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Greene & Greene: Details and Joinery

Editor's Note: The following images are of details of Greene and Greene homes and furniture, taken by David Mathias. These images are supplemental to the article published in the October, 2008 issue of Popular Woodworking magazine.

The Blacker House

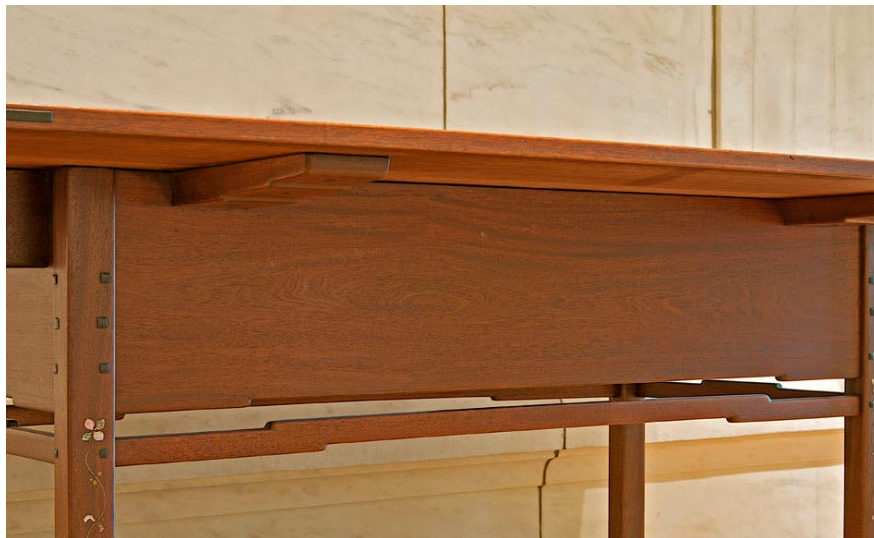
Original furniture and fixtures from the Blacker house were sold off years ago in a disgraceful act of greed. Beautifully restored by the current owners, the house is once again the crowning achievement of the Greenes' careers.





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Subtlety is the order of the day for the Blacker dining table. The lower rails are slightly curved, an unexpected touch. Inlays of silver and semi-precious stones adorn the legs and top.



Arms extending from each end of the Blacker dining table support leaves. The leaves are held in place by ebony pins that pivot into the extensions for storage. One wonders if Mr. and Mrs. Blacker ever saw that detail.



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Greene & Greene pieces are full of surprises. The drawer in the Blacker entry hall table opens from both sides and is,

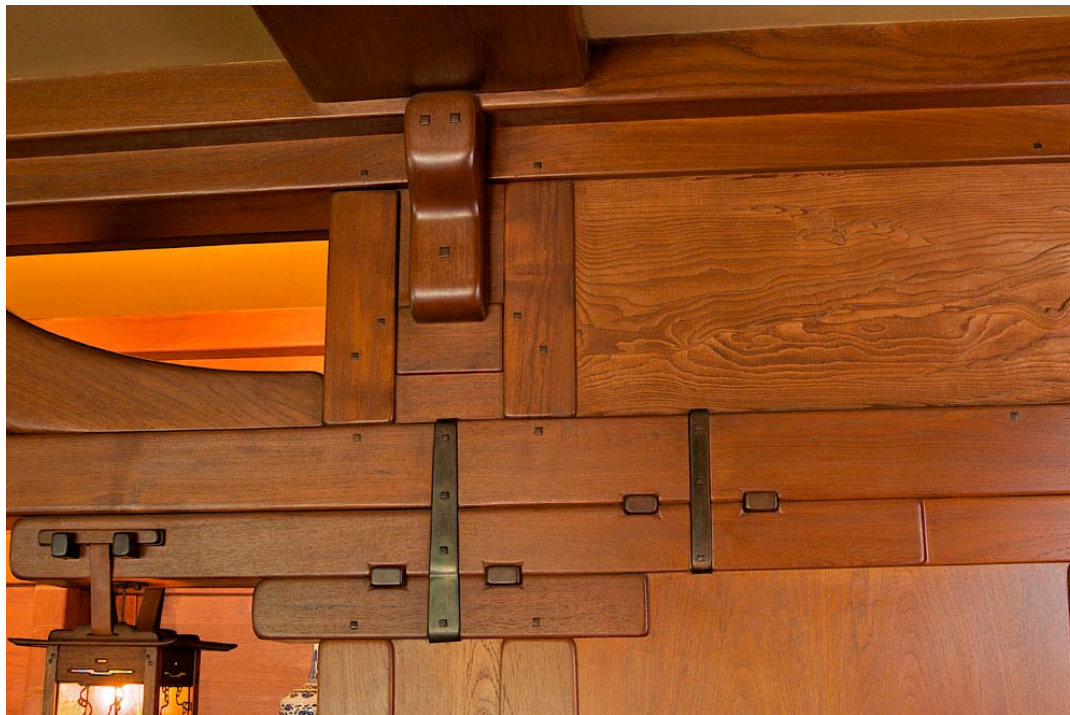
therefore, quite long. Note that the position of the divider is decorated with ebony pegs. Certainly a rarely seen detail.



