 | 1:30 - 2:30pm ET | **Earn 1.0 AIA HSW LUs** | [Learn more](#) | [Register now](#)

Sponsored by the AIA Regional and Urban Design Committee

Registration fees: **Free**

LEAN Applications in Healthcare Design and Construction

Wednesday, June 24, 2015 | 1:00 - 2:15pm ET | **Earn 1.25 AIA HSW LUs** | [Learn more](#) | [Register now](#)

Sponsored by the AIA Practice Management

Registration fees: **Free**

Within Formal Cities: Learning from Informal Communities in South America

Monday, June 29, 2015 | 1:00 - 2:30pm ET | [Learn more](#) | [Register now](#)

Sponsored by AIA Housing Knowledge Community

Registration fees: **Free**

Resources

AIAU Courses for CRAN Members



Take the latest courses in residential architecture on AIAU. New courses include the best of the fall CRAN Symposium, firm strategies for sustainability, netzero residential construction, and managing design-build projects.

You'll learn from top instructors on your schedule, from anywhere in the world. Once you complete a course, we'll automatically update your AIA transcript with your continuing education credits.

Check out these great courses:

[CRAN Symposium 2014: Paradise Planned](#) | Earn 1 LU / HSW / RIBA

[CRAN Symposium 2014: Traditions of Home](#) | Earn 1 LU / HSW / RIBA

[CRAN Symposium 2014: The New Modern House](#) | Earn 1.5 LUs / HSW / RIBA

[CRAN Symposium 2014: The New Traditional House](#) | Earn 1.5 LUs / HSW / RIBA

[Profiting From Design Build for a Residential Practice](#) | Earn 1.5 LUs / RIBA

[Avoiding or Reducing Architect-Contractor Conflicts in Small Projects](#) | Earn 1.5 LUs / RIBA

[Fundamentals of NetZero Residential Construction](#) | Earn 1 LU / HSW/ RIBA

[Small Firm Sustainable Strategies: Applying Sustainable Principles to Small Projects](#) | Earn 1.50 LUs / HSW/GBCI / RIBA

Individual courses are \$25 for AIA members and \$40 for non-members. Buy four or more courses and save 15%, no promo code needed.

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Did you know anyone can join AIA Custom Residential Architects Network for FREE? Sign-up on [AIA KnowledgeNet](#) and start a discussion in the [AIA CRAN Discussion Forum](#).



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AIA Knowledge Communities 

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CRAN Chronicle: April 2015 Letter from
CRAN Chair

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Contributor:

Isabella Rosse

Published:

1/28/13 12:00 AM

Posted Date:

4/21/15 12:02 PM

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Letter from the Chair

By James Walbridge, AIA | 2015 AIA Custom Residential Architects Network Chair

Hello,

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My first convention was in San Francisco in 1998. I was very happy and proud to be involved with a Committee in the San Francisco AIA chapter known as "BAYA" (Bay Area Young Architects), whom conceived, created, built and funded an installation for the convention called "Pixel City". As a young Architect only three years into hanging my shingle out, it was a grand experience and opened up my eyes on a professional practice level I had never imagined. I attended a myriad of educational sessions where I was introduced to highly talented individuals and industry leaders whom presented the latest cutting-edge business practices, techniques, and methods, by which you could further develop your skills as an Architect and enable your career and or practice to grow. Of course, it was also the single location where I could satisfy all my continuing education requirements for my membership in the AIA which seemed to be a very efficient thing to do at the time.

As I began to attend more conventions, a funny thing happened along the way. You see, this is an environment where you meet many other architects from all over the United States and also the world. At almost each event or educational session I attended, I met a host of other savvy individuals whom as I found out, were attending the convention for many of the same reasons I was. On the Expo floor, I also had the opportunity to meet many vendors whom represented the very products I specified in my own projects and also many of the products I was soon to include after learning about them face to face. Over the course of few conventions, I developed acquaintances which then evolved into friendships with so many incredible people from all walks of the architectural profession. At this point in my convention attendance record, many of these people have become not only good friends, yet mentors as well whom, have guided me in my own path as an

architect and also a human being. I feel fortunate that when I attend a current convention, I get to see my extended architectural family and engage in many colorful conversations which almost always seem to end finishing up, at a local restaurant or watering hole, where the banter becomes less refined and the discussions regarding the reality of practicing architecture take on a whole new dimension. As I soon came to realize, the AIA National Convention experience really became more about fellowship, community, friendship and sharing experiences together rather than just acquiring your continuing education requirements for membership.

