

## Re-Style Magazine – September 2009

Throwing a dinner party wasn't just hard for William Murphy – it was unheard of. Living in a one-room apartment in the early 1900s meant his mattress was always in plain sight of guests – a serious faux pas at the time. Frustrated, he started tinkering with the idea of a bed that folded into the wall. On June 27, 1916, his design was patented and the Murphy bed was made.

Today's "folding beds" have come a long way. The mechanism Murphy invented was fixed to the floor – the bed dropped down when the closet it was stored in was opened. Modern-day panel systems use a mechanism that attaches the bed to the inside of a wall-mounted cabinet, so the panel itself becomes the bed.

"A panel-system bed comes down like a dishwasher, whether you choose a vertical or side-tilt bed," explained Carla McBeth, marketing manager for Surrey-based Murphy Wall-Beds Hardware Inc. "Verticals let you enter and exit the bed from both sides and allow for storage on either side; they're also a bit easier to make. But side-tilts are a nice option because they come down horizontally from the wall and have a lower profile, so they leave room for overhead storage."

Although the technology's evolved since 1916, McBeth said the benefits of Murphy beds remain the same. "It's about space and making full use of every square foot. People are downsizing to smaller and smaller spaces. They want to keep certain features they enjoyed in their former, larger homes but they've got much less room to do it in."

As such, single rooms in smaller homes must often serve dual purposes; this is where a Murphy bed – which tucks away neatly out of sight and out of the way – comes in handy. "You can add extra features to your unit, like a drop-down desk or storage units above, below or to either side of the bed," said McBeth. "In seconds your office or rec room becomes a guest room – with extra storage space, if you wish."

The key, she said, is customization – a specialty at Murphy Wall-Beds Hardware. The company will create a unique unit to suit your needs, whether that means adding a desk, drawers, cabinetry, shelves or even an entertainment centre for storing video and audio equipment to your Murphy bed.

"We can build whatever you want," said McBeth. "Our beds are made from various wood veneers – maple, oak, cherry, pine – so we can take a sample from your furniture and match the unit to your existing décor. It's really all about making your own bed."

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**Sidebar headline:** Before you buy

**Sidebar subhead:** Thinking of purchasing a Murphy bed? Consider the following:

Unlike other types of folding beds (sofa beds, futons) the mattress in a Murphy bed doesn't fold. It tilts up on end and into a specially designed cabinet. Look for

brands that are manufactured from strong, heavy-gauge steel or aluminum frames secured to a spring mechanism.

To avoid a struggle when it's time to put the bed away, choose a model that includes a spring-loaded counterbalanced mechanism that allows easy, one-handed operation.

The bed legs should be sturdy, able to hold a minimum of 1,500 pounds and tuck under the bed cabinet to avoid stubbing your toes.

Murphy beds will accommodate a standard innerspring mattress in twin, double, queen and king sizes. Although these beds can be sold with their own mattresses, consider models that let you supply your own mattress for greater choice and eventual replacement.

To avoid having to remake the bed with each use, opt for a more convenient model that folds away fully equipped with sheets, blankets and pillows that can be strapped in place.

Most Murphy beds fold away into a cabinet that looks like an attractive piece of furniture. These come in a wide variety of styles and colours and can usually be incorporated into a wall-storage system.