

# The Chapel Street Home: A Clear Design Vision Leads to a Successful Project.

*By Debbie Costa, CKD*

Nevada County, and most of the communities throughout the Gold Country, has a wealth of early and pre-20<sup>th</sup> Century Victorian homes. These homes provide a historic and aesthetic back-drop to what gives places like Nevada City and Grass Valley its unique charm.

But, what happens when one of these historic homes begins feeling its age? That's the story of the home at the top Chapel Street in Grass Valley.

A two-story, 3-bedroom, 1-bath Victorian built in 1881, the new owner wanted to maintain as much of the original design as possible. So, a team was put together with a general contractor along with interior designer, Debbie Costa. With 17-years of experience as an interior designer and Project Manager, Costa brought a background not only in design to the project, but an award-winning resume that includes complete kitchen remodels, in addition to having worked closely with a local home re-modeling firm.

“A part of the problem with this home is that it did not have a perimeter founda-

tion. While this was a structural challenge, it also presented a number of design problems.” Costa says. To bring the home to code, the contractor had to pour a foundation and add center post and piers. To make matters more interesting, the house had its original knob and tube electrical system, so it had to be completely re-wired.

As the contractor went further, fire damage was found in the roof. Eventually, the entire interior had to be gutted, with the only original part of the structure remaining being the exterior walls.

The owner, never thinking the re-model would ever have been this extensive, began to

simply see dollars – a lot of them – flying out of their bank account. But, according to Costa, this is where having an interior designer as a part of the team is a true asset to the contractor and the owner.

“In all honesty, I make the blow to the client land a little softer,” she says. “A true designer isn't just fluff and puff. We understand the construction and remodel process, and that sometimes means there's more involved than what immediately meets the eye.



“Just as what occurred with the Chapel Street project, I can act as a liaison and advocate for the contractor and the client. Instead of delivering bad news, my attitude is sometimes, ‘This could be a blessing because now you can not only have the home restored to its original style and look, but also make some additions that will make the home more comfortable.’” For example, additions that had been made over the years were removed, while an upstairs bathroom was added (where there had not been one previously). A back and front porch, along with major landscaping and a detached garage were also added that weren’t a part of the original 19<sup>th</sup> Century design.

Using modern-day materials, the contractor and Costa were able to keep the original 1880’s look. Because the entire interior was re-built, an entire new floor-plan was developed that included a living room, kitchen, dining room and laundry that fit into the owner’s vision of style and livability. Having an interior designer as a part of the team helped meet all of the client’s desires. “By maintaining frequent and consistent communication, I was able to represent the desires of the client to the contractor. For example, to maintain the 1880’s feel, we used original door style

and trim with crystal knobs. While it may seem like a small detail, it maintained the integrity of the era. Best of all, it made the owner extremely pleased with the final project.

“Believe me, that made the contractor happy, as well.” Costa says. “Many clients and contractors may not think about having an interior designer as a part of the team. But, from my 17 years of experience, the team concept works extremely well, especially when the designer has a clear understanding of construction and remodel principles and techniques.

“With my background in remodels, I was able to integrate the client’s design into the overall process. It creates a clear vision and, in the end, fewer change orders and more congruency.”

And the result? The Chapel Street home is yet another Grass Valley gem, thanks to an interior designer who always protected the vision of her client, while acting as an excellent communicator on behalf of the contractor.

*Debbie Costa Interiors is located in Grass Valley. For more information contact her at 530-305-1664, or at [www.debbiecosta.com](http://www.debbiecosta.com).*



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