

REAL ESTATE SECTION



Dave Bixler guides the crane operator, placing the newly pegged wall frame to its new home.

Photo by
Bobby Powers

Timber Frame Revival

Garfield Construction uses vintage technique to build stronger, longer-lasting and beautiful structures

Dave Bixler has owned Garfield Construction since 1998. He began his career using stick-frame building methods – basically using 2-by's milled lumber in framing with 16-inch spaces between the 2-by's. He found himself trying to make the structures of wood joined to metal stronger.

Ree Slocum
Features Writer
ree@willitsweekly.com

"I was always putting notches in the plates and screwing and gluing trying to

make it stronger, stronger, stronger," Bixler said. About nine years ago a customer, who'd grown up in upstate New York and played in a 200-year-old timber-framed barn as a kid, asked him if he'd be interested in building one for him on his property. The customer gave Bixler a book and asked him if he could build something like that. Bixler said, "Yes!" and never looked back.

"I saw a way of building that's better, stronger and longer-lasting," he said. "It made me feel better about the bones of the building." He continued, "It's wood going into wood, connected with wood. It's cool because everything expands and contracts over its lifetime." That doesn't happen with post and beam nor stick framing, where metal is the other element – it doesn't expand and contract at the same rate as wood and this can create problems over time.

In conventional building, the thrust of the project is to get the structure framed and covered so you can start putting your creative details in it. In the timber frame, the structure itself is the creative detail. The beautifully crafted joints are exposed. Huge beams and braces are often embellished with a decorative cut or rounded over.

Once erected, there's no hurry to finish the building since the frame itself can be in the weather, uncovered, for a long time without structural damage. This fact gives new home owners time to have work done in phases when they can afford it or have time to be involved in the next part. While unusual, Bixler has customers who've taken up to four years to complete their building project.

For many people who enter a timber-framed building, they experience the beauty and warmth of the wood and the graceful curves of the braces – the diagonal supports from the post to the beam – and the embellishments of the structural elements. There's a feeling of timeless durability and open space.

Bixler also sees the craftsmanship. "It's right on the surface," he said. "You can't hide it. It's really quite prominent and will be forever. The ability of the person who cut those joints is right

Read the rest of **Timber** | Over on Page RE3



A detail of a new timber-framed building comprised of post and beams with graceful braces in the corners.

Photo by Gabe Madrigal

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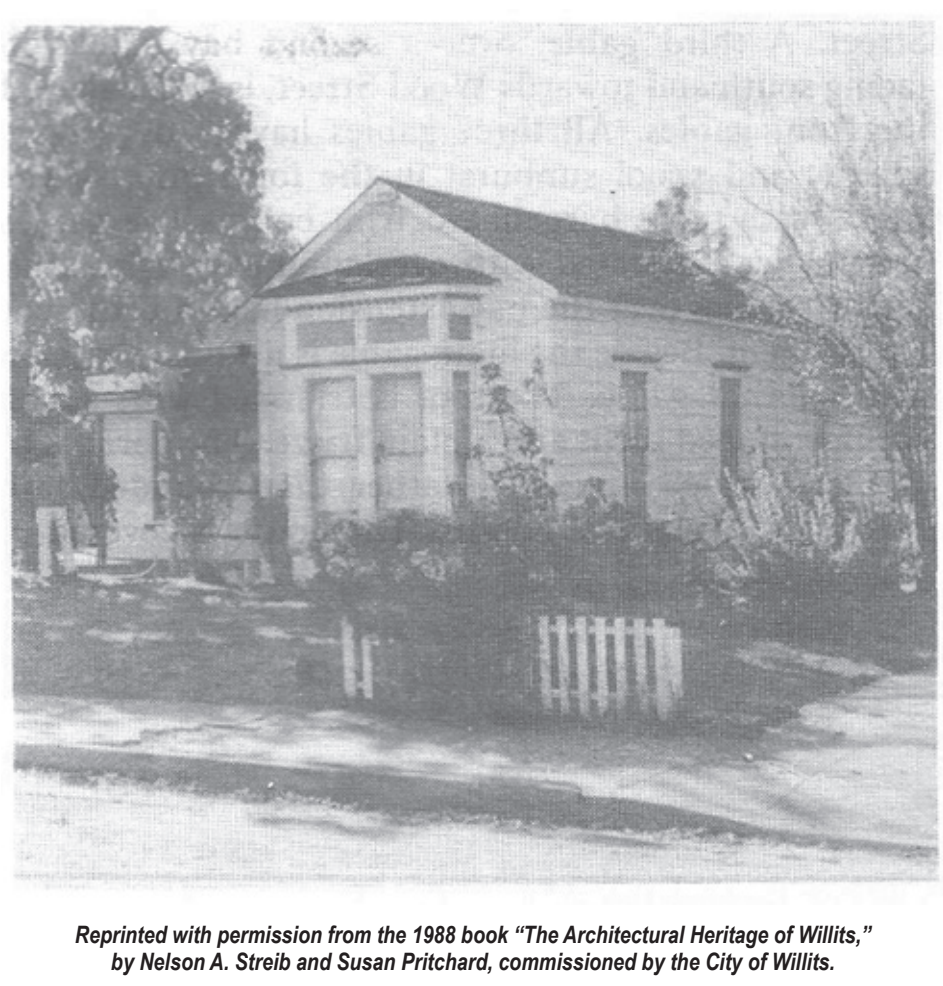
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Now & Then

