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Annual Wedding Guide

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AMBITIOUS TEAMWORK

In an ambitious and challenging project in the Saucon Valley, the professional team at Worthington & Shagen took a house down to the studs and rebuilt it in a “Barn Style” / BY CHRYSA SMITH

Complex and ambitious—those are the projects our firm is meant for,” says Chance Worthington of Worthington & Shagen Custom Home Builders of Newtown. In fact, right now, the firm just finished working on a project that was not only expansive, but exceedingly detailed. Speaking with Worthington about this project it is understood that to fulfil the expectations of their discerning clients, a professional and well-organized team is a necessity. Desiring to consistently satisfy their clients, Steve and Chance determined over 20 years ago that they needed to develop a well-



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and continually update everyone involved with the project.

Steve explains: “As a home starts to take shape—the customers own vision of the finished product also develops and gets sharper. This inevitably results in changes, refinement of details, and we need to keep everyone on the same page. This requires having a field team that is constantly updated, and that knows how to work well together and with the clients and their design professionals”

Chance, Steve and all their people love when the clients finally see their vision turned into reality. When the windows go in, the stone goes up. Their excitement is palpable. And so it was with their recent project just north of Bucks County in Saucon Valley. In this major renovation all existing space was gutted down to the studs and put back together in a traditional fashion. A new section of the renovation is made in barn style using a post and beam/timber frame type of construction.

The owners, who took residence last spring had the home designed by the esteemed Chester County-based architectural firm Archer and Buchanan. It was special because it was such a traditional home, but it was laid out for modern-day living. The firm is seeing so much of this demand in recent years. They claim for the most part, people still want aspects of a traditional home, but with the openness and well-connected rooms that facilitate contemporary family living and entertaining.

“In the past, the style was traditional,” Worthington explains. “It has now gone to transitional.” Styles change—but the key elements of communication with the client, architect and designer and developing a highly skilled group of craftsman will always be the key to success in custom construction.

With major renovations being so very popular, it’s almost hard to classify a project as a renovation or a new build. The Saucon Valley home was in essence a new house. Working with foundations—literally re-designing and reconstructing a home from

the ground up is a challenge.

According to Shagen, “Renovation projects evolve over the course of work because of hidden problems.” And if you watch enough home remodeling shows, you get the idea. Where the budget starts is rarely what the final numbers come in at. Electrical, plumbing and structural problems—you name it and older homes possibly have them. One of Worthington and Shagen’s customers purchased a very large home, over 12,000 square feet. On paper it looked like you could purchase an existing home and redesign everything to make it exactly to your liking. But there are often so many problems, they might actually be getting a 10 to 20 percent less perfect house, as Worthington described it. Yet if the company had to put a number to it, they have about a 60/40 mix of new construction vs. renovation.

Presently, their new construction team is busy working on reframing a barn, with about 75 percent of it being rebuilt; adding a new integral structure. This wide variety of projects—new construction, renovation, large projects and small, and different structural approaches (stick frame, steel, and wood post and beam) motivated Worthington & Shagen to develop their own cloud based project management system. There are some that are commercially available, but Worthington & Shagen found that they needed more flexibility for the diverse projects they handle.

While Chance Worthington and Stephen Shagen come by their successful building business naturally, over the last 25 years they have worked tirelessly to transform what his great grandfather began almost four generations ago. Shagen, a carpenter by trade, joined the firm in the early 90s and helped to build the company into the example of professionalism it is today, thereby earning his stake in the business. Together, with their field technicians, they have earned numerous awards for both custom homes and renovations from the Home Builder’s Association of Bucks and Montgomery Counties. A member of the National Association of Home Builders,

