



## ***The Kitchen & Bath Insider***<sup>®</sup>

Paul Bookbinder, M.I.D.

### **Why Do Bathrooms Cost So Much?**

And why do we bother to bathe in the first place? Popular in the ancient empires, bathing fell out of favor in the middle ages, when having a layer of filth on you was considered protection against illness. It wasn't until the 1700's that washing caught on again, when some intuitive doctors believed that this procedure could help keep you from getting sick. In the 1800's germs were discovered and the first thing we wanted to do with them was wash them off. By the mid-1800's, indoor plumbing was being developed, and although a luxury for many years, it began to find itself in more and more homes as the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed. And with the advent of indoor plumbing came the modern toilet. Often attributed to Thomas Crapper, who *was* a plumber in the 1800's, the toilet was actually invented by an Englishman named Albert Giblin.

With this very succinct history of the modern bathroom, we can see how all the necessary ingredients fortuitously came together just at the right time, enabling us to devote a special room in our homes dedicated to personal hygiene. But in the contemporary world, what would this simple room be, if it isn't beautiful as well as functional? We need stylish tubs; showers; glass enclosures; tile; faucets; vanities; countertops; medicine cabinets; lights; mirrors; soap, glass, tooth-brush and toilet paper holders; and towel racks, to complete this *unpretentious* room. (Not to mention the shower body, diverter valve, shower pan and other pipes and things that you don't even see).

A typical, modern bathroom is a conglomeration of many, many elements, that when assembled enable it to accomplish its primary goal, and be aesthetically pleasing at the same time. Granted, a "powder room" (with no shower or tub, also known as a half-bath) doesn't need quite as much, and a "master bath" may need more, (a Jacuzzi, steam shower, heated floor, etc.). Couple all these parts with the labor involved in installing them and you have quite a project. As with a kitchen, you need a plumber, electrician, mason, tile-man, carpenter, and painter to assemble all these components in order to create your *Dream Bathroom*. You begin to understand why bathrooms are not inexpensive.

If you are remodeling (as opposed to doing new construction) you also must factor in the additional cost of demolition. Demolition (the removing of the old fixtures and tile) and preparation of the space depend on the original construction. Chances are the old tile and bathtub were set in "mud" (concrete mortar) which needs to be removed, a messy and time consuming task. And, even if the new fixtures are to be placed in the same location it's usually best to replace the old pipes because once the new tile is on the wall, you don't want any problems with the pipes.

Naturally, the selection of the fixtures also has a large impact on the final cost of a bathroom remodel. A toilet can range in price from under \$100 at the box store, to the Herbeau Creations, Dagobert Throne Toilet which costs \$9,799.00 (shipping included). Similar price ranges are found when purchasing the rest of the fixtures.

If you're on a budget, and want to keep costs as reasonable as possible, don't move the location of the tub and toilet, and shop around for the best deals on the fixtures. Better yet, if you don't mind a thin layer of filth on yourself, you can close up your existing bathroom and install a Porta-Potty in the basement.