266 School Street - built circa 1902

Gordan Baechtel was the first owner of the small house near the Methodist Church on School Street. The house is also important as it is a good example of the popular local vernacular version of the Queen Ann Cottage, complete with bay window and large front porch.

Built near the turn of the century, the house at 166 School Street has a low gable roof facing the street with a flat bay extension within the gable, and another low gable roof is parallel with the street, making an "L" shaped house. The house also has an attached veranda with its own roof that is supported by square columns. The house is covered in wide shiplap boards and have end boards at the corners of the house. The edge of the roof is trimmed with a box cornice, sloped soffit and plain frieze.






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Above, from top: Sitting amongst the bones of a new timber frame is Dave Bixler, owner of Garfield Construction in Willits. Redwood beams crafted in Garfield Construction's shop on Highway 20 in Willits will be joined in the shop. A photo showing creative detail possibilities like utilizing an actual tree as a support post.

At right, from top: One of the many advantages of timber-frame construction is the quiet atmosphere of the building site. Mostly hand tools are used in erecting the building. A room in a newly completed New England-style timber-framed home by Garfield Construction. Notice the gentle curves of the braces and old-world feel of the beams and windows, along with the warmth of the wood. Working in the shop to craft the components of a timber-framed building saves time and money. Carpenters are able to lay down their tools at the end of the day and pick up where they left off the next morning. A model showing a typical New England-style timber-frame buildings.

Photos by Ree Slocum, Gabe Madrigal, and Dave Bixler

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The rest of **Timber** | From Page RE1

in your face for the entire life of the timber frame ... which is really cool. There's not another structural part of building that gets that luxury."

"What people don't [understand] is the whole process is a church-like love affair," continued Bixler. "I get these units of wood come in. They're raw. And I spread out all my timbers on the crib beams and get to start lookin' at them, and I go: 'This one's grain's gorgeous, it's gonna be super strong. Let's put it in the rear. This one's got a couple of problems. It's got a really big knot here. Let's use it as a post. This one has really interesting grain. Let's put it over the kitchen because she's going to stare at it every day. This one I'm not quite sure about. Let's decide on that later.' I pick it all out and – it may sound stupid, but you get a relationship with the beams and you get to decide which ones will go where."

Bixler explained with pride that the other carpenters in the crew who work with the wood are just as intimately connected to the wood and project as he is.

Then it's time to take the joints apart, load the timbers and supports on the trailer, and get the crane and crew to the building site where the structure will probably be erected in a day. Usually the new home owner is on site for the awesome event. And now it's the wow factor for the customer who hasn't seen any of the preparations in the shop.

Imagine the guys on the beams with hand tools pounding pegs and joints in place with huge wooden mallets, making slight adjustments with chisels, and fitting the braces in place. You hear the mallets hitting pegs and timbers while the guys call back to one another and breezes rustle tree branches.

It all magically comes together because the pegged wooden pieces had been living jointly, expanding and contracting for months. From that point forward it's up to the customer as to how soon they'd like to finish the building. In the end they'll have more than a house. They'll have an heirloom home, built with exceptional care to live in and pass on to many generations in the future.

Bixler is self-taught, teaches his crews, and has read all the books in his extensive library on timber framing. He also collected the necessary tools for the New England-style timber-framed buildings he constructs. Garfield Construction is only one of maybe six timber-framing businesses in California.

Visit their Facebook page, "Garfield Construction Timber Frame Revival," or call 707-841-7429 for more info.