One of CRAN's mission statement objectives has been to *educate*. This is a broad-based objective which has many facets. Over the course of the last seven or so conventions, CRAN has sponsored and brought to the AIA National Convention a host of pre-convention workshops and general educational sessions which have been primarily focused on the residential practitioner. We are very proud of this effort and it remains a yearly priority for us. Of course for CRAN, our yearly swan-song is our own Symposium, which for 2015, will be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota from September 19th -23rd. However, this year in Atlanta, we will be sponsoring three educational sessions, one of them by noted Architect and author Sarah Susanka, FAIA. Sarah's session, TH413 – “Not So Big Community: A Vision for Our Collective Future”, will be held on Thursday May 14th from 5:00pm – 6:00pm. CRAN will also host its very own CRAN Forum, this year called, “What Can CRAN Do for You: Advocate, Educate, and Support for the Residential Practitioner”. This perennial CRAN favorite for the convention always produces a lively degree of discourse on topics all dear to our hearts as residential practitioners. Please join us on Thursday for Session EV210, Thursday the 14th from 4:00 - 5:30pm for this forum. Immediately afterwards, we will be co-hosting a Reception with the Housing and Small Project Practitioners Knowledge Communities and also the Small Firm Roundtable from 6:00 - 8:00pm at the Par Bar Atlanta a short walk from the Convention Center.

All of this AIA National Convention soliloquy ultimately leads me to asking you for your creativity, your insight and your assistance. About one month after the convention, the Institute sends out its yearly call for educational sessions to be presented at the next AIA National Convention, which will be held in Philadelphia in 2016. CRAN is already ramping up our efforts to provide more quality educational pre-convention workshops and general sessions for the residential practitioner who attends the AIA National Convention in 2016. If you know of an industry leader, be it a seasoned architect, an emerging professional, an intern architect, educator or even yourself, (that's right you industry leader!), whom you feel would be a great candidate for CRAN to sponsor towards this opportunity, please contact myself or any of the other CRAN Advisory Group members to discuss this possibility. The submittal process is not an easy task and the Institute has made great strides in honing this selection process towards providing only the "best-of-the-best" sessions each year. CRAN has within its ranks quite a number of seasoned presenters whom can assist in guiding a potential presentation candidate through the process to help your chances of being selected.

If your plans include attending the AIA National Convention in Atlanta this year, I welcome you to attend our CRAN Forum on Thursday to meet many of the CRAN Advisory Group members and a great cast of residential practitioners from all over the country. If your dance card does not have the convention currently penciled in, then we look forward to hearing from you with potential candidates and or sessions for consideration towards submittal at the AIA National Convention in 2016.

Please know that CRAN's successes are all due to your previous and current efforts to change the Institute's and the public's perception and vision of the residential practitioner. Thank you all in advance for your continuous contributions towards this collective effort.

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Project Profile: Two families, one house



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Posted By: [Dawn Zuber AIA](#) April 05, 2015 11:21 am
Posted In: [Custom Residential Architects Network](#)

Tags/Keywords:
User-defined tags : [addition](#), [Cape Cod](#), [one house](#), [Two clients](#) **Knowledge**
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Description

In 2002, I was contacted by a couple in Ann Arbor, Michigan, who was expecting their first child. Their home was a fairly large Cape Cod, but none of the existing bedrooms was really suitable for use as a nursery. The couple decided to finish the existing attic over the garage, adding a small dormer to the front of the house to match the existing dormers, and adding a shed dormer to the back to make the space much more usable.

