



Welcome home

For relocating couple, Triple Crown house was love at first sight

BY JUDI KETTELER | Courier Contributor
PHOTOS BY MARK BOWEN

When EGC Construction broke ground on a \$1.9 million home in the Triple Crown golf course community in Union, they were building on spec. There was no homeowner yet, but the custom homebuilder wasn't too worried: they knew the home and the lot would wind up selling itself.

"We haven't been stuck with a home yet," says Ray Beil, owner of Newport-based EGC, a firm that does residential, commercial and industrial construction.

True to form, halfway through the building process last summer, some prospective buyers became interested. An empty-nester couple was relocating from central Ohio, and friends recommended they check out Triple Crown.

They liked what they saw: a 7,500-squarefoot custom Country French style home. The couple got involved in time to pick out most of the finishes and features, including all of the kitchen appliances and fixtures, an Italian porcelain tile floor; and a built-in, see-through fireplace with intricate woodwork and stucco.

"We absolutely love this home. We loved it from the very beginning," said the homeowner (she asked not to be identified). "Plus, we got to make it our own."

That meant bringing in Francine Laenen, their Troy, Mich.-based decorator who had worked with the couple on two previous custom homes. She helped them choose warm tones — tans, soft greens and reds — for the furniture and accessories, and custom wall finishes to accent the European feel of the home.

Like many custom homes in the Triple Crown development, EGC's latest is a ranch with an open floor plan.

"The ranch style really appeals to the empty-nester demographic," said EGC's Paul Jasper, project manager for the job. "It's a real design



Jasper

'The ranch style really appeals to the empty-nester demographic. It's a real design challenge to get it all on one floor.'

Paul Jasper
EGC Construction



EGC designed and began building the 7,500-square-foot, Country French home on spec. The buyers entered the process in time to select most of the finishes and fixtures.

challenge to get it all on one floor.”

Today’s custom ranches are



Granite countertops and a mammoth range hood set off the kitchen area.

a far cry from the bland ranch styles of the 1950s. Designed as part of the suburban housing boom after the war, 1950s ranches are known less for architectural interest and posh detailing than they are for simple and easy-to-duplicate floor plans, appropriate for growing families.

Today’s custom ranches boast high-end detailing at every turn: ornate, hand-framed molding, coffered ceilings that stretch to 12 and 16 feet, stucco and tile work done in the “old world” method (versus modern, automated methods), hand-forged iron railings and beautifully carved ceiling medallions.

No detail is spared: everything is upgraded — that is, when economic times are good. And times are very good right now, said Beil.

“You can look at houses in subdivisions and figure out when certain homes were built by noticing the detailing,” he said.

In the kitchen, for example, recession means laminate countertops, he said, where in better

economic times counters are crowned in Corian, granite or slate.

Today’s custom homes are also about promoting a lifestyle. In this home, the homeowners do a lot of entertaining. They have three ovens, GE Monogram appliances (including a built-in, “hidden” refrigerator with custom woodwork), a full bar (with wine chiller) and an enormous range hood that looks more like a sculptured piece of art than a fan you flip on when you burn the toast.

The much-hyped greatroom — once an audacious statement — has evolved into an open floor plan, with one room meandering into the next. It promotes an easy flow for entertaining, versus a generation ago when floor plans were more about keeping rooms separate with niches for noisy kids to do homework and watch

television.

The house is also intricately connected to the site, said Beil.

“We don’t design by square footage,” he said. “We design for the site.”

In the case of this home, it was all about keeping access to a pretty view of the lake just beyond the yard. Whether you’re in the hearth room, the dining room, the living room or

PROJECT FACTS

Location: Triple Crown

Size: 7,500 square feet

Project cost: \$1.9 million

Construction, design & architecture: EGC

Features: Custom built-ins and woodwork, gourmet kitchen, wine cellar

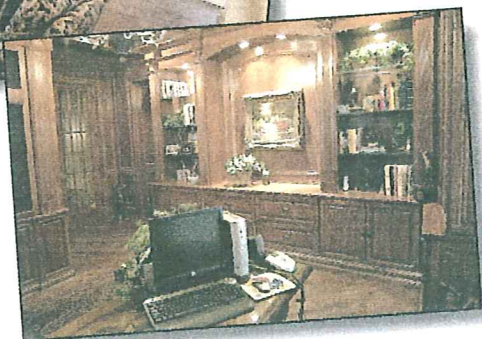
Below: A flat-panel television screen rests behind custom cabinet doors above the fireplace in the hearth room. Right: The 80-inch projection screen is in plain site in the lower level media room. Both rooms have coffered ceilings with built-in lighting.





