

An Oregon Cottage Podcast

Episode 68: Year 2 Farmhouse Fixer Review

- Brian: Hi there. I'm Brian. And this is another episode of an Oregon cottage podcast. This is episode 68. If you're listening to it on your usual a podcast device, it's going to sound funny, kind of echoey. Um, if you're watching us on YouTube, it's obvious why. It's because we're recording a video as well as doing the audio today and what we're going to do, we're doing this from inside our a hundred year old farm house fixer. And today we're gonna review sort of how much progress we've made in the last two years. Yeah, it hasn't been fast. And what we've accomplished and what we have yet to do and then just kind of some of the things that we've learned.
- Jami: Yeah. And we did one of these last year and it's a great record to see, you know, what we've done. And I know that people are wanting to see how's the house going. So we thought we'd just do another, we're calling it a year two review, and we are just going to talk about, well what we've done up to this point and what we have to do next, which I think is going to be all the kind of good stuff.
- Brian: That's stuff that goes faster, makes a difference. And by the way, that's episode 49 if you want to go back and kind of see what the, that was the one year review, right? Episode 49. Okay. Well, so what have we done on this place?

Farmhouse Fixer Year 1 Recap

- Jami: Well, we're just going to do a brief recap because you can go see that other episode 49 to get the whole recap. But we did have to start out with foundation. So that was a big deal. We knew this house didn't have a foundation that wasn't a surprise when we went in, but it was a surprise how long it took us to find someone to do it, for a reasonable cost. Um, so anyway, that was kind of the whole first six to seven months that we bought the house, was just finding and getting someone to do the foundation. And then we couldn't do anything on the house because the foundation was being worked on. We did start tearing off the vinyl siding though, that we could still do, because that just took, we just did it ourselves a little bit at a time and tore off of vinyl siding. In fact, you have a video, because you came up a real technique. So if you have vinyl siding and you want to take off.
- Brian: How not to fall off a ladder while taking off vinyl siding, it's great.
- Jami: Yeah, he's got a really good technique for that. And our other big thing that we needed to do was all through the permits and County, and that's kind of why it's taken so long. And we needed this extension that we're in right now, this is an extension eight foot off the back of the house. And that was to give us a usable master bedroom. The size of the bedroom before was, um, what's the width of a queen size bed?
- Brian: I don't know. From the head to the foot of a queens size bed. 7 feet? You could wedge a queen size bed sideways into this room. Now you can see it's much bigger, the master bedroom here.

Jami: So, we needed to do that so we could have master on the main, that was one of our big goals. And to kind of expand the bathroom, because it's the one bathroom on the main floor. And so we did that. We got that done in the first - when we did that other review, it wasn't like, all the way dried in I think even then. So since then we've been doing that, and we also started gutting the kitchen and tearing down a wall between an enclosed porch and the kitchen.

Brian: Yeah. And that's in progress. We'll talk about that in a minute because we're still in the permitting. We're getting our plans and everything approved. And so some other things that we did, we had electrical service on the outside of the house. And so, you know, when you have to throw a circuit breaker or whatever, you don't want to have to go outside. So we had that moved inside. But then we had the great idea to have 11-and-a-half foot ceilings, which I'll throw in a shot here of this room. They're really high. Hey, our contractor, our framer guys said, "Hey, you can have high ceilings." We said, "Oh, let's do it." So then I had to rewire all the wiring that went through the existing ceiling. I had to move up a couple of feet. So that was an adventure.

Jami: I had no clue. If I could go back in time to when he just asked that one question, said, "Hey, they kind of dropped the ceiling, do you want to go all the way up?" And I just thought of all these lovely, you know, high Pinterest ceilings. And I'm like, "sure." And if I just knew all that would cost, I mean the windows were too small, then, the electrical was way more involved. We've got more space to fill, so it costs more money for wall and ceiling and, it's a big deal.

Brian: But we could put up a basketball hoop in here if we want it. So that there's always an option.

Jami: It is a light, bright space. But yeah.

Farmhouse Fixer Year 2 Review

Brian: It's really caused me to learn a lot of things. I'm not a natural, I'm not a contractor, I'm really not a natural do it yourselfer. But I learned wiring, I did all the wiring for the rewiring in this end of the house. I learned how to draw my own plans and submit them to engineering. And I will be submitting them myself for a beam across the kitchen that all has to be engineered, the loads on that. And then I did, I learned how to do PEX plumbing, which is, it's kind of a hose system, an indestructible hose system that's kind of idiot proof. But you know, when it's plumbing there's a bunch of water that can go places, so. Anyway, all that's done, we've learned all that. And so what else do we have to do?