Unfortunately, the couple's son was born with a rare brain malformation, which meant that he would never be able to walk or talk. This was obviously a devastating blow. For the first few years of their son's life, they were able to carry him around the house. As he got older, he would learn to use a motorized wheelchair, which would be extremely difficult given that the house was not at all accessible. The garage was connected to the house with a narrow mud room which was two steps above grade. From this mud room, there was another step up into the main living level. The boy's bedroom, which he shared with his younger brother, was at the back of the house, at the same level as the mud room.

The couple contacted me again in 2006 to address these issues. Although I drew up plans to make the home more accessible, most of these plans were never realized. However, my clients decided to add a carport to the front of the garage so that they could more easily transfer their son in and out of their wheelchair van without being exposed to the elements. This required a zoning variance, but the ZBA was sympathetic.

In 2010, my clients contacted me again to add a wheelchair ramp to the front of the house. I drew up some sketches, but they did not complete this project. Instead, they found a house that was already accessible and sold this home.

A year ago, in April 2014, I received a call from the home's new owner. They had lived in the house for 3 years with their two young daughters, and had decided to add a master suite over the first floor bedroom, which they used as a family room and playroom. I am currently working on construction documents for this addition. It will be built this coming summer.

When the new owners first met with me, I shared the set of "before" photos I had taken back in 2002. When they returned them to me, they said they were glad to see that the attic that was converted into a bedroom was already two steps below the rest of the second floor, because the steps had always bothered them and they wondered if I added them as a design element. It was funny to get that kind of feedback.

It has been gratifying to do so many different projects on the same house for two different families.

Attic Bedroom Project Team:

Architect: Dawn Zuber, AIA, Studio Z Architecture, LLC, Canton, MI
Date of completion: 2003
Contractor: Pilon Construction, South Lyon, MI

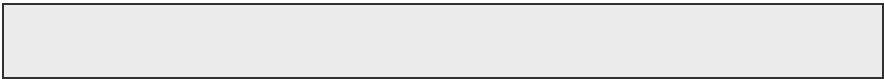
Carport Project Team:

Architect: Dawn Zuber, AIA, Studio Z Architecture, LLC, Canton, MI
Date of completion: 2007
Contractor: David Klein Construction, South Lyon, MI

Master Suite Project Team:

Architect: Dawn Zuber, AIA, Studio Z Architecture, LLC, Canton, MI
Date of completion: 2015 (anticipated)
Contractor: Beechwood Building & Design, Chelsea, MI

[Unfortunately, due to a glitch in the software used for this project profile, we were unable to arrange the photos in the appropriate order.]



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File(s)



[Front of house in 2002](#)

901K

This is what the house looked like when my original clients contacted me in 2002.

download



[Front of house in 2006](#)

3.92MB

The front of the house after the carport was constructed.

download



[Attic interior in 2002](#)

788K

This is the attic that my original clients wanted to turn into a child's bedroom.

download



[First Floor Plan in 2006](#)

167K

This house was not accessible.


download



[Second Floor Plan in 2006](#)

123K

download




[Mud room](#)

3.09MB

The mud room connects the garage to the rest of the house. It's narrow and is a step below the main level of the house.

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[Attic bedroom in 2014](#)

3.14MB

The attic bedroom is now used by one of my new client's two daughters.

download

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No Related Resource entered.



MAN-MADE AND NATURE
Project Completed Fall 2010
by Marcy Giannunzio, AIA



Working in an architectural firm that emphasizes collaboration—both within the firm and with our clients—has given me numerous opportunities to contribute to custom residential projects. Our two principals, Joseph E. Wnuk, AIA, and Steven L. Spurlock, FAIA, established WNUK SPURLOCK Architecture over 30 years ago, and have always encouraged emerging and young architects to learn the fundamentals of residential design while exploring their own innovative ideas. Our firm has experience in a number of residential project types, including projects as small as a kitchen remodel to as large as a multi-family condominium.