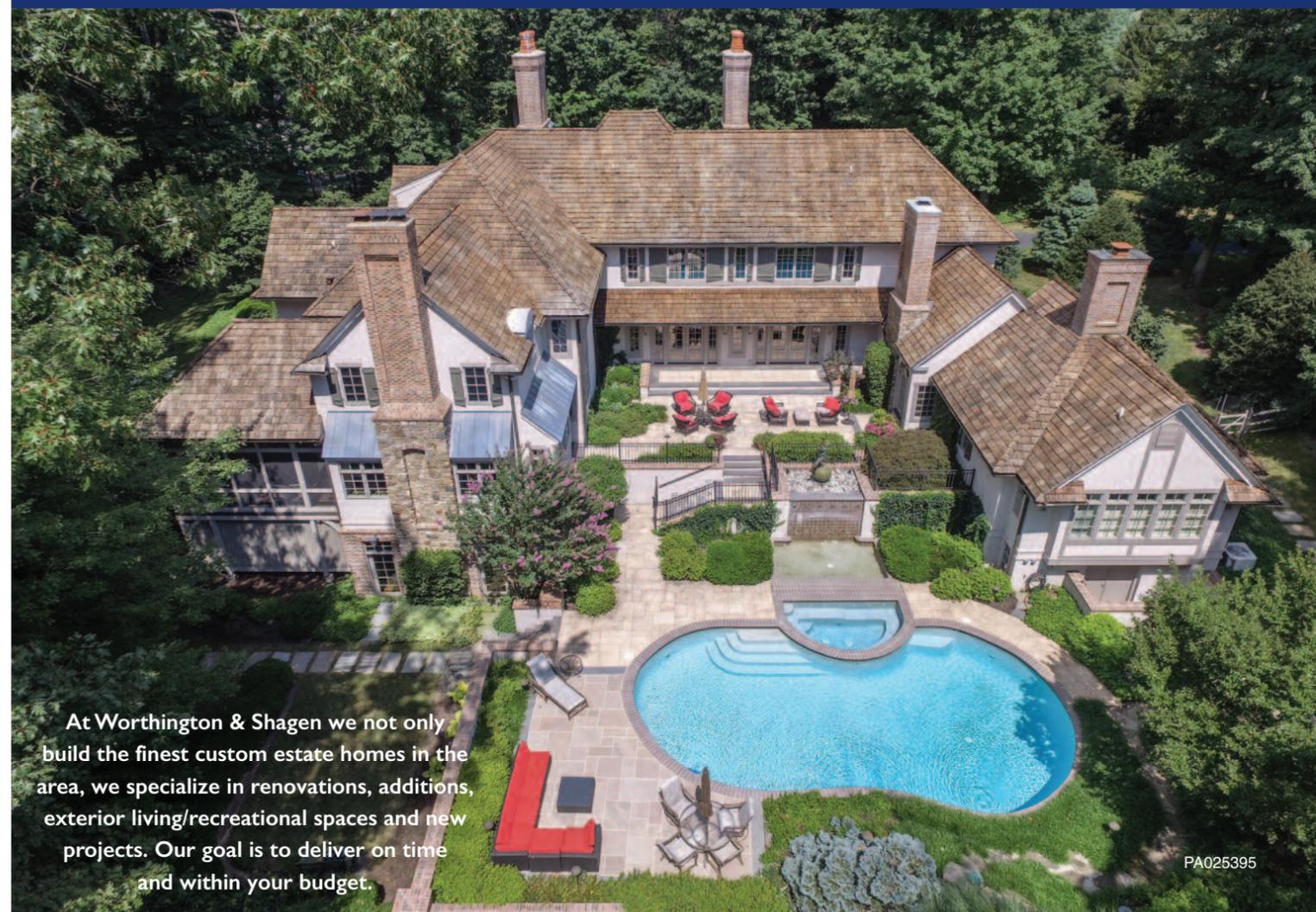
about 95 percent of their business comes from repeat customers and referrals. Their stable financial position with vendors and contractors provides comfort for customers who know that they stand behind their work both verbally and financially.

“Customers are more educated today. They visit websites and can present photos of what they want. But they don’t always understand how things go together,” says Steve Shagen. Some homeowners desire to bring in a company like Worthington and Shagen for what one might call a ‘partial’ renovation—picking and choosing which aspects of the project they are hiring out and which they might want to do themselves. Naturally, web-based education can make it quite tempting to pick out something like a range hood, tap the ‘purchase’ button, all without understanding how it will fully work within a design. As such, Worthington asks homeowners about the complete scope of their project. As experts who work at this on a daily basis, they can put together the whole package and stand behind it, knowing that everything works perfectly well the first time.