Jami: Well, to be fair, you had done electrical in our other house. In our cottage. We had done electrical with that, so it was not like starting from scratch, but you did have to learn a lot.

Brian: Yeah. And so I suppose, what are the pros of do it yourself? That's what we're gonna talk about, some of the pros and cons.

Jami: Right, and we do have an episode that we talked about being your own contractor. Um, I don't remember the, I'll link to it in the show notes, I can't get the actual name of it right now. But we did talk about the pros and cons. And so this is just sort of the same thing, and more of what we're learning.

Brian: So one thing is, if you do it yourself, you learn how to do it yourself. And so you not only learn the skill, usually by about the time you're done with that part of the house, you're kind of good at it and you're done doing it. But also you learn a lot

about the structure of your house. And I know where every wire, every, you know, plumbing thing, every, more than I want to know about the insulation underneath the house. So you have all that knowledge, so that's good. And then you save money.

Jami: Right. And we've also learned a lot about the house too because we've learned that it just was not a very well made house. You know, there are some houses that were just made great back then. And then there are others that were just put up using what they had, and this was one of those houses. So we've had to, like the windows and doors didn't have headers. The beam holding the upstairs that we we pulled it off to discover what it is. It's a one by six, like it's holding the whole upstairs on one side of the house. So we've learned these things and we know. We feel really good about like, we don't know, I can't imagine what it would've been like if we hadn't needed to remodel, or wanted to remodel, because it had a lot of issues.

Brian: Yeah. And so the last thing, and this is the advantage of doing it yourself, is that you do it exactly how you want it. It's amazing, I felt like we've hired good people, but stuff just gets lost in communication. And if you're saying how you want something done, from window molding, to door width, to you name it. Um, wires get crossed and it gets done the wrong way. And some of this stuff we didn't discover until a long time later. And so if you do it yourself, you know you're getting exactly what you want.

Jami: Yeah. So let's give an example. So this, the people who did this extension finished it last February, I think. And we just discovered in December that when I asked for 32 inch wide doors, I wanted 32 inch wide doors, meaning in my head that's the finished door, because I found some old doors and they're 32 inch. Well they heard I want 32 inch opening, which is what you need for a 30 inch door. And so we have been trying to figure out, talking to people, what do we do? Do we have to tear it apart? And luckily my stepdad was a contractor, and he gave us an idea and this last weekend that's what Brian did. But instead of doing other things, he had to go back and fix something someone else did. Kind of a bummer.

Brian: Yeah. So that's kind of a bummer, but then there are some cons to doing it yourself. And we found a lot of those. Like what are some of those?

Jami: Oh well, we forgot the biggest pro is to save money.

Brian: Oh yep, that's true.

Jami: And that's why we're, you know, at year two in an unfinished room because we have been trying to save as much money as we can, pay cash, try to not have as much of a mortgage. That's kind of the overall goal to do. So that's, that's that. But yeah, a con- time.

Brian: So when money is no option - no, when, money is no OBJECT.

Jami: We uh, would hire someone and this probably would have been done. Well after... I think still, we did talk to some contractors and they were clueless about the foundation, so we still would've had to do that. But after that six to eight months, it probably would have taken them another, maybe six to eight months. We've probably would've been in the house by now. So there you have it. That's time.

Brian: Okay. So, having done that and learned that, all right, here are a few things that we still need to do. And we feel like, especially once we get past this, the kitchen,

taking out the wall and putting in the header that's going to span and make two little rooms into one big room, we're really gaining momentum here. We're able to do things that are fairly easy and fairly fast. Like in a day you can easily put down a floating floor in a day in a room and see a dramatic difference. And so we're, we're kind of entering that phase. So anyway, that's one of the things. We do need to get flooring. We would love, you know, classic oak wood floor, but it's cost prohibitive, it would just be really expensive. In our other house, we had an engineered product, which was like the very top, maybe eighth of an inch, was a hardwood. So as you walk on it, it's wood and then it's made of like a kind of a veneer, you know, all kind of plywoody down through anyway, but a floating floor. And so that's what we're looking at that. And the reason we need that is because to get our final, we have to show that the plumbing is working and in the bathroom that means we have to put in the the sink and fixtures, the toilet and yeah, you've got to have a floor. So that's a long way of saying flooring is a big, big thing coming up.

