

CAPTIVATING QUARTERS

Gingerbread Gothic Revival owners' village isn't a cookie-cutter place

by Barbara E. Cohen

Painter Grant Wood made the Gothic Revival style famous in "American Gothic," a painting that depicts two farmers in front of their farmhouse in rural Iowa. Although the image has been heavily parodied since it was unveiled in 1930, Annette and Jim Post weren't making a statement when they selected the style for their new home in Carmel's Village of WestClay subdivision.

"We had no preconceived exterior plan," Annette Post says. "One of the things we liked about the Village was the array of colors and the style of the homes. We placed our trust in our builder, and he guided us to a Gothic Revival design."

Dale Woodall, owner of

Woodall Construction Services, built the Posts' home and 45 houses with price tags from \$500,000 to \$1.6 million in the Village of WestClay. As one of the custom builders selected to work in the village, Woodall follows architectural guidelines intended to create a strong sense of community with visual interest not found in many modern subdivisions. He recommended the Gothic Revival style for several reasons, including his own admiration for it.



The façade of the Posts' house shows the Gothic Revival details.

"It's not as prominent as some other architectural styles in the Village of WestClay, such as Federal, Greek Revival or Italianate," Woodall says. "On the Posts' street, which is home to many empty-nesters like them, the other houses were more subtle. The Gothic Revival has a little more visual interest."

Based loosely on French Gothic architecture, the Gothic Revival house of the 1830s translated elaborately carved stonework into wood filigree, or fretwork known as gingerbread, thanks to use of the newly invented scroll saw. The style was introduced in the early Victorian period by architects such as Andrew Jackson Downing, who published pattern books that helped popularize the style. Even so, the Gothic Revival style was more common in churches and civic buildings than in homes.

Woodall used the most prominent features of the Gothic Revival style on the exterior of the Posts' house. For example, it has a steeply pitched roof, lacy bargeboards — wood trim carved like Gothic stone tracery — at the gable ends, windows and doors with pointed arches, vertical board-and-batten siding on the second story and an asymmetrical floor plan with a small porch. The style is sometimes known as "carpenter Gothic" after the anonymous carpenters responsible for the characteristic fretwork.

The Posts' four-bedroom, four-bath home has about 4,200 square feet of living space with a master suite downstairs and guest bedrooms on the second floor. "We selected a lot that faces a green space [Jennings Green] and homes with larger lot sizes [Estates section] because we thought it would be a good value as



Annette Post in her home's Gothic doorway.

well as for aesthetic reasons," Annette says.

As first-time homebuilders, the Posts say they decided on the Village of WestClay, a Traditional Neighborhood Development created by the Brenwick development company, because they liked the lifestyle it represents. "We were attracted to the diversity of traditional architectural styles, the variety of the people, many of whom are from other urban areas like we are, and the range of ages of people who live here," Annette says of the 686 acres south of 131st Street and east of Towne Road. "It's not a cookie-cutter place."

With the community only partially filled, there is still a lot of construction going on around the subdivision. From the Posts' Gothic Revival front porch, they have a front-row seat to watch as the neighborhood takes shape around them. ❖