

Paul Denys – Builds Design! by Daria Cohen

Paul Denys construit à dessein par Daria Cohen



A beautiful porch can create curb appeal and become the focal point of any house. Paul Denys has built, designed and renovated houses in Ottawa since 1984, but the projects he feels most fortunate to have worked on involve the restoration of historic porches. “With heritage porches, it’s like finding buried treasure. Once you show some care, it

takes on brand new life, then it feels like it’s always been there.”

His passion for heritage conservation blossomed while working for the City of Ottawa restoring an original board and batten house in the New Edinburgh area. Paul now operates a full turnkey business, Denys Builds Designs.

Many heritage home owners in Ottawa have made use of the City’s Heritage Grant Program for Building Restoration to restore and reinstate their original porches. And Paul Denys has worked with many of them. His favourite—and most challenging—restoration was the Rochon House, a designated property now home to an art gallery in the Lowertown neighbourhood. All that was left of the once beautiful porch created by wood carver Alphonse Rochon at the turn of the century was an old photograph. The project was painstakingly completed in four phases over 10 years, and re-created using only the old photo. The intricately carved two-storey porch is now an area showpiece.

Though heritage restoration is just a small portion of his business, Paul is carving out a space for himself in this niche market. He continues to emphasize to heritage home owners the important connection between conservation and the environment. “Throwing everything out is not a green choice. Green is making a better-built house, not just buying stuff that is green.” He also stresses that the future has to involve making materials last longer.

Paul’s motto is sincere: “I really care about what I do, and anything worth doing is worth doing well.”



The Rochon House as seen in 1908 (left) without its decorative wooden features (centre), and after its restoration (right).

The Rochon House as seen in 1908 (left); without its decorative wooden features (centre), and after its restoration (right).

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