For example, in a recent New Hope contemporary home there were two different designers. “A Design firm from Center City Philadelphia introduced us to the client as we had completed several past projects with them” says Worthington. And the downstairs of the home was redone—from the fireplace wall to the floors. The kitchen tile was removed and Brazilian Cherry wood flooring was installed. A new kitchen and powder room were added. There has been a growing trend toward transitional and modern design that began about 10 years ago in the area and this home was a prime example of it. More recently, the same client wanted to renovate the master suite. Another designer from Lambertville was brought in, but his choice for field execution remained consistent. Worthington and Shagen coordinated the entire project and their field team performed most of the onsite work. While the designer supplied

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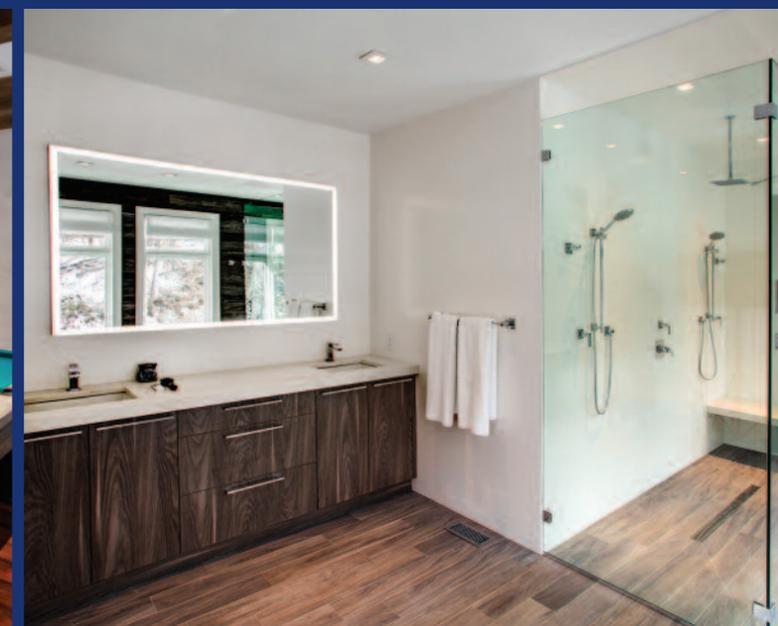
At Worthington & Shagen we not only build the finest custom estate homes in the area, we specialize in renovations, additions, exterior living/recreational spaces and new projects. Our goal is to deliver on time and within your budget.

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the tile, vanities and other finish materials, they entrusted Worthington & Shagen with the execution.

The firm also stands strong at the end, or “closeout process,” where they go over the details with clients and petition their feedback. This helps them maintain the high building and personal standards that have led to their success. In fact, they have put into practice a follow-up system that checks in on clients in three to six months; even a year later. The company says their main hallmark is working well with their customers. Clients love their crews so much that Worthington thinks they have invented projects in order to keep working together.

“The ultimate goal is the total satisfaction of the client,” Worthington notes.

“Everyone involved gets excited when significant milestones are hit—when plans are complete, the frame is in place, the stonework takes shape, and the final completion.” They often help past customers with smaller projects. Recently an older couple ran into “use and occupy permit” issues in Doylestown, and they were able to collaborate with the realtor to resolve. He also renovated a kitchen for a large family in record time. In an effort to minimize the inconvenience for a large family, the partners knew the organization and preparation phase was critical. All decisions and selections for the project were made in advance and all of the materials (cabinets, plumbing fixtures, tile, wood flooring, etc.) were stockpiled on site before demolition began.

This enabled them to expedite a fully custom designed kitchen. The family had their new kitchen up and running in about a month.

It’s pretty clear that these two men have not only developed a systematic approach to construction, but they have developed a culture of excellence and customer satisfaction with in the ranks of their tenured field team. They truly have transformed a “family business” into a professional service company that is relentless in the pursuit of satisfied customers.

Worthington and Shagen Custom Builders is located at 1108 Wrightstown Road, Newtown, PA 18940. They can be reached online at www.worthingtoncustombuilder.com or by calling 215-504-5500.