Jami: Floors the next thing so that we can get some of these permits taken care of and out of the way, they've been dragging on for awhile. Um, but I'm excited about the floor. I've got some samples coming in, we're trying to do it, you know, find the best deal and that sort of thing. But still something we really want, obviously. It's going to be the whole main floor here, so that's a big deal. Also because we need to be working on the bathroom, I looked and looked and finally found a vanity, uh, or a dresser, that we can make into our vanity. Some of you, if you're longtime readers, know that we did this in our other house, in our cottage and we had a dresser and we changed it, and we have a whole how-to on how to do that. And we're going to do that here again. I found a really great piece that fits it exactly. It took me a while because I was looking for size, and style and usability and good quality, and not too expensive. Uh, not too much - I wasn't asking for too much. [laugh] And so it took a while. But I found it on Facebook Marketplace. It was a great deal and I'm really excited about it. And the top though, has holes in it, where in the back there was a mirror, I think, at one point attached. Like, pretty big holes. So I can't just refinish the top, it also has a little bit of the veneer coming off. So I thought maybe we needed to go and buy one of those premade, you know, marble-like you know, with an undermount sink in it. And I priced them and they're all like, \$250 to \$300 just for that. And I'm not sure that they're going to fit because we've got, I mean my measurements seems the same but you know, it's all different inside. I mean, those are made to go in, you know, pre-made vanity.

Jami: So, I'm kind of excited about this. Years and years ago when we lived in our Portland bungalow, I painted our mantle in the house. It was just a, you know, painted white mantle, and I painted it to look like marble and it really did.

Brian: It fooled people.

Jami: It did, it fooled a lot of people. And it was actually not that hard. It was one of the first DIY projects I did besides painting, you know, just walls. And so I'm going to do that on this. I decided I'm going to do this, I'm going to fill the holes, we're going to work to fill everything, and then I'll have a surface. And I'm going to paint the top of it to look like marble. So kind of excited about that.

Brian: So let's see our next, the next thing is, Oh wood on the walls. That's going to be big. We salvaged a lot of a tongue and groove wood as we were taking it apart. But it's not nearly enough to cover. Like just this room is going to take a truck load of wood. So we've been pricing like a tongue and groove. It'll look like shiplap basically, that's the look we want. So we have to just install that.

Jami: Yeah. Well, we have to buy it and have it in the house so that it's ready to put up. And so yeah, we'll be using the, we'll try to use the things that we salvaged in places like the hallway, you know, things that are smaller and will have kind of more of an impact. And we are able to just use the walls in the laundry room as they are. So that's pretty cool. And we're using some of the ceilings, we'll use the ceiling in the kitchen and the ceiling in the bathroom. Those are all really usable.

Brian: And let's see, we need to do, we need to put in some windows. That's a another thing.

Jami: Yes. Laundry room windows, which we already have, and kitchen windows, which we're kind of waiting for the final walls to be put up so we can get some measurements.

Brian: And the doors, of course, we looking at blank doorways behind us.

New Speaker: Yeah, and like I said, we found, this last summer, we found a house they were redoing in our nearby town and they were selling all of the old, hundred year old doors. They are five panel doors, and I think we got them for less than \$20 each because we bought them all. So then, we had to start the stripping part.

Brian: Yeah, stripping is not as cheap, though it's not as bad.

Jami: And I did mention trying to strip these doors using all different kinds of strippers. I was going to do a whole blog post about which one worked best, but instead it just went in a Good Things List because none of them worked. It was terrible. There are so many layers of paint, nothing worked. So we're going to have them dipped and we have to drive all the way up to the big city of Portland to do it. So it'll be a little bit of time, you know, we'll have to figure out how to, you know, get up there and two weeks later, go get them again, but it's not too expensive. I was afraid it was going to be exorbitant, and I really want the look of wood, you know, plain wood doors for the house.

Brian: Yeah. And there is one area that we do need to, um, tape and mud, like regular wall sheet rock. And so that's actually, it's over my shoulder back here, the closet. Otherwise we can do a really crude job on the wallboard because we're covering it with wood. So it was just kind of up there as a barrier. Oh and then in the kitchen a big thing, and I probably won't be able to do it, we'll have to have help on it, is getting the stairs done. Um, they're kind of rickety and they're kind of, we've got a head banger at the top there where I keep hitting my head. How many times I get hit my head before I remember it's a little low as you go up?

