



FALL 2008

# Charleston STYLE & DESIGN

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at home



Photograph by Dickson Dunlap

# Classic Makeovers

This Lowcountry design team turns houses into dream homes

BY PATRA TAYLOR

Unpredictable real estate markets and fluctuating home construction numbers aren't keeping Bob Fleming awake at night. In fact, the owner of Classic Remodeling and Construction believes there has never been a better time for homeowners to ask, "How can I turn my present home into my dream home?"

The Charleston area's premier design/build remodeling contractor, Classic has focused on residential remodeling and restoration since its inception in 1989. "Remodeling work is

very specific," states Fleming, who studied both architecture and building science in college. "In a city with so many historic homes and timeless neighborhoods, I think my company fills an important niche."

Fleming attributes much of his company's continuing success to the design/build model upon which he based his business. "Design/build means that rather than finding an architect and a builder, we have both under one roof," says Fleming. "I believe that combining both skills in one company does

away with designer-builder misunderstandings, and delivers a less-stressful, more attractive and cost-effective result to our clients."

Every project begins with a Classic Remodeling team that includes a lead designer who oversees the planning and a project manager who oversees the

*Built in the 50s, this never-updated lakeside home enchanted new owners with classic lines and unrealized potential.*





Photograph by Dickson Dunlap



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1. Fleming says that the first obligation in expanding a fine old home is to make the fusion of old with new imperceptible. 2. This granite and mahogany bath is bathed in natural light. 3. A former screened porch becomes an art gallery and sitting room. 4. Mahogany, copper, granite and mosaic tile make this free-flowing kitchen a symphony of textures.



Photograph by Dickson Dunlap



Photograph by Tripp Smith



construction, sitting down for a listening session with the clients. "It's important for the team assigned to fully understand not only what the client wants," explains Fleming, "but also how to make their house work for their family, their entertaining style, their interaction with friends and business associates, and how the house relates to the property it sits on."

According to Fleming, most clients come to the table with a long wish list, one that is often bigger than their budgets. Classic Remodeling's team approach allows the design and the budget to evolve almost simultaneously. "It's all about reaching that place where the design, the budget and our customers' satisfaction meet," adds Fleming. "I think that's one of the beauties of the design/build process."

One of the other beauties of Classic Remodeling is Bob Fleming himself. While the design/build model often encourages creative, outside-the-box thinking, it's evident that Fleming's values, principles and straight-arrow approach form the foundation of every project his company undertakes. His philosophies are reflected in the way he approaches his work.

"Charleston is filled with historic homes," states Fleming. "I think it's important to respect our city's old structures...to try to preserve as much of their historic character as possible. We try to encourage our clients to do this by offering them alternatives to gutting their houses and starting over."

"Today people want sleeker, cleaner, more open living spaces," he continues. "When working on an historic house, we try to bring in new amenities in such a way as to complement and highlight the original structure. The result is a traditional home with contemporary detailing...it's what I call, 'eclectic contemporary.'"

When it comes to building home additions, Fleming is a stickler about preserving the character of the surrounding neighborhood. "I want an addition to a brick house in a classic 1940s neighborhood to look like it's always been there," insists Fleming. "I think it is part of a designer's responsibility to make sure their design isn't something that's too far off the beaten path. It needs to work in the context of the original house and its surroundings."

The Johns Island-based company also sees its fair share of remodeling projects located in a broad range of environmental settings. "Often times we're working with view lines and the association between outside and inside," explains Fleming. "There's outside space, inside space, and what I call transitional space. We focus on creating a design that transitions between the house and the outside in a way that looks and feels right."

At Classic Remodeling, "going green" isn't a new concept. In fact, Fleming believes that remodeling is highly compatible with the green movement. "To me, 'green' is about indoor air quality,

energy efficiency, and respect for the environment," he says. "I think a lot of remodeling is inherently green simply because we're not demolishing the whole house and sending it to the landfill."

Fleming notes that all the building materials his company pulls out of a home during a remodeling project go to a waste sorting facility where recyclables such as copper, aluminum and other metals are removed. "Our local landfills are nearly full," notes Fleming. "So I want to add as little to them as possible."

"Many of the things we've done for years are considered 'green' today," adds Fleming. "We've always incorporated high-quality air-tight windows, good insulation packages, energy-efficient HVAC systems, Energy Star® appliances—because it makes good business sense. We often recommend tankless water heaters and low-consumption toilets; and we're also achieving lower energy use in some of our remodels by opting for semi-conditioned attics and encapsulated crawl spaces."

With interest in environmental issues piquing across the Lowcountry, Fleming and his team are constantly reviewing the latest green technologies coming down the pike. "Some of them make a lot of sense and others don't," he says. "We only use products that have a proven track record."

Classic Remodeling consistently earns the industry's top awards; and voluntarily subscribes to GuildQuality, an exclusive service which independently performs customer surveying and establishes a public performance rating for participating remodelers. The highest level of distinction is given the title Guildmaster, representing a sustained customer approval ranking of greater than 90%. Over the past twelve months, Classic Remodeling has earned a 100% recommendation rate. Classic Remodeling is the only company specializing exclusively in remodeling that has earned the distinction of Guildmaster for the three consecutive years that Guild has given this performance rating.

"When the majority of our work still comes from word-of-mouth, I figure we're doing a few things right," smiles Fleming. "It is fun working with clients to help them turn their present home into their dream home...that's really what it is all about." ➡

#### CLASSIC REMODELING AND CONSTRUCTION, INC.

1832 River Road  
Johns Island, SC 29455  
(843) 763-3297  
[www.classicremodeling.com](http://www.classicremodeling.com)

*Based in Mount Pleasant, S.C., Patra Taylor is a freelance writer, and a humor columnist for the Charleston Mercury.*