

# Greetings & News

Warmest summer greetings!

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So is historical preservation, and I bring these two aspects of my life together by studying old recipes and the trends in food throughout the years. One of my favorite cookbooks is The American Century Cookbook by Jean Anderson, a gift I received from my parents a few Christmases ago. Its thorough examination of the good, the bad, and the processed of 20th Century foods is a positively delectable read.

I come by this passion rather honestly my father's grandfather owned several bakeries in Oregon and I have many cookbooks from my grandparents and great-grandparents. What I wish I could come by honestly is my dream Arts & Crafts style kitchen of Quarter Sawn White Oak, with plenty of counter space for playing and creating, and a built-in bookcase shrine for all my cookbooks. But I am on the waiting list?

In homage to all things kitchen, and the role they play in our homes and lives, we've dedicated this month's newsletter to the historical evolution of our kitchens, an example of our modern solution for a city row house kitchen from the Colonial Era, and our preservation themed musings. As always, if you have any questions, comments, or need additional information-- just let us know.

All the best,

Danielle Groshong-Keperling



## HISTORIC RESTORATIONS

341 East Liberty Street

Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17602

Phone: 717.291.4688

Toll Free: 877.461.6928





Continuing Thousands of Years of Timelessness

# Sometimes Preservation Takes Us on New, Surprising Paths

## Kitchens

### Bucks County Soapstone



Soapstone is a traditional material that's been in use for thousands of years and is often found in early Colonial American homes. The soft, metamorphic stone material, favored for its ability to withstand and retain heat, was used for fireplaces, hearths, cooking slabs, and water basins.

It still is today, thanks to Bucks County Soapstone.

With a beginning in the cabinetmaking trade, Bucks County Soapstone now focuses solely on crafting custom soapstone sinks for kitchens, bathrooms, and laundry rooms, and a few other specialty products.

Soapstone can be found all over the world, including here in the United States, but Bucks County Soapstone sources their material from Brazil where the families of some current soapstone harvesters have been quarrying soapstone for hundreds of years.

One distinct advantage Bucks County Soapstone can claim is the use of a highly accurate digital templating device called the Faro Arm. This instrument uses a handheld imager to trace the backsplash a sink will be fit against to get a truly snug fit, even against stone, tile, and other uneven surfaces. This digital template, along with other measurements, are then inputted into a computer system that guides the saws that cut the soapstone slabs to shape. Once cut, the soapstone pieces are then finished by hand by Bucks County Soapstone's artisan craftsmen. To see their Faro Arm and the cutting and hand-finishing process in action, visit [bcsoapstone.com/videos](http://bcsoapstone.com/videos).

Along with the truly custom pieces they can make, one of Bucks County Soapstone's particular specialties is their ability to replace modern sinks with apron-front traditional soapstone sinks common in historic homes without any major cabinet work. While the sink may have been a common occurrence, this particular specialty is not.

For more information about Bucks County Soapstone, the products and services they offer, and general information about soapstone sourcing and product care, visit their website at [bcsoapstone.com](http://bcsoapstone.com).

And sometimes it's our customer that leads the way...

The traditional approach to creating a custom kitchen is one we are all familiar with – create new cabinet frames from scratch in a millwork shop, face them with the customer's choice in doors and styling, and remove and throw away the existing cabinets (doors, drawers, frames, and all) to install the new cabinetry.

But traditional is not the approach Richard and Dasa Redmond wanted to take.

They proposed a custom refacing and remodeling project that would replace only the doors on their cabinetry and rework some of the existing cabinet frames without replacing it – a first for us.

So how did it happen? Our project began the way they always do – with measurements and an evaluation of whether or not what the customer wanted was possible. As it turns out it was, and we headed into the design phase. Using a picture the Redmonds provided, Chuck designed a formal, raised-panel inset cabinet design to replace the informal overlay design in their existing cabinetry.