When presented with a mid-sized renovation project that required the updating of a dreary 80's facade, the replacement of an exterior rear deck, and the installation of protection at the front entrance, the Principal-in-Charge, Steven Spurlock, asked me as Project Architect to generate some design options and solutions. After presenting the sketches to the firm in a pin-up, Steven and I devised a concept for the project—*Man-Made and Nature*—inspired by the client's interest in amateur Porsche racing and the picturesque wooded setting. With Steven's input and feedback, I developed and executed the design concept.



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Title:
CRAN Chronicle: May 2013 - Emerging
Professional Submission - MAN-MADE AND
NATURE

Location:

Contributor:
Isabella Rosse

Published:
1/28/13 12:00 AM

Posted Date:
4/21/15 12:00 PM

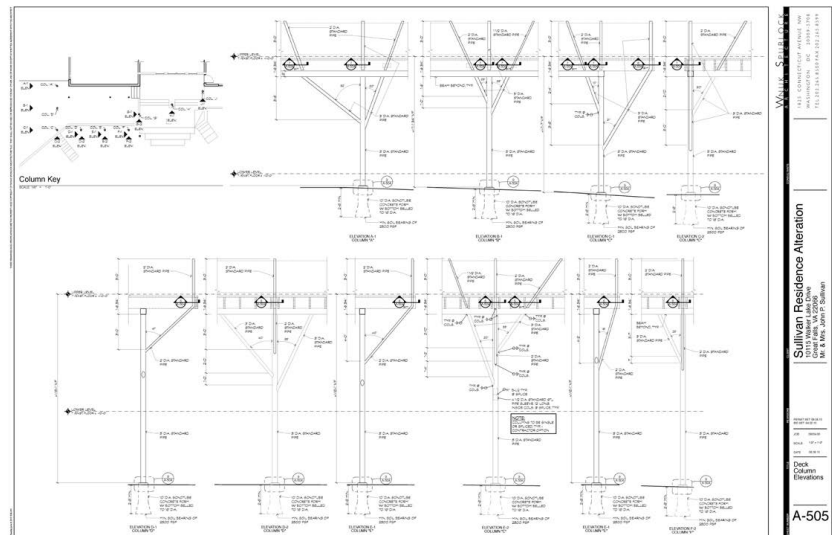
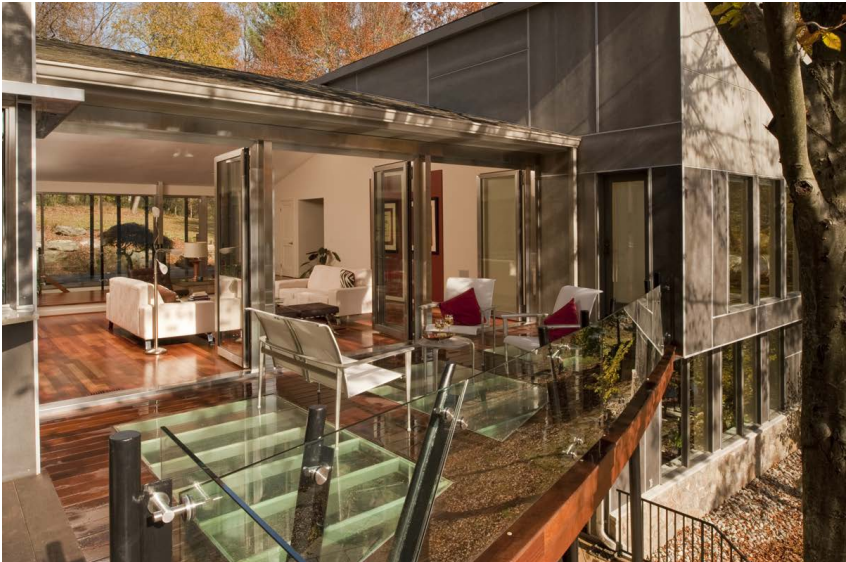
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To create a playful transition between the exterior and the interior, one initial exploration was to design the deck structure using standard lumber but to arrange the members to both mimic the trees nearby by creating "branches" and "trunks" and to structurally support the deck. Through the course of the project, this design was refined and evolved from a wood structure to galvanized steel posts. This change allowed us to meet the structural height requirements of the deck as well as to provide a more delicate and durable support structure. The unique support structure required thorough drawing documentation in order to fully communicate the design to the contractor and steel fabricator. I determined that the best method to communicate this information was to codify and diagram, in elevation and section, each custom piece and connection.



