



Redwood Deck on a Blue Lagoon

by David Bullene

In 1958, real estate developer T. Jack Foster spent \$200,000 to buy an island and several square miles of San Francisco Bay marshland on the east edge of San Mateo, Calif. In order to build houses there, he spent several years dredging wetlands and pumping millions of cubic yards of mud and sand onto the island to raise it above sea level. The 218-acre lagoon he created—technically a drainage detention basin to collect stormwater runoff—became the centerpiece of Foster City, now a city of over 30,000 residents.

The home where I built the redwood deck featured here is located on one of the 16 miles of drainage channels that make up the lagoon. In the 1960s, Foster promoted his development as the “island

of blue lagoons,” and the claim is still true, thanks to the pond dye added to the water to disrupt photosynthesis and aquatic weed growth.

I framed the deck with pressure-treated Doug fir, rounding over the edges with a $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch-diameter router bit wherever the framing is exposed to view. On the ends of the support beams, I cut my signature scroll detail, also rounded over (B).

I milled the decking, railing, and trim material on site from rough-sawn #2 grade redwood from Big Creek Lumber, one of two primary sources of redwood in the Bay area. After ripping and planing the material to size, I used a belt sander to prep it for the final finish, up to 120 grit for the decking and treads, and up to 220 grit for the rails and balusters (C).



I like to notch rail-to-post connections, then round over the notches with a $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-diameter bit to highlight the joints. Virtually all the other trim details on the deck, such as the coping around the tree wells surrounding the pine trees, are rounded over too. For an informal, “beach-like” feel, I gave the stairs down to the concrete patio next to the lagoon a wave-like design (D). To bring out the redwood’s beautiful natural color, I painted on two coats of Sikkens ProLuxe transparent matte penetrating oil finish. ♦

David Bullene is a craftsman with over 40 years of woodworking experience now living in Nevada (bullenedesigns.com).

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