

Builders' Showcase



Photo provided

Construction continues on a \$2 million house being built on 50 acres in the Bull Valley area of Woodstock.

Custom builder stays busy in poor home-building climate

In the past 18 months, tract and semi-custom home builders have gone bankrupt.

Others in the single- and multi-family construction business have simply packed up their hammers and tools and gone to build a livelihood elsewhere.

Bad times in the new-home building industry have been headlines since 2008 and Peter Scholl has read many of the accounts, if not all of them, in his daily newspaper.

He is a little baffled as business for him has never been so good.

The custom home builder based in Woodstock is keeping his in-house



REVIEWS

Jerry Kuyper

crew of tradesmen busy on 12 current projects in the Chicago area. Three more projects are in the design or contract stage, including a church in Poplar Grove.

Besides tear-downs and guttings for housing rebuilds in Glen Ellyn, Arlington Heights, Libertyville and Crystal Lake, Scholl, who is president of Scholl Construction Co., is close to finishing a \$2 million custom house in

the incorporated but rural Woodstock area of Bull Valley.

When completed, the two-story will have 6,000 to 7,000 square feet of living space, five bedrooms, four bathrooms, five fireplaces, four-car garage and a suspension bed.

"The owner we are building the house for is a single lady about 50 years old. She saw a swinging bed in a magazine she was reading and liked the idea so we built one for her," Scholl said. The bed is operated manually by pulleys and is on a copper-turreted porch off the main floor's master suite. "You can sleep out there in good weather and raise and lower it

as needed. It hangs pretty tight to the ceiling so is out of the way when not in use," he added.

"It's an interesting home and the owner gave us a lot of good custom ideas."

One of the ideas was a separate suite off the master with its own closets, separate living quarters and bathroom. "Our client's parents live in mid-Illinois, and she could foresee the day when those parents might have to move in with her and she would have to care for them. So she had us build a suite for that possible use," Scholl said.

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The female client also has three daughters who can avail themselves of the huge house when desired. The house has the potential to expand to 11,000 to 12,000 square feet of living space as there is a 2,000-square-foot unfinished bonus room above the four-car insulated and drywalled garage and more than 3,000 square feet of, currently, unfinished walk-out basement space.

Not all the ideas came from Scholl's client as her architect is Robert Gebelhoff, owner of M.A.R.S. Design and Construction in Island Lake.

"It was he who brought me into this project and worked side-by-side with my company to design and supervise the construction of this home," Scholl said.

Surrounding the house are 50 acres of hilly and heavily wooded Bull Valley terrain. "It is heavily wooded with mature trees and very hilly. The owner has counted 17 natural springs on her property.

"She's a wealthy woman but she's building this house for her family, too, so she is thinking ahead or, at least, preparing for possible future eventualities," Scholl said.

On the exterior, the house has stone, brick and fiber cement that looks like wood siding. The roof is a combination of 50-year asphalt shingles and copper. "We have \$12,000 worth of copper alone in the roof," Scholl said.

Interior floors are marble, hardwood or ceramic.

Four of the five fireplaces are masonry with natural finishes. The fifth is in the master suite. "It is a direct-vent, two-sided fireplace," Scholl explained.

One of the masonry fireplaces is in the eating area off the kitchen, which has a butler's pantry, see-through window to serve food and the upgrade appliances expected in a \$2 million house.

One of the two laundries is off the kitchen. "The main laundry, though, is on the second floor and it is about 8-feet-by-13 feet in



Photo provided

Peter Scholl's client, who is a mother with three daughters, wanted him to design and build a chimney reflecting family relationships. The tallest and most straight chimney represents the home owner and mother. The three descending chimneys represent the daughters.

size. It is large enough not only for a sink, washer and dryer, but also for built-in cabinets," Scholl added.

"We started this house in December of 2008 and our goal is to have the owner move into it by Christmas."

That means he can devote even more time to the 11 other projects in the Chicago metro area. "We have a new custom house underway in Glenn Ellyn, but most of our projects are

extensive remodelings with a really nice project on North Shore Drive in Crystal Lake.

"One of our more interesting projects is in Green Oaks by Libertyville. The owner is a retired engineer and has a nice house in a wooded area but it is next to Interstate 94. Being next to the interstate means there's a lot of noise. He is having us soundproof the house, top to bottom, windows, walls, roof, everything. The window won't

even vibrate when we are done.

"We also are doing a house in rural Libertyville, which will be totally gutted and where we will be installing a thermal heating system. We really emphasize our "green house" abilities," Scholl said.

Scholl's work is concentrated in McHenry, Lake, Kane, Cook and Dupage Counties, plus southeastern Wisconsin in communities such as Lake Geneva, Williams Bay, Fontana, Dela-

van, Sharon and Burlington.

"I feel lucky to have kept so busy. I have not felt the downturn in the housing market at all. I guess I am in a nice niche market but what helps is referrals from architects and past customers. It looks like we will be busy for a long time to come."

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