In the final design, the volume of the house—composed of three elements: a center volume with public functions that hyphenates two flanking volumes serving more private spaces—was used to reinforce the *Man-Made and Nature* concept. The two flanking volumes became the *Man-Made* portion and were completely resurfaced with new fiber-cement panels and aluminum trim configured in a modular and abstract pattern. By eliminating the solid walls and inserting floor-to-ceiling glass doors and windows, the center hyphen became a non-volume, *Nature*, and opens up the primary living space to engage the outdoors. A freestanding “tree-like” steel canopy and an interior glass and steel stair rail repeat the language of the deck structure at the front of the house. The client’s satisfaction and the recent publication of the project in the Fall 2012 edition of the Washington DC magazine, “Home & Design”, proves that, when given the opportunity, young architects have a great deal to contribute to custom residential design.



-Submitted by Marcy Giannunzio, AIA, LEED AP of WNUK SPURLOCK Architecture (WSA). [Note: I have been working with WSA since September 2005. In, 2008 I completed my IDP hours, passed my ARE's, and became licensed in February of 2009. Since becoming licensed I have continually contributed to the custom residential projects at WSA.]



Submitted Photographs by: Steven Paul Whitsitt

Additional Project credits upon request.

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CRAN Chronicle: April 2015 - Thresholds to the Hearth: Living with the Natural Environment

Location:

Contributor:

Isabella Rosse

Published:

1/28/13 12:00 AM

Posted Date:

4/21/15 12:12 PM

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Thresholds to the Hearth: Living with the Natural Environment (an abstract)

By Edward J. Cazayoux, FAIA | EnvironMental Design | Breaux Bridge, LA

Editorial Note: The following is an abstract from the white paper, "[THRESHOLDS TO THE HEARTH: Living with the Natural Environment](#)."

INTRODUCTION

Henry David Thoreau wrote in Walden, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

Man has developed over thousands of years with a very close relationship to the natural environment. My belief is that humankind's psyche and soul are closely tied to the natural environment, and that relationship must be nurtured for a fruitful and holistic existence on this planet. Architecture can aid in providing this relationship.

NATURE'S DEVELOPMENT

This planet, early in its life, was a very hostile place with caustic fumes and toxic ultraviolet rays of the sun. The first life on this planet was probably anaerobic bacteria existing without oxygen. It was in the oceans, which make up three-quarters of the earth's surface, and with its great mass provides stable temperatures and alkalinity with a richness and constancy of chemical composition, where sunlight penetrates but protects against its harmful ultraviolet rays, that life emerged. Life started as simple as algae. Algae could not exist without the sun. The sun is our life force. But it is the plant world that has allowed life on this planet. Life is dependent on photosynthesis. It was the plants that colonized the earth. It is interesting how close the words plant and planet are to each other. This symbiotic relationship between plant and bacteria created a biosphere around the earth that permitted the evolution from the sea of amphibians, reptiles, mammals and man.

TEXT

The author describes how different cultures around the world work and live with the natural environment. To some it is a spiritual relationship with land and animals. To others it is domination of land and animals. The author then hones in on his property and sustainable home and how he lives with the natural environment through the different seasons – there is a time to plant, there is a time to fish, there is a time to compost, there is a time to gather mushrooms, there is a time to chop wood, there is a time to harvest, and there is a time to sit still.

CONCLUSION

Americans spend 80% of their life in buildings. I would say that a great percent of the other time is being in a vehicle. The reality of evolution is that all living things have adapted to their natural environment or perished. Today mankind is realizing that life can be much richer when you stop to smell the roses. As architects we can accommodate this

philosophy by designing architecture with the natural environment. The emphasis here is on the preposition WITH. Not only are environmentally responsive buildings more sustainable, but they also provide a stage that allows the occupant to dance to the rhythms of changing seasons. A dance that brings mankind a little closer to the wonders of the natural world. A dance that makes life rich, “and not, when (you) come to die, discover that (you) had not lived.”

