



NEWS FROM HAVERFIELD PARK

PUMPHOUSES: PART OF SONOMA SCENE

By Barbara Caswell



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My favorite thing to see in a fine property is evidence that the owner is committed to preserving its beauty. I've always felt that the country surrounding Petaluma is some of the most lovely land available, and I like to see it treated as something precious.

So, what is it with the blue pressure tanks? I have wondered about the person responsible for choosing the paint color for the ubiquitous pressure tanks popping up all over Sonoma County's country properties. The idea may have been to remind the buyer of water, but one thing's for certain: the color was not selected by a landscape designer.

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In spots with esthetic concerns, tanks get "dealt with." The blue is only paint after all, and tanks can be painted to be camouflaged, as at Garden Valley Ranch. My new neighbors built a custom house, and luckily for me have excellent taste. All of their design decisions have reflected simplicity and practicality, and their solution was to surround the tank on all sides with a combination of wood screen and thick shrubbery, so that their tank is hidden from themselves and their neighbors, and yet is accessible for repairs.



Well, I'm not as practical as my new neighbors. Like Kathleen Turner said in *Body Heat*, "I'm weak!" Spending on my properties has always been my biggest temptation, and I can truthfully say that my only regrets have been the times I've tried to cut corners to save money. At

home, I believe that most people "save foolishly" more than they "spend lavishly." I recall my own financial advisor saying: "Nothing's more expensive than doing it twice," and I try to follow that good advice.

After laying out our property plans, I realized that our pumphouse would be located right in front of our beautiful new house, smack in the front garden, and would be the first thing we saw every morning. We made the decision to create a pumphouse that we could love, and have never regretted it.



This graceful pumphouse was styled after George Washington's outbuildings at Mount Vernon.

Every homeowner needs to maintain accessibility to the well itself, so that when the pump fails, a truck can get into it for the repair. Many proud pumphouse builders have found out the hard way that well repair can mean demolishing their cute building.

For a long time I was unaware that the actual well doesn't need to be located at the same spot as the pressure tank and the rest of the electrical paraphernalia. In our case, we located the building right next to the standpipe of the well, and easily hid that with a little matte black paint and a low shrub.

The copper roof . . . looked like a shining beacon in our little valley.

I was attracted to Mount Vernon's "pepper pot" garden buildings long before I learned much about their history, but now I know that they are so much admired that they've been reproduced in England as well as America. Four of them create symmetry at Mount Vernon, and one was reputedly used as a schoolhouse for Nellie Custis, Washington's beloved little granddaughter. Apparently another was an outhouse, but that one seems to get less publicity.

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Our modern day efforts to achieve "multi-tasking" are pitiful, compared to the productivity of our country's founders. As near as I can tell, Washington couldn't possibly have had any time for sleep at all, much less to occupy all those rooms back East with "Washington Slept Here" signs on them. He designed much of Mount Vernon himself, between winning battles and posing for portraits in boats, and Jefferson never stopped fiddling with redesigning Monticello. And those guys were mere slackers compared to the ever-versatile Ben Franklin. Imagine being a politician, an inventor, a journalist and running all those dime stores too!



Weather vanes are common atop these fancy small buildings, but we mounted ours elsewhere, where it can be viewed from a morning dressing room.

My building is hexagonal rather than octagonal, and my roof and trims are altered from the Virginia originals. John Brebner, an English craftsman, built the structure from only the roughest sketches drawn by me, and the copper roof has weathered to a dull brown, after its rather shocking debut when it looked like a shining beacon in our little valley. On John's advice, we decided to keep the aviary look, but closed the bird holes to prevent any possible contamination near our water source, since we provide plenty of bird nesting sites elsewhere in a habitat area.



Concept: Designs of the Times
Mitered brick foundation & brick vents: Joe Cuneo Masonry
Building plans and construction: John Brebner
Copper roofing: Dan Shea