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The Gamble House

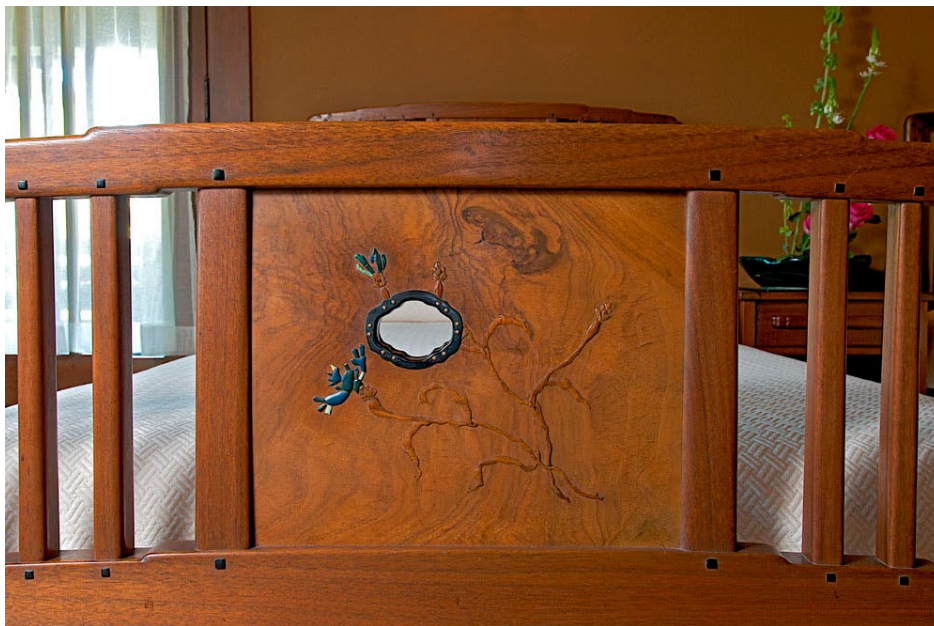
Greene & Greene architectural details consist of a myriad of various elements. They come together like the instruments of a symphony orchestra to create a cohesive, beautiful whole.





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Apropos of the times, David and Mary Gamble's bedroom was furnished with twin beds. Fortunately, times have changed but the incredible inlays on the footboards and headboards of those beds are as beautiful now as they were then.



Obsessive attention to detail is a recurring theme in this series. The reason is touches such as this tsuba-inspired ebony escutcheon in the Gamble sideboard.



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The Robinsom House

The Robinson house is home to the Greens' only moveable chandelier. Originally in the dining room (now in a recreation of that room in the Huntington) the fixture is a study in design and engineering. Note that even the counterweights are finger-jointed and pegged.





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Closer inspection of the chandelier reveals more secrets. The Dutchman-shaped inlays are mirrored in the surface of the dining table.





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Other chairs in the Greene & Greene catalog receive considerably more attention but those made for the Robinson dining room are masterful. Derived from a Chinese form, they are understated and elegant.





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The Ford, Thorsen and Culbertson Houses

Furniture for the Culbertson Sisters' house is very different from the Greene & Greene norm demonstrating their breadth. On the bottom of this drawer from a bookcase, we see Charles' mark: "Sumner Greene His True Mark"