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A Tailor's House

By *Stuart Narofsky, AIA, LEED AP* | [Narofsky Architecture](#)

be-spoke bi sp k/ "Made to order."

This phrase is central to the success of a prominent Brooklyn tailor whose company is world renowned for the finest handmade custom suits. When he and his wife approached us to design their home on a beautifully landscaped site on the North Shore of Long Island, "made to order" became the driving force in a collaboration that resulted in a very personally defined dwelling. The site contained many various specimens and presented as a mini arboretum embedded with abstract concrete sculptures, paths, and areas to rest and contemplate. In thinking of their new home to be, the requests were specific: build a house for the future – a low impact, environmentally sustainable house that is "married" to its surrounding landscape.

Sustainability is often thought of in terms of energy performance, and the home does have geothermal heating and cooling, super insulation, proper sun orientation & control and green roofs. But also, sustainability refers to the materials used and their performance, maintenance and longevity. Early on we decided on poured concrete for structure, floors, significant walls and roofs to achieve the goal to minimize component assemblies (the client, early on stated he was bothered by the voids he sees in typical frame construction) and adhere to the request for a timeless maintenance free environment. At that point we had no idea that nature and the earth beneath our feet would intervene and play a major role in determining the materials that would complete the home.

Before there was Hurricane Sandy there was Hurricane Irene, which prior to construction felled several Black Locust trees on the site and throughout the neighborhood. Considering that Black Locust is amongst the hardest American woods, we decided it would be a waste not to take advantage of this and use the wood sensibly. The trees were sent to a mill and made into the home's siding, used to build shower benches, shower floors, a vanity and other water resistant applications.

In siting the structure's location, with our most sympathetic attention, even the least evasive decision still required the removal of four Pin Oak trees. With re-use now clearly in our minds, we had these trees milled for use as flooring, rail caps, bookcases and mantels. And then during excavation, we encountered old stumps and logs that were buried, most likely in the 1950's when the road and subdivision was established. We began to refer to this trove of material as "swamp wood", and fabricated and used the wood for a large dining table and other cabinetry.

Another request the client had was to not see "the men in white" suits, that is, painters. So with this mission assigned we developed a system of pre finished green (post mill dust) wood panels and used them to clad non concrete interior walls. These panels are mounted with exposed facets to oak frames which then become the (reveal) connector to the concrete walls, floors, ceilings, and door jambs. Other than the staining of doors and sealing of the wood trim elements, without any drywall on site no spackle or painting was required.

Other reclaimed and recyclable materials used are: PEPP (Porous expanded polypropylene) panels, used on ceilings to aid in sound control; a resin panel button wall in his private bath (left over buttons supplied by the client); Viroc board (made from recycled pine wood particles and cement) for loggia ceilings & fireplace facades; and the polycarbonate translucent panels for the court yard walls.

The process of designing and building this home was in fact a process of discovery and adaption: “made to order” renewed.



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Have You Talked With The Builder Today?

Some words of wisdom highlighting the builder's critical role. (Part 2 of 2)

Interview by John Altobello, [John Altobello Architecture](#) with Stephen Payne, [Payne/Bouchier, Inc.](#), [Fine Builders](#)

Editorial Note: This is the second part of a two-part series. If you would like to view the first part, please [click here](#).

Everyone needs to have a voice.

JA: Describe the workings of a typical job site meeting in which the principal participants were present.

SP: The day before the meeting, our Project Manager will have emailed a proposed agenda to all the attendees, asking for agenda additions. Once at the site meeting, our PM will run through the agenda. Some of this agenda will be reporting and some of it will be asking for clarification or new design direction. If design issues are being discussed, everyone gets a voice.

