

Building homes of distinction

Quad-City builder, Mark McManus looks to the future of new construction

By Jay Crump
QUAD-CITY TIMES

More and more, people are choosing to build homes and selecting styles reminiscent of those built during the 1920s and 1930s. Then craftsmanship was more art than labor and houses were trimmed using real woods such as cherry, walnut and oak, rather than some of the composites found on the market today. Homebuyers want to combine a sense of nostalgia along with amenities found in today's modern home.

According to Mark McManus, owner of McManus Development, new homes are being built to appease owners leaning towards a more casual lifestyle with a less formal appearance.

"Buyers today are very astute. They know and understand craftsmanship and they look for it in the homes they buy. We build houses the way they did 50 years ago — with that level of craftsmanship. We manufacture most of the wood trim, mantels, entertainment centers and other wood products that go into our houses. That way we keep total control over design and quality," he says. "Too many houses today are built using lower quality materials to save on cost and it shows up in the final product."

McManus, who has been involved in the Quad-City housing industry since 1977, says a popular trend in upper-end homes, those from \$450,000 and up, is to feature distressed hard-



McManus says homebuyers today are more astute and "... they know and understand craftsmanship and they look for it in the homes they buy."

wood and incorporate more family-friendly amenities.

"Through their desire to move back to a 'casual' home, a lot of people want that rustic look with cabinets and trim work made from distressed wood. Also, we're designing built-ins and stair cases integrating iron into their designs," he said. "Some of the more popular woods we're using are alder and knotty pine, again with a distressed finish, and cherry is very popular," he said.

"People want their house to be a home and not just a statement. Which is part of the nostalgia movement. We're incorporating all types of architectural styles in our houses, which includes amenities like all-paneled dens and beamed ceilings." McManus notes houses with heated tile floors are becoming more prevalent. "Home theater rooms are a must — people are staying home and enjoying their houses more."

Another area where McManus feels the homebuyer is getting tremendous value is with geo-thermal heating. This type of heating system doesn't dry the house out during the cold winter months like traditional gas furnaces and actually keeps the moisture content at a comfortable level.

"We've been using geo-thermal for about four or five years and it's cost effective immediately. Plus the technology makes the house more comfortable for

the homeowner," he explained.

As market prices for lumber and hardwoods continue to increase, McManus says he's able to pass on discounts to homebuyers by using his own cabinet shop.

"I started as a cabinetmaker right out of high school, and because of our cabinet shop, Pinnacle Millworks, we're able to eliminate the middle-man

—MCMANUS
continued on next page

2004 Homebuilding and Remodeling Preview

and supply a superior product. We design and mill all of our custom wood products and exercise quality control — so we're able to give the homebuyer exactly what they want to our standards. Our philosophy has always been 'to put more into the house' be it quality, craftsmanship, or materials. And because we control our own cabinet shop we're able to do things for our homebuyers other builders don't," he said.

Pebble Creek, Walsh Pointe and more ...

McManus says he's developing one acre lots north of the Davenport Country Club in the Pebble Creek sub-division. Homes in the north side of Pebble Creek will range from \$400,000 and up, while those in the south addition will go for \$800,000 and up.

"The area will also feature an 18-hole golf course designed by Lohmann Golf Designers out of Chicago. I understand they're one of the premier course designers in the United States."

Walsh Pointe is another area McManus says is perfect for today's mobile family or retiree. Besides having a super location, near Crow Valley Golf Course on Utica Ridge Road in Davenport, many of the homes are story-and-a-half and are available in a wide variety of styles.

"These homes are really very good for empty-nesters who still want to maintain a house here. They're close to shopping and grocery stores, plus they can accommodate visiting children and grandchildren," he said.

Preserve at Shabonee Estates

Another development sure to



Open floor plans are very popular today, says McManus. "We feature many styles and designs the homebuyer can select from."

"I started as a cabinetmaker ... we design and mill all of our custom wood products and exercise quality control — so we're able to give the homebuyer exactly what they want to our standards."

Mark McManus

be successful, and one that has McManus praising its location is the Preserve at Shabonee Estates near Port Byron, IL. Located on a former Girl Scout camp, the lots will range from 2.5 to 5.5 acres.

"This is a special area where homebuyers will have their choice of wooded acre lots," he said. Shabonee Estates will be unique among Quad-City developments because residents there will have access to their own 50 acre forest preserve.

"This area is very unique. It has some interesting local history surrounding Chief Blackhawk," he added. In addition,

the development will feature quite a bit of common area and the forest preserve is exclusive to the homeowners who will own a share of the land.

According to McManus, the division will feature homes starting in the \$500,000 range. "We're building these homes to fit the landscape and to complement their natural surroundings. Homeowners will be able to enjoy an abundance of local wildlife."

In conclusion

McManus says his homes generally range in sizes from 2,800 to 6,000 square-feet.



McManus homes feature beautiful woodwork and built-ins. This cherry entertainment center and wall unit was designed and manufactured at McManus-owned Pinnacle Millworks cabinet shop.



"People want their house to be home and not just a statement," says McManus. People are wanting to move back to a "casual-style home."

"We're building homes with a lot of stone or cobblestone and shake siding. And we use many different architectural styles. One thing we're recognized in this area for is our ability and willingness to work with the

homebuyer. We make sure they're comfortable with the entire process from selecting a site to financing to moving in."

For more information contact McManus Development at (563) 449-9212.