



2017 TFG
Conference

Building Green on the Pale Blue Dot

Steve Thomas
Saint George, ME

In 1990, when the Voyager space craft took a picture of Earth from 4 billion miles in space, the image was a tiny speck of life in the vacuum of space, what astronomer Carl Sagan calls the "pale blue dot." Steve Thomas has seen much of this dot as a blue-water sailor in the 1970s; host, writer, and producer of *The Last Navigator* book and film in the 1980s; and in his television programs *This Old House* (PBS), *Renovation Nation* (Discovery/Planet Green), and *Save Our History* (History Channel).

In this richly illustrated and fast-paced talk, Steve takes the audience with him on his documentary and television projects with the "Star Path" navigators of Satawal Island in the Pacific, the Eskimos of the Alaskan Arctic, WWII vets in the Aleutians, and Habitat for Humanity builds from Detroit to Kenya. Along the way, he takes us through his own building and renovation projects from his 1700s historical home in Salem, Massachusetts, to a "green" timber frame barn built on an island in Maine ... featuring some familiar faces from the Timber Framers Guild!

The "business" core of the talk is a clear, straightforward, and concise explanation of what sustainable, or "green," building really means; who demographically is building green and what motivates them to do so; and why green building, scaled up, is a major driver of positive change for the planet. For timber frame builders looking to articulate the value proposition of their craft in their marketplace, this will be a useful part of the presentation. Being an honorary member of the Guild, Steve is happy to do what he can to advance the cause.

About the Speaker

Steve Thomas

Known as a serial renovator, Steve Thomas helped catapult *This Old House* to the top of PBS's list of most-watched ongoing series of all time. He was honored with a 1997-1998 Daytime Emmy Award, and a total of nine nominations for "Outstanding Service Show Host." He went on to highlight historical restorations on *Save Our History* on The History Channel and green renovation across America on *Renovation Nation* on Discovery's Planet Green.

He has renovated his own homes for more than 35 years, starting with a run-down 1920s craftsman cottage in Olympia, Washington, then two historic homes in Salem, Massachusetts, and a cabin and barn on an island off the coast of Maine. He just completed renovating Sea Cove Cottage, a 1905 Victorian in the center of a classic Maine lobstering village, which he featured on his popular Facebook page, "SteveThomasHome." He's a popular speaker, video producer, writer, blogger, photographer, renovator, and branding consultant. He also consults on green, sustainable building and renovation for clients all over the United States.

In between early renovation projects, Steve's yen for adventure, which he attributes to his late grandfather, a missionary in the Alaskan Arctic, inspired him to combine his love of fine woodworking with his passion for the sea and sailboats. In the early 1980s, he journeyed to the remote Micronesian island of Satawal to learn the ancient technique of star path navigation under the late master navigator, Mau Piailug. Steve's research resulted in the critically acclaimed book, *The Last Navigator*, and a documentary for the *Adventure* series on PBS. It was in 1989, between research trips to the Alaskan Arctic for a second *Adventure* book and film, when Steve got a call from the *Adventure* series publicist, who also worked for *This Old House*. The show's producers were conducting a nationwide search for a new host, and the rest is history.

Steve received his undergraduate degree in philosophy from the Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. He lives in midcoast Maine with his wife, Evy, and their standard poodle, Emma. His son, Sam, is a videographer in Santa Fe, NM.