Intricate wood carving was key to a project of which the goal was to suggest the Petit Trianon at Versailles. Key to making this a reality was an expert wood carver who knew details of relief, applique, materials, and authenticity. At job meetings the design professionals took into account the carver's expertise, they laid low, and they listened to the needed direction from the master.

An engaged client helps the project run smoothly.

JA: What has been your experience with homeowners? What would you say constitutes a "good" homeowner. Give an example of what was right about your relationship with the homeowner.

SP: We almost always enjoy our clients. They tend to be really good at something and are typically very interesting. Despite the attendant stress, building projects should be fun for the client. We encourage our clients to attend the weekly meetings and participate in the process. Usually the more engaged they are, the better the project runs. A client who is an active player and witnesses the interplay between the rest of the team, is more inclined to share ownership in decisions that make the budget go up and the schedule go out.

We have found that long after the project is over, the client who had a close attachment to the process stays in touch with us, sometimes even becoming a friend.

All topics need to be discussed.

JA: Are there times when a homeowner's concerns have gone unsaid during a meeting? Did the unspoken word come back to haunt you later on? Once discovered, how did you deal with getting the hidden concerns out in the open?

SP: There may have been such an instance, but I don't recall it. Our Project Managers, include "Budget Review" and "Schedule Update" on every weekly site meeting agenda as a precaution against leaving uncomfortable topics un-discussed.

Having a well thought agenda prevents conflict. During a walk-through with the owner, architect and me, the builder, it's critical that the owner speak up about any design change. If the change is not captured in the moment, then it might become problematic and costly to add on at a later more advanced stage of construction. The meeting minutes will reflect the desired changes. On a particular project the owner expressed a wish for a change to the landscape design. Because this was caught early on, we were able to pull in the concrete form specialist and quantify how much the site work would cost. The owner was OK with the proposed change, and the work went ahead without obstructing the overall schedule of work.

Bend over backwards for the client.

JA: How have you handled an overzealous or overanxious client? I'm talking about the homeowner who oversteps their role from vigilant, active observer and participant, to meddling watchdog, i.e. someone who believes they know better than the architect and builder.

SP: We have had an instance or two of this. This scenario doesn't make for a very happy project. Our only defense against this client is to bend over backwards to satisfy even outlandish requests.

A client complained that she, and she alone, had to run the project because we did not pay enough attention to detail. She fired the architect and did battle with the interior designer. She was moderately pleased with my work and wanted to hire me back for phase II. I tried to stretch myself to meet her needs, but given that she had behaved unreasonably, I graciously backed down from future work.

All direction comes to the project manager from the architect.

JA: As we well know, the process of home renovation or building a new house can be overwhelming to the homeowner. What role do you play in helping the owner navigate the playing field? Do you do this in conjunction with the architect or other design professionals, or do you take the lead?

SP: Sometimes I take the lead, other times I play second violin to either an interiors person or an architect who has the client's ear. A central part of my role is to be strict with the team about the flow of information. I insist that all direction come to my Project Manager from the architect.

Consider having an owner's agent.

JA: Is there an instance where the all-important communication on a project broke down? What was the remedy to put things back on track?

SP: We have had a couple or three dramatic instances of this sort of breakdown. We have had the most success when the client has engaged an Owner's Agent to take over the project. These are the rare occasions when it worked for the architect not to be the lead dog pulling the sled.

In one instance, the owner fired the architect when communication had broken down. Unfortunately, the owner did not understand the value he was getting from the design professionals. The owner hired his own agent who at first was hostile to me, the builder. But as things progressed, he couldn't find fault with my work. Because of the agent, the project got back on track.

On another project, the owner kept on adding to her wish list. I tried to make the budget more realistic and still give her what she wanted. With the help of the owner's agent we were able to keep the project from continuing to grow out of hand.

Make sure the owner and everyone else involved stay on board and engaged.

JA: Talk about what has been your most successful project, in which the channels of communication among the principal players always remained open.

SP: We have had a few projects where it was a struggle to keep open communication, but

these are the exception, not the rule. Most of our projects are successful. We often end up as life-long friends with the clients and the other members of the project team.