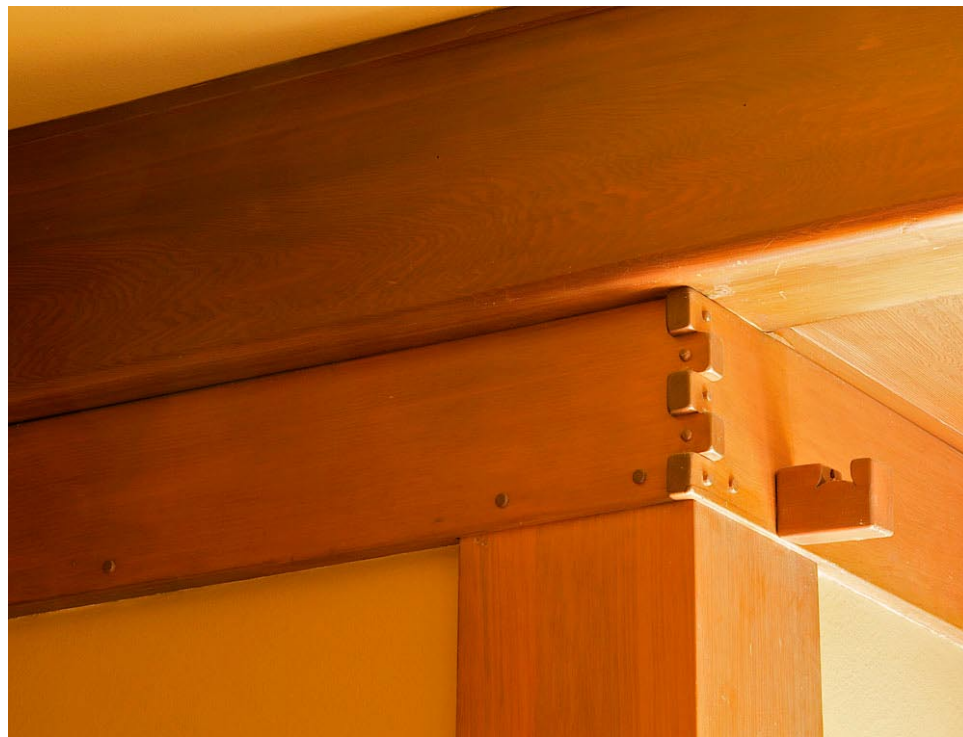
The danger of peering behind the curtain is disappointment. No worries here. The work on the Culbertson bookcase is exquisite.





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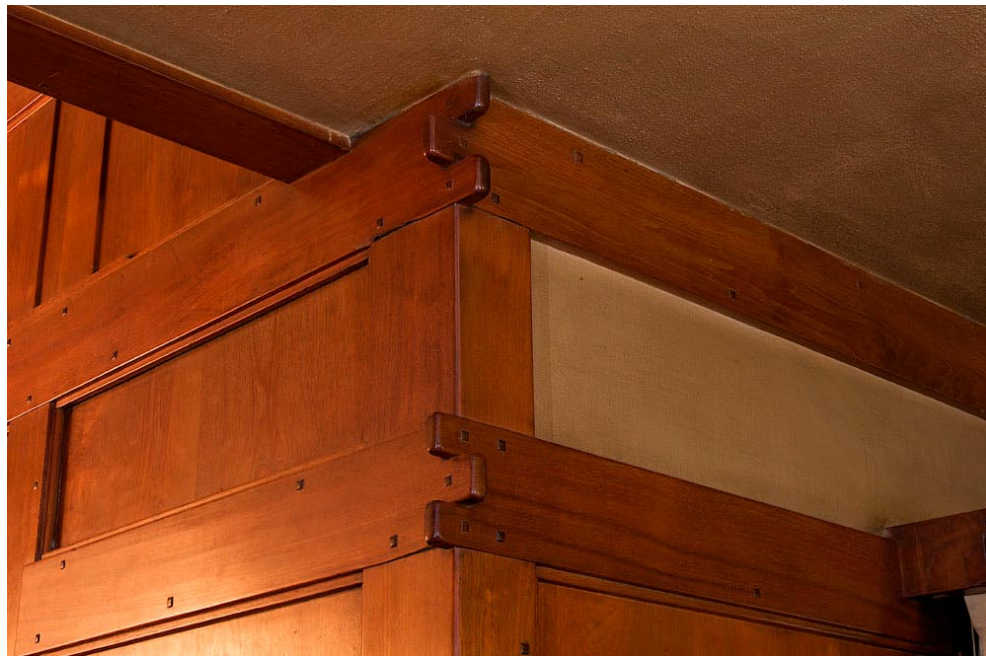
Whether round or square, pegs are an important part of the style. They are incorporated into furniture and architectural trim, as are finger joints. This example is from the marvelous Freeman Ford house.





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Fingers come in many shapes and sizes. Changing the shape and finish gives a very different feel in the Thorsen house.





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The sideboard from the William Thorsen house contains many of the elements of the vocabulary: proud breadboard ends with ebony splines, ebony pegs, custom-made pulls and fantastic inlays.





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Landings with windows are a hallmark in Greene designs. The landing in the Thorsen house is almost a small room. The frame on the wall contains a photo of the house during construction.