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COLUMN | Numbers by Nick

The right time to start working with an accountant

Hello, here we are in 2018, and the rainy season has arrived!

I hope your holidays were filled with fun and quality time with family, chosen family and friends.

As we approach the tax-prep window, you may be asking: When is the right time to start working with an accountant?

I get this question, often.



Nicholas Casagrande
Columnist

There are good reasons for hiring someone to help you be wise with your personal and / or company money. In an accountant's world, there is no such thing as one year being the same as the next – there are marriages, births, separations – there are new businesses started, a biz partner or investor added, a unit sold....

You should be consulting with an accountant if you own real estate and / or own a business. You likely do not need a full-time person but a few hours

a quarter could go a long way toward:

- Saving you time and money
- Helping you grow
- Reducing stress
- Making you more efficient and sane

You may feel you can't afford an accountant. However, your skills may be better targeted toward other parts of your business.... If you've always filed your taxes it may be tough to hand the task over. Sometimes all I do is take a quarterly look at a client's ledgers, books, Quickbooks, etc.

When every dollar counts and how you spend your money matters. An experienced accountant will help you keep tabs on your finances and guide you through tax time, making sure you do not pay a penny more than you owe.

I am an accountant certified as an Enrolled Agent (EA). Each month I am in training, learning about the changes in the federal, state and local tax code. Not only do I offer advice on strategies to minimize the taxes you'll owe, I guide on matters of tax compliance and make sure you meet all your necessary obligations in the (ever-changing) tax landscape.

Please, PLEASE give a call if taking this step is something you'd like to explore.

Nicholas Casagrande, EA, is an accountant and a financial advisor. His firm, NC Financial Group, is a wealth management firm serving individual clients as well as small-to-medium-sized businesses. Client work includes personal and corporate taxes, investment planning, insurance, and real estate. NC Financial Group's Willits office is located at 675 South Main Street; contact 855-240-6606 or nicholas@ncfinancialgroup.com (taxes) or Nicholas.Casagrande@Ceterafs.com (investments) for more information.



PG&E offers free gas appliance safety checks and heating safety tips

With all the cold nights recently across the North Coast, Pacific Gas & Electric Company is urging customers to be cautious when heating their homes.

Electric heating devices, such as space heaters, are a home fire hazard when not properly used or monitored. Fuel-burning appliances, such as gas furnaces, stoves and water heaters, can increase the risk of carbon monoxide, a toxic gas, when they are not working properly.

"We want our customers to be warm this winter, but most importantly we want them to be safe. High levels of carbon monoxide can be generated by appliances that are defective or improperly installed or maintained. That is why it's very important to have your gas appliances checked before every winter to ensure they are working properly," said Carl Schoenhofer, senior manager for PG&E's Humboldt Division, which includes Mendocino and Lake counties.

PG&E encourages their gas customers to schedule free gas appliance safety checks through the company's customer service helpline at 1-800-743-5000. If you have gas, and not propane, our gas service representatives (GSRs) will test carbon monoxide detector batteries and expiration dates, relight furnace pilots, and check gas stoves, fireplaces and water heaters at no cost to the customer.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, heating equipment is the second leading cause of home fires in the United States. Nearly half of these fires occur from December through February. The leading contributing factors to space heater fires are heating equipment too close to objects that can burn, such as furniture, clothing, mattresses or bedding, and leaving heating equipment unattended.

PG&E urges customers to focus on safely heating their homes as temperatures dip and offers the following tips:

- Place space heaters on level, hard, nonflammable surfaces, not on rugs or carpets.
- Don't put objects on space heaters or use them to dry clothes or shoes.
- Turn off space heaters when leaving the room or going to sleep.
- Keep all flammable materials at least 3 feet away from heating sources and supervise children when a space heater or fireplace is being used.
- Never use cooking devices such as ovens or stoves for home heating purposes.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors to warn you if concentration levels are high. As of 2011, all California single-family homes are required to have carbon monoxide detectors. Make sure they are installed near sleeping areas and replace the batteries at least twice a year.
- When using the fireplace to stay warm, make sure the flue is open so that the byproducts of combustion can vent safely through the chimney.
- Never use products inside the home that generate dangerous levels of carbon monoxide, such as generators, barbecues, propane heaters and charcoal.

If customers suspect there is a problem with a natural gas appliance inside their home, they should call PG&E at 1-800-743-5000. A gas service representative will be dispatched to do a thorough inspection. If you detect carbon monoxide in your home, you should get out immediately and call 911.