Working on an Asher Benjamin house on Beacon Street in Boston was a great example of everyone staying engaged. There were tremendous obstacles to be overcome with groundwater recharge, so close communication with geo and civil engineers was critical. The architect and interiors person were both on board throughout, and communicated directly with the engineers and with me at weekly meetings. An overarching guideline for the project that everyone kept in mind was this: "Given a particular problem or circumstance, what would Asher Benjamin have done?" This was the mantra that united us all.

JA: Thanks, Steve, seems like a good note to end on. I always try to keep in mind a key phrase as a project's guiding light. Even better when everyone involved embraces the same idea.



Architecture by Olson Lewis + Architects. Interior Design by Greg Lombardi. Photography by Mike Fein



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Architecture by Olson Lewis + Architects. Interior Design by Greg Lombardi. Photography by Mike Fein



Architecture by Siemasko + Verbridge. Photography by Bruce Buck



Architecture by Siemasko + Verbridge. Photography by Bruce Buck



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Join the CRANversation

Housing Stock – Retain & Reuse

By *David Rausch, AIA* | [David Rausch Studio](#)

According to statistics prepared by the Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research (1), over a 32 year period from the mid 1970’s, the number of existing single family homes in the United States increased by 67 percent while the US population only grew by 40 percent. Simply put, this data illustrates more individual households with fewer actual occupants occupying larger homes.

During this same period, statistics indicate that energy consumption of homes built in the 1970’s is 20 percent greater than those built in the 2000’s. (2) Further, technology and societal changes in lifestyle and family composition further challenge the usefulness of many older homes, which are often located in desirable, mature urban areas where infrastructure, community and neighborhood resources already exist.

While there is considerable focus amongst architects to construct new homes in a sustainable way, where do you stand on a belief that effective sustainable practices involve improving existing homes, rather than constructing new ones where possible? To that end, do you believe architects have a bias toward new construction, and with that, a qualified commitment to sustainability? Should residential architects become greater champions and leaders in this area? Have you used USGBC’s “Regreen” or NAHB’s Green Building Standard in a renovation project and, if so, did it serve useful to create a sustainable renovation?

(1) “32 Years of Housing Data”, Frederick J. Eggers et al, Revised October, 2007

(2) “How much energy homes use, and why” Special Studies, November 5, 2014, Paul Emrath, Ph.D., and Joshua Miller, Ph.D., Economics and Housing Policy, National Association of Home Builders

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Central Valley CRAN

By Josh Divelbiss, AIA

In California, it seems that everyone is talking about the next start-up. It is only fitting, then, that the AIA Central Valley (AIACV) explore its own version of a start-up through the creation of a new local CRAN.

AIACV's CRAN, located in Sacramento, launched last July with three clear goals: 1) advocate for the residential architecture profession; 2) promote local residential architects; and 3) demystify the process of hiring an architect from the public's perception. Chaired by Maria Ogrzydziak, member participation has nearly tripled in size since its launch.

Marketing and branding efforts have taken center stage in an attempt to develop a robust local presence for CRAN, encourage members to interact with future clients, and promote the work of local members. Committee members are actively developing strategies for facilitating a dialog with the public, which to date includes meeting with Houzz representatives and an Architecture Showcase.

The collaboration between the AIA and Houzz created an opportunity for residential architects to display their work in a forum that is easily accessible to the public online. The local CRAN has taken steps to involve members with Houzz by initiating an event where Houzz representatives will visit the chapter to discuss the business opportunities and benefits of creating a Houzz profile.

CRAN members also hosted an Architecture Showcase to create an informal setting for the public to meet with and review several residential architects' work. Residential architects who participated in the showcase were on hand to discuss their work, process and the advantages of hiring an architect.

The CRAN committee continues to explore new opportunities to educate the public and advocate for the profession. Work planned for the near future includes development of a CRAN resources page on the AIACV's website, as well as a CRAN award in the Chapter's Design Awards program.

About the Author: Josh Divelbiss is an associate at The HR Group Architects in Sacramento, California. He is focused on design within established communities through the development of sustainable urban architecture.

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