

Builders' Showcase

CL house electrified community when originally built



Peter Scholl's 1,800-square-foot addition to a landmark house in Crystal Lake was a garage with a second-floor master suite connected to the original structure.

It is not every day that a contractor gets to remodel a landmark house. Today is the day for Peter Scholl of Scholl Construction in Crystal Lake.

The American Legion built a house in 1929 that was described at the time, as the Model Electric Home.

Modern conveniences of that day included a telephone in the kitchen which made it easier for the cook to "give the order to the grocer."

Although electricity was beyond its late 19th Century infancy, not all households in the United States were plugged in.

"I think at that time period, electricity was not in most homes," Scholl said. "This one, which was built by the American Legion and sold by lottery, was the first all-electric home, at least for this area with electrical appliances, electric instead of gas lights and, of course, the telephone."

From readable newspaper copy from the 1929 Crystal Lake Herald, the house went on public display Memorial Day of that year.

During the summer, more than 67,000 people visited the house at 323 West Crystal Lake Avenue. On or about Labor Day, the house was raffled off to raise money for the American



Jerry Kuyper

Legion.

The raffle was won by Charles Norris of West Chicago for a sum that did not exceed \$6,000.

According to barely legible newspaper copy, the raffle either raised \$6,000 or the house was sold for that amount. Norris died in September 1929 days after winning the raffle. His widow, Addie Norris, sold it almost immediately.

That buyer and family kept the house for 50 years making minor changes or additions. Other buyers, from 1979 to the present, were of short duration and retained the basics in the house. In October 2010, Tim and Beth Lawrence bought the house and moved in with their two children.

"We bought with the intention of putting on an addition. We loved the house and its unique style. And we liked the location in an older part of the town and near Crystal Lake's downtown. We are a short walk from that downtown area," Lawrence, who works for a pharmaceutical company, said.

More than a year after the Lawrence purchase, Scholl was hired to build a two-car garage and install a master suite above it. The addition totaled 1,800 square feet. Scholl had the master suite connect to the house via a second floor stairway landing. He enlarged the kitchen, and, among other cosmetic changes, put in a new entryway.

"The master suite has a bedroom, bathroom and library. Since the house is on a double lot, that allowed the garage expansion to connect with the house.

We incorporated an inside existing stairway landing to put in a new entrance to the attached garage master suite addition," Scholl said.

The hardwood stairway with its wrought-iron railings are original from 1929.

So is most of the house including the brick exterior, interior fireplace, dining room French doors, trim work and most of the fixtures.

"The original chandelier had been taken down from the great room and stored in the basement where it was getting dusty. It is going into the remodeled kitchen. It is a pretty neat chandelier," Lawrence said.

While almost doubling the size of the kitchen from 156 square feet to 264 square feet, Scholl installed a modern double oven, built-in gas range, upper and lower shelving, microwave and granite countertops. He also added a pantry. "There had been a 1950s remodel of the kitchen and I tore that out completely," Scholl said. "Because of the double lot, we could expand the kitchen onto that and double the square footage."

Scholl's remodel left the fireplace and other original fixtures intact.

"We kept the original doors, chandelier, sconces and used everything we could," Lawrence said.

"The fireplace has a big concrete sculpted mantel. Sculpted images include three shields and the faces of two young girls. The shields on that massive fireplace mantel may have some symbolic significance as the American Legion built the house."

The French doors originally opened to a terraced lawn and a garden wall of flagstones. The flagstones are still there, but today the French doors open to an addition made later to the original house. That addition eventually was turned into a ground floor bedroom. "When we bought the house it was listed as having three-bedrooms but that downstairs addition really was a den and my wife and I plan to transform it back into a den," Lawrence said.

"With the master suite over the garage connecting to the house, it really is a three-bedroom house," Scholl noted. All three bedrooms are on the second floor and should provide room for parents and children ages five and two.

In 1929, the house was advertised as having a shower in the upstairs bathroom. "This room is worth the trip (public visit) in itself," newspapers reported. That bath still has the shower. A half-bath is located on the main floor of the two-story house.