— submitted by PG&E, North Bay, Sonoma & Humboldt Divisions

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Michelle Goforth
CalBRE #01461392
707-841-7409
isellwillits@gmail.com

Bill Barksdale
CalBRE #01366662
707-489-2232
bark@pacific.net

Tara Moratti
CalBRE #0197301
707-367-0389
tara.moratti@coldwellbanker.com

Roxanne Lemos-Neese
CalBRE #01712217
707-484-6489
roxanne@getmendohomes.com

Patsy Broeske
CalBRE #01482063
707-841-8053
patsy.broeske@coldwellbanker.com

Randa Craighead
CalBRE #0197301
707-841-7778
mrcraighead@comcast.net

Nicole Flamer
CalBRE #01932844
707-354-2301
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How to hire a Realtor

I've talked about the many benefits of *why* you should consider hiring a Realtor if you plan to buy or sell a home. What I neglected to mention was *how* to hire a Realtor. Like anything, if you've never done it before, it's hard to be an expert.

Briefly, here's a reminder on why to hire a Realtor.



Richard Selzer
Columnist

- Licensed real estate agents have a fiduciary responsibility to deal honestly and in the best interest of the principal (you) – this is not just an ethical responsibility, it's a legal one.
- Win-Win. It's in your Realtor's best interest to help you meet your goal, because Realtors only get paid if you get what you want: a completed transaction.
- Realtors know their stuff and can save you time and money. Just ask people in the industry, because they hire Realtors. Even lenders and people in related industries with the knowledge to do the work themselves feel it's worthwhile to hire Realtors. I'm a broker, and when I want to list or buy property, I use a Realtor other than myself.

So, how can you pick a good Realtor? First, talk to your friends and neighbors to find out who they've used and would recommend, and maybe more importantly, whether there is anyone they would not recommend. Ask your insurance agent, your accountant, your attorney and your local banker, too. These professionals understand the economics of real estate and are likely to have a valuable opinion on the subject.

The Realtor you ultimately choose needs to be someone with whom you can have a personal and a business relationship. It's critically important that your search not be a popularity contest, because we're talking about dealing with hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Before you pick up the phone to talk to any of the potential Realtors on your list, make sure they have integrity, a good reputation, and are well-connected to all kinds of information. By the end of the interview, you should be really comfortable (hopefully even impressed) with answers to these questions.

- **Does their communication style work for you?** Do they use all the communication tools you like (e.g., cell phone, text, email, even that old-fashioned standby, face-to-face)? Are they available on weekends or during evenings? How long do they usually take to respond to questions?
- **Do they have the expertise to meet your needs?** When measuring expertise, pay attention to years and type of experience, as well as professional designations as Realtor (instead of simply real estate agent). Some Realtors even have additional education like GRI (Graduate, Realtor Institute) or CRS (Certified Residential Specialist).
- **Do they have the capacity to take you on as a client?** Although the Realtor may have wonderful credentials, it is important to find out about their current workload. Can they give you the time and attention you need to buy or sell a property on your timeline?
- **Do they have the technical tools and support to do the job right?** In this world of constant communication and electronic marketplaces, can your Realtor excel? Does their real estate brokerage have a mobile app? Do they have access to support staff and a 24-hour answering service? Do they have a robust website, blog and social media presence? Do they have access to the Multiple Listing Service (MLS)? Are they affiliated with a franchise that provides marketing exposure through extensive online networks? Are they part of a company where managers and / or brokers are available to answer questions?

In addition to answering all these questions to your satisfaction, was the Realtor organized? If you plan to list your house for sale, did the Realtor come with a marketing plan, a market value analysis of your property, and information about themselves and their company? If you want to buy a home, did the Realtor review prospective contracts and walk you through what to expect at each point in the buying process?

If you responded positively to all these questions, you're probably in great shape. When it's all said and done, the Realtor you choose should be someone you trust and get along with, and someone who has the expertise, capacity, and company support to accomplish your objectives.

If you have questions about real estate or property management, please contact me at rselzer@selzerrealty.com or visit www.realtyworldselzer.com. If I use your suggestion in a column, I'll send you a \$5 gift card to Roland's Bakery. If you'd like to read previous articles, visit my blog at www.richardselzer.com.

Dick Selzer is a real estate broker who has been in the business for more than 40 years.



Property Feature: 76498 Main Street, Covelo

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