Jami: They're kind of too wide, the steps are too wide at the bottom and too narrow at the top. So we just need someone to come in and rebuild them so that they're kind of all the same.

Brian: And it's got this funky aluminum railing that looks like it came out of a mobile home. That's amazing. It's probably a collector's item. So anyway, lots to do and we'll be updating you on the podcast and you'll see on the blog kind of our progress on what we're continuing to do.

Jami: And now that we have more of the pretty stuff to show, you know, I didn't do very many video tours last year because it was just, you know, trying to pass the plumbing inspection or the electrical or you know, getting the insulation done. Like these are not things you want video tours of. But as soon as we start getting, you know, wood on the walls, and trim up, and doors, I'm going to be sharing a lot more longer video tours and also in Instagram stories and things. So just be

waiting, because I'm excited. This is going to be the year where it's going to really look more like a farmhouse, I think.

Brian: Right now you do not want to see what it looks like outside this room. It is mess. We'll get some before pictures yeah, for the tour.

This is Really Cool

Brian: Well, this is our part in the podcast where we kind of talk about some discoveries that we've made that are really cool. And this one has absolutely nothing to do with fixing up old houses except, at the end of the day when you've worked, and then you've gone out and spent a couple of hours working on an old house and then after dinner you just collapse and just want to watch some TV. That's where this comes in. It's YouTube TV and it's not regular YouTube that you're watching right now. And it's not YouTube Red where you get YouTube without commercials. It's like a cable TV service that comes over the internet via YouTube. And the amazing thing about it is, it actually has the best channels that you want from cable.

Jami: Yeah, we heard about this from my brother and he's a big sports fan and they have all the sports channels.

Brian: And we're like, we questioned him because we're like, wait a minute, are you? Because I thought, "Oh no, he doesn't know what he's talking about." But of course he knew what he was talking about. He's a sports fan. So it was just using it and finding and watching the bowl games. That was kind of our first test. It's got this really cool DVR feature.

Jami: I love it. We are from the generation where, you know, we had to look at the instructions and try to complicatedly program our VCRs and then DVRs when they came out. And then, or it was this complicated cable system where you just had to scroll through all these things and maybe pick the ones - everything just seemed very complicated about it. So Brian asked, he's like, "how would we tape this game we were going to miss?" And I said, well let me, let me look it up, it's going to be hard and I'll look it up. And so I Googled it and it was literally three steps. Like, find the show you want, press the little plus button, go to your library. That's it.

Brian: Later, go to your library to play it. Yeah, it's pretty cool. And what's amazing is, it's got unlimited DVR theoretically. So we have another relative who uses it because he loves PAC 12 basketball. So he records every single PAC 12 basketball game by any team that he would even remotely want to watch, but he could not possibly watch like 150 hours in a month. And then what happens is it just expires. So I think it's, um, different shows for different expiration dates. So maybe a month, maybe a month later you have to have watched it by then. So it's not for a permanent collection, but yeah.

Jami: But it's really amazing. It's not very expensive, I think it's like \$50 a month or something? But you get five screens so you can have it on any other screens, your wife, your kids.

Brian: They encourage you to share with family. So it's not like, secretly share with family, it's like here, share these usernames and passwords with your family. You can share the account.

Jami: Yeah, so your kids, your mom and dad, everybody can be on it. Then the other thing is it's super easy. Like, so we use a Firestick. You can use a Chrome or

whatever, it's just one of the apps that you can get. So it's easy to get to, it's easy to use.

Brian: Yeah, it's really easy. Anyway, YouTube TV. We were not paid for this commercial. [laugh] Well that's all the time we have. Actually it's really cold in the house right now. We're like trying to save money by not keeping it heated.

Jami: Here's my wool blanket.

Brian: I know my feet are numb, I can't feel my hands, but uh, it's been really enjoyable doing this, and we thank you if you've watched this far.

Jami: Or listened.

Brian: Give us your feedback. We'd love to hear from you. We've enjoyed getting, feedback and comments and suggestions from people through the usual channels. And of course you can also do it on YouTube, leave a comment. There's a bunch of different ways we always talk about. And we've just really appreciated the people that have been subscribing and rating and reviewing both the podcast and our videos. You guys have been terrific and it's helping people discover it more. So thank you so much for watching and listening.