

# Their dream house an American classic

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"There are so many advantages to building yourself," Mark said. "We had more flexibility and were able to customize the house."

Being their own boss, the Smiths took time to obtain 100-year-old beams from a barn near Morris, Mich., for the great room and living room. They also hunted for authentic, thumb latches for interior doors and hand cast strap hinges and a knocker for the front door.

Peggy also found authentic, tin fixtures at Horwood's Country House in Plymouth. Through a Garden City glass company, she ordered old-fashioned, bullet glass from Germany, which was placed over the front door for natural lighting.

THOUGH BUILDING a house yourself has advantages, the couple quickly points out the downside.

Mark remembers the long days, often working at the house eight hours or more after leaving his regular job. He had to check the work done during the day and once fired a sub-contractor for an unsatisfactory job. During construction, Peggy often drove around town searching for masons, roofers and other workers to hire.

"I used to pull off the road and take names and phone numbers if I saw someone working

**"There are so many advantages to building yourself. We had more flexibility and were able to customize the house."**

— Mark Smith homeowner

construction," Peggy said. "I was always on the lookout."

Mark learned early in the construction that the rough carpenter is one of the most important tradesmen. Taking off only Christmas day, their carpenter did the framing, installed drywall, hung doors and installed beams and plank, pine flooring throughout the house.

After serving fast-food dinners on make-shift, saw-horse tables, Peggy stained and sealed the floors and trim throughout the house. Mark painted the interior and finished the kitchen, which includes custom, pine cabinets and a work island. The kitchen fireplace includes a pot for cooking.

Though it was difficult building during the winter, the toughest job was preparing the basement floor for the pouring of cement after a

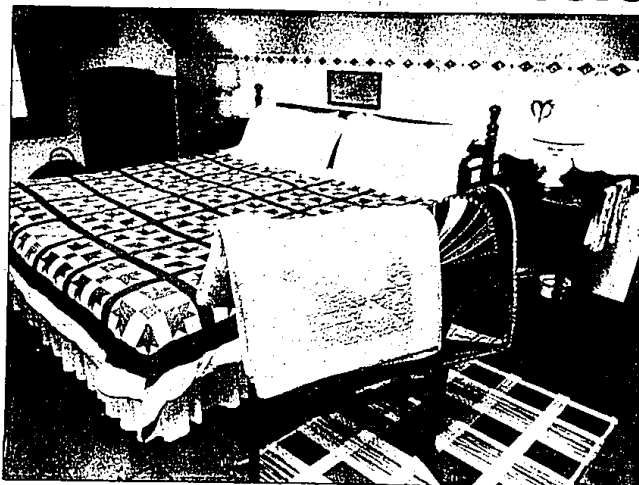
spring thaw. Mark and his son, Adam, removed wheelbarrows full of muck from the basement and poured layers of pea gravel to create a base for concrete.

THE SUMMER the family moved into the house, Mark painted the home's rough cedar exterior with a transparent, gray stain. "It was so hot, I'd sometimes paint at night while Peggy held a spotlight," Mark said.

The home's interior is a pleasing mix of Early American-style furnishings and accessories, including a 100-year-old church pew in the kitchen. The couple chose off-white for the walls, which are decorated with Peggy's cross stitch, art work, hand-made baskets and custom stenciling. Mark built the pine armoire in the great room from a plan Peggy made. Windows are decorated with simple, cotton curtains sheared on dowel rods.

Plymouth Nursery designed a herb garden around the brick walkway. The garden includes plants found in the American colonies before 1800. Peggy added Baby's Breath and other favorite flowers in color.

Mark, who recently earned a Residential Builders License, couldn't be happier with the house. "We used to drive around and look at other subdivisions, but we don't now. We'll never sell."



The Smiths' master suite is decorated with red and green, custom stenciling, rag rugs and simple, cotton window treatments. Peggy

Smith made the quilted bedspread. Quilts made by her grandmother and great-grandmother hang on a handmade quilt rack.

## Gospel musicale tonight

Northbrook Presbyterian Church of Beverly Hills will host a presentation of "The Cotton Patch Gospel," by Graystone Youth Productions of Indiana and Pennsylvania, at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, March 7.

Graystone is in its 10th season of presenting Christian musicals. The company consists of 85 young people, grades 7-12, and advisers who travel with them in two buses and a

15-foot truck. This year's tour is taking the group through Michigan, Ohio and Western Pennsylvania. "The Cotton Patch Gospel" uses bluegrass music to tell the story of Christ's life in a modern Georgia setting.

The presentation is open to the public, a freewill offering will be taken. Northbrook Church is at 14 Mile and Lahser, Beverly Hills.

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