Mechanicals, such as heating and electrical boxes, were kept in the basement. There have been updates, especially with the hot water heating system.

Lawrence refused to divulge the purchase price or the remodeling cost



the flagstone wall from the original Model electric Home of 1929 can still be seen at 323 West Crystal lake avenue in Crystal lake

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of the house, but they are more than original prices.

Various businesses and tradesmen donated time and materials to the 1929 project to help raise money for the American Legion. Crystal Lake contractors Swenson and Son did the carpentry and frame work under the supervision of construction superintendent Sture Pearson.

Mason contractor Martin Ekland of Crystal Lake furnished the foundation, walls, brick work and sidewalks. Alexander Lumber Co. furnished the obvious.

H. M. Rosenthal and Sons, besides lumber, furnished flooring, millwork, steel casement sash, insulation, shingles and the fireplace.

"We have kept the original features of the house," Lawrence emphasized.

A column in a June 1929 issue of the Crystal Lake Herald gave a glowing review of the house.

"The entrance is inviting and upon entering the reception hall, one will note convenient guest closets to the right and one is immediately impressed with the beauty of the studio living room. One might say this is the showcase of the house . The electric fixtures, wrought iron stairway rail, balcony rail, rust covered floor coverings together with the wall treatment make of it a very harmonious setting. The visitor will be impressed with the beautiful stone fireplace with the colorful coat-of- arms ."

And so the column continues with one extravagant paragraph of

praise upon another.

Scholl started the remodeling project in mid-November and will complete his duties in March.

"Peter does a good job and we are very pleased with him," Lawrence said.

Scholl Construction Co. was featured in a Remodeling magazine article, "Our Annual List of the Biggest Home Improvement Companies in the Country." Scholl was listed as 247th of the 550 largest home improvement companies in the country. To qualify, he had to do whole house as well as kitchen and bath remodeling, basement finishing, sunrooms/screen rooms/solariums and additions.

While remodeling sales in the United States have been declining since 2010, Scholl has been generating annual sales of \$1 million or more.

Besides the Lawrence remodeling, current Scholl projects include building a physical therapy office (Diamond Physical Therapy) in Algonquin, which will open Feb. 1, a house rebuilding project in Crystal Lake (a tree fell into the house in a July 2011 storm) and a basement renovation in Libertyville.

"Obviously, I would like to have more and be busier," he said. Scholl attributes the growth of his company to diversification and customer satisfaction. He believes customers expect a good product at fair prices. "It is listening to our customer's needs that make our projects evolve into a custom service delivery program. We work hard to transform our customer's ideas into reality. That is the secret to leaving each project

just build homes, we build dreams."

Before he created his own company, Scholl was a project manager with several housing developers. He saw there was a right way to build homes and that it is never right to build it wrong.

"When I started Scholl Construction, I knew that customer satisfaction was key. Customer satisfaction starts with listening. If we're going to deliver the home, office or commercial project our clients expect we have to listen when they tell us what they're looking for," Scholl said.

"We set high standards for ourselves and we meet them. We settle for nothing less than the best we can deliver because it's not enough to have satisfied clients. We want our clients to be thrilled with the results."



A fireplace in the Tim and Beth Lawrence landmark home has a concrete-sculpted mantel with images of shields and faces.

knowing that our customer's are more than satisfied with the results," he said.

Visit www.schol-lconstruction.com, call 815-479-0910 or visit their office is at 5908 Edgewood Road in Crystal Lake for information.

Scholl builds additions and does home and commercial remodels, but really gets excited when building a custom house.

With more than 20 years in the profession and thousands of construction projects completed, Scholl said he has learned the difference between slapping a house together and purposely building a home.

"A home transforms your whole life," Scholl said. "It becomes a major part of your reality. Our goal is to ensure that people have a home that's a warm, secure and nurturing foundation for a fuller life. We don't



Original light fixtures remain in use in the american legion's 1929 Model electric Home.