

Builder/Architect

Feature
**What's Underfoot
Is Top of Mind**

**Carl M.
Hansen
Companies**

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Carl M. Hansen Companies

By Russ J. Stacey

For Carl Hansen, what's old is new again. Or maybe it's the other way around.

Tapping into the past — and his company's rich heritage

— the third-generation builder has crafted a faithful throw-back to the stylish homes of another time that, combined with modern building practices and technologies, was selected as a Dream Home in the 2008 Fall Parade of Homes.

Front entrance view



PHOTO BY FRANK HEFFELFINGER

“It was quite simply a tribute to redo one of the homes that he did in the Edina Country Club area in the late 1920s or early '30s. That's what made the house so fun, and I think that's why it was selected as a Dream Home,” Hansen says.

The “he” that Hansen refers to is his grandfather, also named Carl Hansen, an immigrant from Norway who first worked as a carpenter on these shores. After making his way to the Minneapolis area, he began building in the 1920s with his uncle, Louis.

“They started in Lowry Hill, which is right at the edge of downtown Minneapolis, near the Walker Arts Center,” explains Tom Jones, a long-time local real estate agent. “It's a gentrified, upscale residential neighborhood today and the original home for founding families of major industries in the Minneapolis area like the Pipers from Piper Jaffray, the Dunwoodys and some the original big lumber baron families.”

In the 1940s, the elder Hansen purchased 600 acres of farmland in northwest Edina near Interlachen Country Club. According to his grandson, everyone told him he was “crazy”



PHOTOS BY FRANK HEFFELINGER

Formal living room

Kitchen



because “no one would ever want to live that far away from Minneapolis.” The fact that the land is a paltry 5 miles from downtown indicates the discrepancy in perspective of distance between then and now. The elder Hansen built up the neighborhood, Parkwood Knolls, one parcel at a time from the 1940s until his death in 1991. The younger Hansen took over the business in 1992 from his father, Harvey Hansen, who briefly held the reins.

Reflecting sumptuous attributes and meticulous craftsmanship, the Parkwood Knolls Parade home opens up with a striking front entry that leads to an elegant gallery reception hall with inlaid herringbone floors of African wenge and Brazilian sucupira wood. Dramatically detailed arches offer dramatic sight lines to the main floor’s formal and informal areas. Custom millwork, white and black marble, custom-designed cabinetry, entryway eyebrows, coffered ceiling, built-in buffets, push-button light switches and other materials and designs that would have been seen in previous eras await throughout the nearly 5,000-square-foot home. •

A classic traditional two-story brick home built in the Country Club vein and matching the elder Hansen’s



Master bedroom

Master bath



PHOTOS BY FRANK HEFFELFINGER

uncompromising quality, the home's level of detail is "exceptional," according to architectural designer Tom Rauscher of Rauscher/Robichaud. "Most of the time, molding profiles and such that are put in newer homes are much narrower and smaller to save money. But we decided not to skimp on the millwork details, like bringing some of the arched openings back into what a lot of the older homes had. And with the faucets and hardware, there's much more of a substantial feeling to them. More vintage profiles."

Echoing the typical Country Club style, the residence was designed to be washed in sunlight from all four sides, unlike many modern homes that only have windows located front to back. The airy effect complements the open floor plan that still retains intimate spaces.

But unlike an exact reproduction of a vintage Country Club house, this home allows you to peek into the past while it adopts the best practices that bring it up to today's living standards. Modern conveniences like spacious walk-in closets and master suites take it beyond the realm of pure nostalgia. Energy innovations also allow for doubling the window percentage.

The running joke is that this Country Club home has closets! Of course, original Country Club homes also had them — but just barely. A master bedroom would typically contain two 4-foot-wide by 2-foot-deep closets; children's bedrooms may have a 3-foot by 2-foot closet.

"They wouldn't qualify as closets by anyone's standards today anymore than a wood-burning stove and ice-box would be considered a modern kitchen," explains Jones.

The master bedroom suite — including sitting area, coffee bar, bed alcove, opulent bath with a floating tub at its center and wardrobe room

in addition to the closet — creates a warm, sophisticated getaway that would have been unheard of 60 or 70 years ago.

"I also think that the whole back end of the house, with the kitchen/morning room and the family center, is so functional yet has a lot of beauty and a lot of detail to it. The kitchen is open and yet it doesn't feel like it's sitting in the middle of the family room. The spaces flow," Rauscher says.

With countless remodels in the Country Club area under his belt, Rauscher drew on his experience and expertise

Morning room



PHOTO BY FRANK HEFFELFINGER

for the Parade Dream Home. The vision was simple, he says. “I wanted to get to that older type of home, and that involved creating intimate outdoor living spaces as much as the intimate indoor spaces. Things like the terrace, the arbor, the double-sided fireplace in the screened porch. On the other side it was the motor court and getting the garage pushed off the street. It kind of gave me an option for another place to give kids to safely play.

“And if you look at the landscape, I worked with the landscaper to make sure we had boulevard trees, which doesn’t happen much anymore nowadays. So, we’re trying to get the neighborhood those large canopy streets back again.”

“Looking at Carl’s old plans from the 1930s and ’40s, studying streetscapes and old blueprints, everything was mixed together to come up with a house that has the strength, detail and bulky elements of the last hundred years in a new house,” Jones says.

“People walk in there and know it’s on the Parade of Homes and know it’s a new home, but still ask me how long the house has been there,” Hansen says.

People are surprised to hear that there are new lots still available in Edina. From the original 600 acres the elder Hansen purchased 60 years ago with the intention of developing a timeless neighborhood, the final phases of Parkwood Knolls are in full swing. The last 36 lots are available and, with the company averaging four builds a year, it will be close to a decade before the area is filled out. With Parkwood Knolls, the sole development that the company owns, they also do outside projects and build on client-owned lots.

“It’s the last tract of undeveloped land in Edina to be developed, besides infill and things like that. So, it’s a



Study

PHOTO BY FRANK HEFFELINGER

pretty big step for us because for the first time in our company’s history we don’t have raw, undeveloped land,” Hansen says.

He’s already looking to position Carl M. Hansen Companies post Parkwood Knolls. “We’ve obviously been an Edina-centric company for the last 80 years or so, so we would like to stay in the area and be considered one of the top choices to do replacement teardown/rebuilds of the original homes. Not only did we build those first houses, but what better choice of a company to do the replacements?” ■