

Concepts



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▲ Is this Pickell-built home in Dijon, Lyon, Torino, or Marseilles? Answer: Lake Forest. What did you expect? For a complete itinerary and photos of the Design Group's trip to France, visit us at www.pickellbuilders.com and click on "Design Group Trip to France."

French country architecture: c'est magnifique

The casual charm of French Country architecture has forever captured the hearts of architectural enthusiasts. Today, more and more people are seeking to build residences that emulate countryside chateaus, as it is a style that says "bonjour."

A Lake Forest residence (above) is but one example of a home built by Orren Pickell Designers and Builders that is characterized as French Country due to a number of special features. A hips and gables roof with its varying eave heights and French chimney cap sets the tone while a turret with eyebrow windows is reminiscent of a stately European mansion. A Mettawa house (page 3 top) is also in keeping with this style. The exterior emulates the stucco fronts so common in rural France, and the tall, thin windows and wrought iron details add elegance to the home.

On the interior, kitchens in French manor homes of the past usually featured an oversized island, which back then was a large table. Additionally, this room frequently had surfaces made from granite that was easily obtained in most parts of the country. The Lake Forest residence mimics this, with an island made to resemble a piece of freestanding furniture (page 2). This kitchen is further highlighted by painted tile above the

See **FRENCH COUNTRY** page 4



▲ This beautiful new Highland Park home exhibits the rambling look, but not the "patchwork," of actual French architecture.



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▲ **Above:** An elegant formal dining area in Mettawa.

Right: Charlemagne never had a library like this one! Custom created by CabinetWerks of Lincolnshire. Wainscot by Orren Pickell master carpenters.



Tour de france: an investment in our company and our clients

by Orren T. Pickell

At Orren Pickell Designers and Builders, we are always researching new ways to better serve our clients, and in doing so we strengthen and grow our company. This summer, it took the form of a trip to France. Staff members from our Design Group embarked on a 10-day tour of the land of wine and cheese to learn more about French architecture, which is currently undergoing a wave in popularity here on Chicago's North Shore.



Interestingly enough, on the winding streets of Paris and the green hills of the countryside, we discovered that French architecture is much more than grand palaces and quaint chateaus. Although Paris is overwhelmingly Provincial, we observed Spanish, English and Mediterranean influences during our travels, and saw firsthand how architecture adapts to climate as well as culture.

This trip was much more than an educational endeavor. In order to give our clients truly superior service, our entire staff must be able to work effortlessly as a team. By taking time out as a group to have fun and share a mutually enjoyable experience, I can't help but believe this will translate into even more sharing of ideas and, thus, an ever-improving product.

In fact, our entire company—from the sales department to the Remodeling Group—was built on a team approach. In our Design Group, for example, there are at least three architects working on each and every house we build. They design, draw and problem-solve together, augmenting the other's weaknesses and enhancing their teammate's strengths.

Technology in the form of CAD and other software has greatly improved this process. Line drawings that five years ago were very difficult to break up can now be viewed by different architects simultaneously with the touch of a key board. Soon every project at Pickell will have its own Web site, and starting with our next concept house, the Renaissance.com House, all the selections and scheduling for a project will be made on-line through the Web-based marketplace Solutions on-Site.

Speaking of the Internet, please visit us at www.pickellbuilders.com for a detailed itinerary of our trip to France. It was a fun, exciting, and memorable adventure!



▲ **Above:** This kitchen in the Lake Forest home on the cover of this newsletter, was designed and built by CabinetWerks using Wood-Mode fine custom cabinetry. It includes hand-painted tiles that evoke a Monet feeling.



Top: This elegant home in Mettawa is a Gold Key Award Winner, and a perfect example of French Provincial architecture.
Bottom: This Country French Highland Park beauty is another Gold Key Award Winner. Note the stone work and classic turret.

Country



Smudge Out Address!

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French Country (from page 1)

cooktop, which evokes the image of an Impressionist painting.

Windows are another tool designers use to create a certain ambience. In the Mettawa residence, the dining room's French doors lead out to the spectacular swimming pool and are a true focal point of the room (page 2).

While all of these residences include French Country details, it is important to point out that one of the great aspects of architecture today is that designers can utilize a combination of styles and materials, yet still achieve the same affect. In a Highland Park residence (front cover), white modern furnishings in the living room only enhance the European atmosphere. Likewise, the Mettawa residence interior is more Provincial than it is Country, with its beautiful crystal chandeliers and formal decor. Tony Perry, Pickell vice president and head of the Design Group, says the key is to hire a firm that knows how to interpret the style but still allows enough flexibility for the clients to have fun and personalize their house.

In fact, true French Country architecture is all about mixing the formal with the informal, the old with the new. Historically, French builders and masons were limited to the building materials that were indigenous to the area, and if a certain stone or wood became unavailable they would have to make do with something else. As a result, if a farmer or vineyard (vigneron) owner put on an addition, it wouldn't always match the existing house, resulting in a rambling-type effect. While architects today don't aspire to duplicate this same "patchwork" look, it is the mood it creates that's important. The Pickell architects accomplished this perfectly in the Highland Park residence.

Tony says that although French Country architecture is currently in vogue, it has never really gone out of fashion because of its classic, traditional style, which blends easily into Midwestern neighborhoods. In explaining the current popularity of the style, he says that families are spending more and more time at home and as a result are seeking both comfort and elegance, inside and out. The strong economy also means more people are traveling to Europe, and upon returning home these tourists are showing their enthusiasm for its great architecture.



▲ French Country comes to Northbrook. What a beautiful place to spend a warm summer afternoon.

The design group's on-going education

If a client was to sit in on a meeting of the Pickell Design Group, the conversation would most likely be peppered with conversation about jazz bars in France, virtual-reality "fly-bys" and goings-on at the University of Illinois. What does any of this have to do with building? The answer is everything.

This summer some staff members from the Design Group took a trip to France, seeing eight cities and covering 3,000 miles in just 10 days. With seasoned French traveler Tony Perry, vice president and head of the Design Group, acting as a tour guide, Pickell architects gained a true appreciation and understanding of French culture and architecture. Clients interested in French architecture can now work with designers who have walked the halls of the country's museums and savored each region's delicious cuisine. The end result will surely be homes with more originality and authenticity.

On the homefront, the staff regularly takes part in seminars and weekend outings. A trip to Colorado for an American Institute of Architecture convention and an excursion to Quebec may soon be in the works. Each Friday, the group also visits one or two Pickell homes under construction to learn from the craftsmen in the field.

Speaking of education, Orren Pickell Designers & Builders recently began investing in teaching others outside of the firm. Most university classes focus on the design of commercial buildings, so when the Home Builders Association of Greater Chicago came up with the idea for a residential design competition for students at the University of Illinois Chicago and Champaign-Urbana, Pickell took the lead. The idea took shape and the competition was written into the curriculum. (Forgive our bragging, but Tony Perry actually wrote the curriculum!)

Tony, a U of I Architecture School grad, visited Bob Selby, the professor who runs the program in Urbana-Champaign and Ken Schroeder, the professor who led the project at the Chicago campus. Tony was then invited to address a class. He shared with them his passion for residential architecture and explained how rewarding this line of work is.

Pickell also has an aggressive and successful college internship program. Eight of the current 16-person Design Group came from this effort. Last summer, six college interns were trained in CAD, Photoshop, and other software. They were also taught design skills, color rendering, presentation skills, and even had actual client contact. Four of the six were hired by Pickell at the end of this summer—the other two went back to school and, like their fellow interns, hope to return to the Pickell Design Group after graduation.



▲ Mark Benner and John Anstadt are two members of the Design Group who visited France.