The front entrance leads to an open floor plan, designed to accommodate entertaining.

The wood-paneled study offers seclusion from the openness that defines the home's first floor.



The master bathroom features a fireplace, whirlpool bath and coffered ceiling, as well as custom fixtures and an Italian tile floor with mosaic banding.

the kitchen, each room has a long visual toward the large windows that look out on the lake.

A swank lower level — now commonly called a “terrace level” when it includes a walk-out — is also a key element of today’s custom ranch.

EGC’s home not only features a second full bar downstairs, it also has several game tables, an exercise room and a media room with an 80-inch projection television.

For these homeowners, the wine cellar was undoubtedly one of the crown jewels of the home.

Designed to hold 2,200 bottles (they’ve amassed about 1,300 so far) the custom, cedar-built cellar is temperature controlled (55 degrees) with Italian porcelain tile and a custom-made door that features wood-carved grapevine detailing. The homeowners were able to salvage the three hand-painted canvases from their last wine cellar:

“We go to Napa every year,” the homeowner said, “and we knew we wanted a beautiful custom wine cellar.”

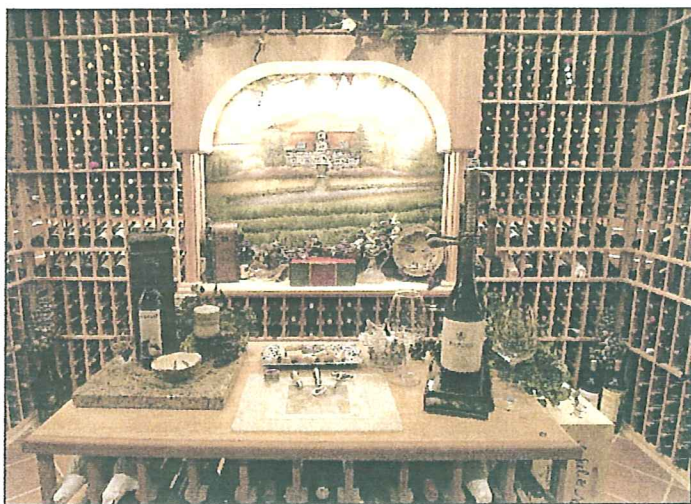
The only problem with over-the-top lower levels is that appraisers don’t always recognize the value they add to a home, said Jasper.

“They don’t always look at the detailing,” he said. “They just want to pigeon-hole it into the ‘basement’ category.”

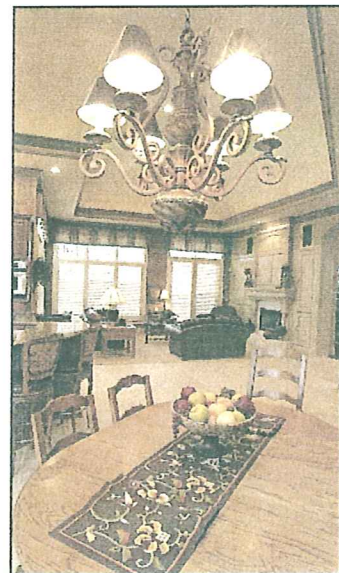
Otherwise, the upgrades of a custom home almost always retain their value, he said. That’s the key for a builder like EGC, because it only builds about two custom homes a year. Construction for this home, for example, took about 18 months. That’s a lifetime compared to production builders,

who can break ground on a home and have a finished product to sell five or six months later.

“It’s a whole different business,” said Jasper.



The lower-level wine cellar holds the homeowner's 1,300-bottle collection.



Windows offer a view of the lake from almost the entire first floor.