After designing the cabinetry, we held "Show & Tell" for the Redmonds where mockups provided them the opportunity to explore color options joinery methods, hardware choices, and other decisions. After final decisions, the cabinet faces, doors, and drawers were constructed in our custom millwork shop. When they were ready, we removed the existing doors, drawers, and faces and installed the Redmonds' new kitchen.

But this project wasn't just about looks...

Small kitchens in historic homes are often awkwardly laid out and less than ideally situated, a definite problem in a culture who's kitchens are meant to house much more in the way of cooking implements than your typical Colonial household. Working extensively with Richard and Dasa, we were able to thoroughly evaluate exactly how each area, cabinet, and drawer in the kitchen was used in order to redesign the cabinetry for an optimal layout. The result was the addition of a surprising amount of space.

Custom kitchen in less than two months...

...complimentary design for their Colonial home optimized for modern function

Constructed by artisan craftsmen from a locally owned and operated business...

...minimal eco-impact eliminated unnecessary waste and protected existing energy investment.

Minimal invasion and disruption, with a fully functioning kitchen throughout the project...

Richard and Dasa may have started a trend worth setting.



are often the hub and heart of a home...

Kitchens are more than just a place to cook our food. They are usually one of the main family living areas where we gather, commune, play, break bread with family and friends, and sometimes even work with laptop and files plopped on the table so we are sure to stay abreast of all the family's happenings.

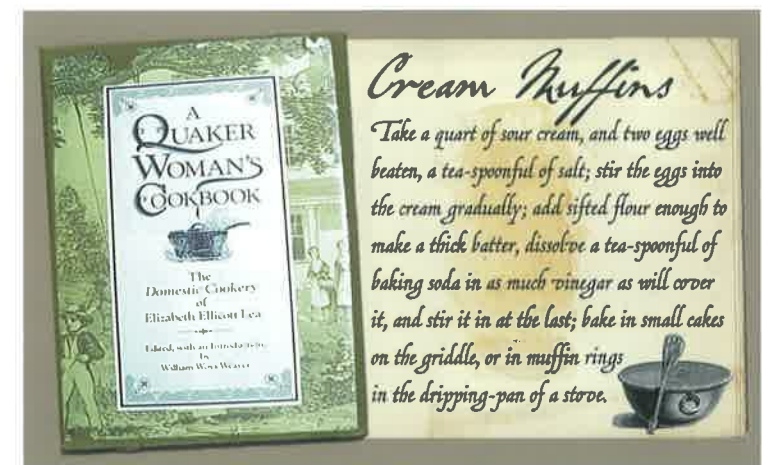
But they weren't always this way. In fact, in the late 1700's and throughout the 1800's – kitchens were more or less viewed as necessary evils to be tolerated and tucked away as unseen, unfelt, unheard, and unknown as possible.

In the very earliest Colonial America houses, this was accomplished by building kitchens in the basement of homes to keep the hardworking class that worked in the kitchen, as well as all of a kitchen's rubbish, odors, soot, and smoke as far from the dining and living areas as possible.

Somewhere in the beginning of the 1700's, kitchens began to be removed from the home and housed in small buildings located a short distance from the main house – something we usually refer to as a "summer kitchen". We've heard these kitchens were built to save the main house from the extra heat of a kitchen during the hot summer months.

This was, no doubt, a consideration, and probably the primary one for most households. But as it turns out, it's not the only one, and probably not the primary one for more well-off households. This new kitchen architecture in wealthier households seems to have had more to do with race, gender, and social space than it did with the practical considerations of meal preparations for those in the middle to upper classes, as it reflected the growing custom of separating guests and family from slaves and cooks.

While energy efficiency was a dominant concern for one demographic in early America, and a strong sense of social order and place for another demographic, both demographics had one major reason for keeping kitchen spaces tucked away by the late 1700's. In the 19th Century, the "Miasmatic Theory" was the dominant disease theory and promoted the belief that offensive odors of decaying materials transmitted diseases, and by the mid-1800's experts were campaigning to eliminate the causes of foul smells from housing in order to improve public health.





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