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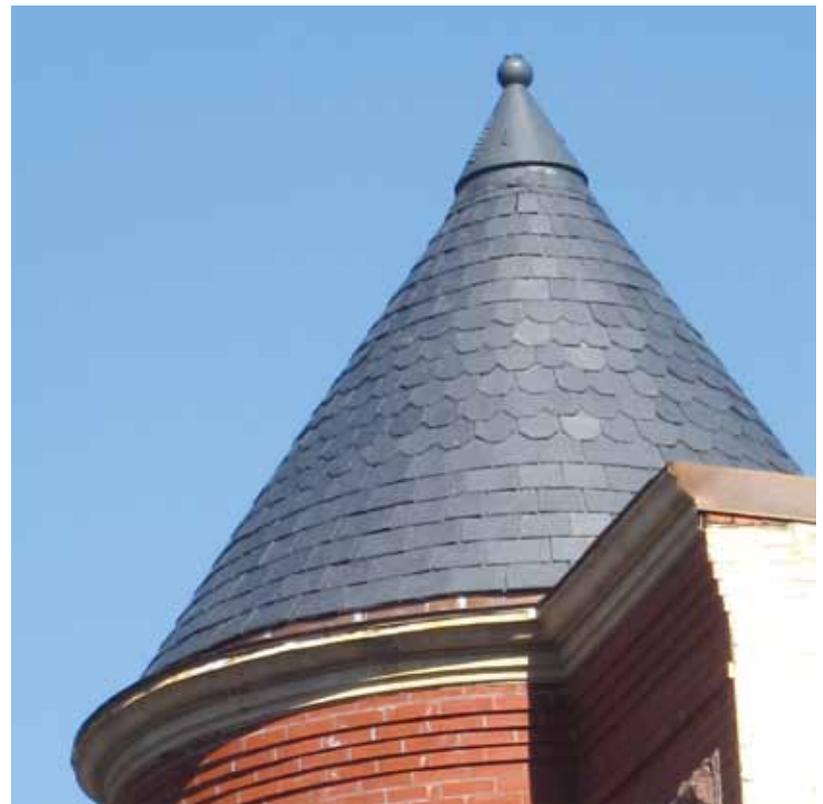
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Replacing a Turret Roof in Capitol Hill

BY TOM DANIEL



Walk, bike or drive on 8th St. S.E., near the Eastern Market and you will see a long block of homes with old slate turret roofs, with built-in gutters below and finials, the decorative metal ornaments, at the peak. A turret is a small tower that projects vertically from a building and were originally castle appendages. These beautiful roofs are most often found on Queen Anne style three story homes throughout the Capitol Hill Historic District. While unique and distinctive they also present a unique challenge to home-owners needing to repair or replace these roofs.

Many of these slate turret roofs are the original roof and more than 100 years old. There are four aspects of these roofs that must be considered in a holistic way order to properly assess the situation. A homeowner and their roofing advisor must consider the condition of the slate, the wood substrate below the slate, the built-in gutter below the roof (also known as a water table) and the

metal decorative finial at the peak. And, finally, they must determine the best plan to do the required work.

Homeowners Joe and Vicki Smith on 8th St. S.E. had an old turret roof, built-in gutter and finial. They were all originals. Over the years numerous repairs had been made to the roof and the gutter. They had been painted with aluminum roofing paint, coated with liquid asphalt, individual slate pieces had been repaired and replaced and the slate had been repaired with other various roofing materials and all repairs had run their course. The time was now to consider a long term solution.

The Smiths' chose to go with traditional products for the roof renovation product. They had recently replaced their main roof with copper because of their long term horizon and chose traditional natural slate and copper for the gutter. These products are both very high quality and long lasting and aesthetically appealing.

Once the type of materials was chosen, the plan of action had to be put in place. This is very difficult work because a roofing contractor cannot just put up a ladder and go to work. Turret roofs project high above the roof line and even long, 60 foot ladders are ineffective to complete the work and OSHA has requirements for these types of projects. Scaffolding was installed to the front of the house which enabled the roofers to properly do their work. This work also requires a high level of skill and handiwork to correctly measure and cut each piece of slate and also requires sheet metal expertise to install the copper gutter and carpentry skills to install new wood.

After removing the old slate, gutter and finial the exposed wood revealed much water damage that had occurred over the years. This was the starting point on the road to replacement. Working from the bottom-up, the first step was to replace damaged lumber where needed on both the turret and the gutter. Once this was completed, the new copper gutter/water table was installed. Copper will last many years and must be joined at the seams by a soldering process in which metal items are joined together by pouring a molten filler metal into the joint. Then it is time to cut and nail individual pieces of slate, piece by piece, onto the wood base of the turret. It is important to use copper nails for their long lasting qualities. The last part of the process is to install a new finial at the peak. There are many options.

The finished product reminds one of the historical and traditional significance of these Hill homes and transports us to a place in time when the Hill was at its origins.

Tom Daniel is owner and manager of R. Thomas Daniel Roofing, a third generation family business that has been doing business in Capitol Hill for more than 90 years. The firm is the recommended roofer of Capitol Hill Village. Daniel is a Hill resident and can be reached at 202-569-1080 or tom@rthomasdanielroofing.com, or visit the website, www.rthomasdanielroofing.com. ★

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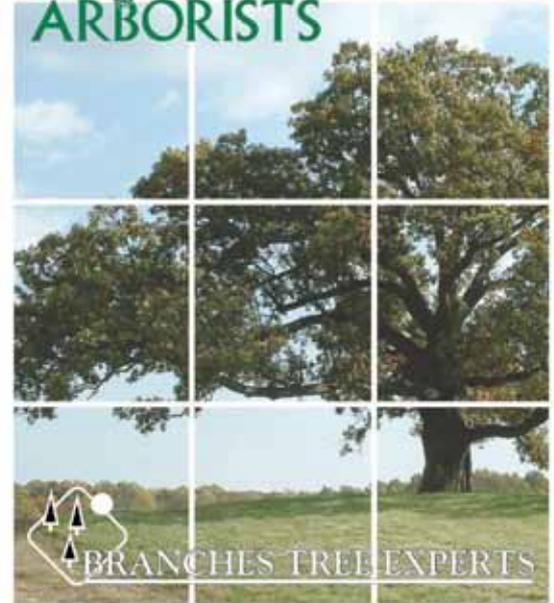
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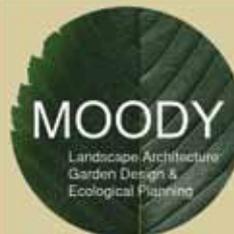
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