

project description

Type:	Multi-Phased Addition, Whole House Exterior Renovations, Interior Renovations, Outdoor Living/Landscaping, and New Carriage House
Contractor:	L.H. Construction (see ad p. 34)
Trade Partners:	Homestead Outdoor Products (see ad p. 42) Lancaster Stone Company Inc. (see ad p. 38) Martin's Flooring (see ad p. 41) MillStream Landscapes (see ad p. 47) Musselman Lumber Inc. (see ad p. 37) Shank Door Company (see ad p. 44) Water & Wire Works Inc. (see ad p. 40) Yale Lighting Concepts & Design (see ad p. 42)
Scope:	<p>Initial Project. In August of 2008 L.H. Construction (LHC) was introduced to homeowners, Linda and Bill, who wanted to increase the size of the pool deck area. During that conversation it was mentioned that they may be looking to do an addition onto their home as well. Plans were developed and approved and construction was completed in October. A special feature in the addition included timber-frame rafters salvaged out of a Lancaster County barn. In conjunction with the addition project, a new, whole house heating and cooling system was installed.</p> <p>Phase II. In March of 2010, LHC started renovations to the kitchen and living room on the first floor—removing the walls in the kitchen, dining room, and living room to take advantage of the terrific view the new addition created. In addition to changing the location of the one stairway to the basement, LHC created an open-tread oak staircase with 3" thick Red Oak treads, wrought-iron railing topped off with a wood cap. Renovations to the new, open space first floor plan included new kitchen cabinets with granite counter tops, a stone fireplace with a gas stove and a barn timber mantle, as well as new flooring throughout.</p> <p>Phase III. In February 2011, Linda showed LHC a 32' x 36' crawl space under the west end of the house that had a height of about 3 feet. She wanted to remodel her basement and needed a dry and climate-controlled area to safely house her many antiques. Her idea was to have the crawl space dug out to make it into a full-height storage area. Using a small Bobcat walk-behind track loader, LHC cut 5' of fill out of roughly 1000 square feet of crawl space and turned it into a full basement—complete with in-floor radiant heat and a dehumidifier. In April 2011, the basement renovation was completed which included the addition of a serving bar, entertainment center, a craft area, new flooring and ceiling.</p> <p>Phase IV. In the spring of 2012, LHC was called upon once again to build a reverse gable on the north side of the home to match the addition on the south side along with re-shingling the entire home's roof with new 30-year architectural shingles. In conjunction with the gable and roof project, the entire white brick exterior was covered with stick on stone and stucco.</p> <p>Phase V. In the fall of 2012, LHC completed a 16' x 22' carriage house with a 2nd floor area accessible by a full set of pull down, retractable steps.</p>



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When a contractor gets called back to a job, it's generally not a good thing. It's usually because something was missed or something isn't holding up the way it was expected. In either case, the homeowners aren't happy.

On the other hand, a call back can be the highest compliment, especially when the call back is to do *another* project. For Leola builders, Kent Nolt and Matthew Garman, co-owners of

L.H. Construction, they got such a compliment—four times already and still counting!

Unlike the typical project where a master plan is developed early on to address *everything* that the homeowners want completed, homeowners Linda and Bill didn't have a grand plan.

It's not that they were new to the house and wanted to get a better

feel...Linda's father, a builder by profession, actually built it. And since its completion in 1969, it has been Linda's only home outside of her college years. With her father's passing in 1981 and her mother's move a few years later across town to be closer to friends, Linda was the home's sole occupant until her marriage in 1984.

Given her reluctance to alter the home her father designed and built, she was in no hurry to make any snap



decisions. What changes she was going to make needed to be well thought out and, above all, respectful of her father's work.



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What got things started was Linda and Bill's interest in expanding the pool deck area and the possibility of a home addition to bring their home closer to the pool. As it was, the area around the pool was barely wide enough for a chase lounge and the pool was a good 70 feet from the house.

Through a recommendation from a friend, they were introduced to Kent at L.H. Construction who immediately started working on plans integrating the pool expansion with a new addition. After some detailed back and forth discussions over a period of several months, plans were eventually approved at which time the project fell into the capable hands of L.H. Construction co-owner, Matt Garman. From that point on, Matt provided daily supervision of the project and was Linda's point of contact in addressing issues that surfaced during the construction phase.

Over the next several months, it was through this daily contact with Matt that a very strong working relationship began to develop. Linda quickly realized that Matt not only had a great eye for detail—he was also very creative in incorporating her ideas (many of which were last minute) into the plans.

In fact, Linda's "ideas" became a running joke between the two. On numerous occasions Matt would arrive to the jobsite to Linda's morning greeting of "Matt, I've been thinking..."

Through this period of ongoing collaboration, a level of trust emerged that would serve L.H. Construction well...time and time again. Upon completion of the addition and the pool deck project in 2009, Linda's "thinking" brought L.H. Construction back for four subsequent projects as described in the *Project Description*

on page 33. In sitting down with Linda and Matt it was clear that this 4-year relationship is not over. Linda is STILL thinking.

Since the start of R&A Magazine in 2007, our cover stories have featured projects that all had a master plan with a well-defined scope of work. Instead of a master plan, it seems that this project morphed from one phase into the next. Is that an accurate description?

Linda: Yes, I suppose so. I am a very hands-on and visual type of person and many of my ideas don't surface



a question totally different than what you had planned on but that child needed your attention at that moment so you just went with it. The same thing happened with the series of projects...one idea led to another.

Matt: And that's exactly why a plan encompassing the entire series of projects would not have worked. Linda's ideas evolved as we went along and, being the detail oriented guy that I am, I enjoyed the challenge. Linda would come up with an idea and I'd run with it.

Linda: One small but perfect example of Matt's creative side was his idea of incorporating horseshoes as

brackets for the hand railings leading down to the pool area. I thought it was a very ingenious way of bringing my background in horse show competition into the mix.

Matt: The whole railing system was custom designed and anything that's custom tends to get my wheels turning.

until I have an opportunity to see something and feel it. After I've had an opportunity to experience things the ideas seem to flow. It was no different than when I taught school. Every day was a different day so you always had to be prepared for that next challenge. I guess I thrive on that. An idea starts and you go with that. In the classroom, a student might have



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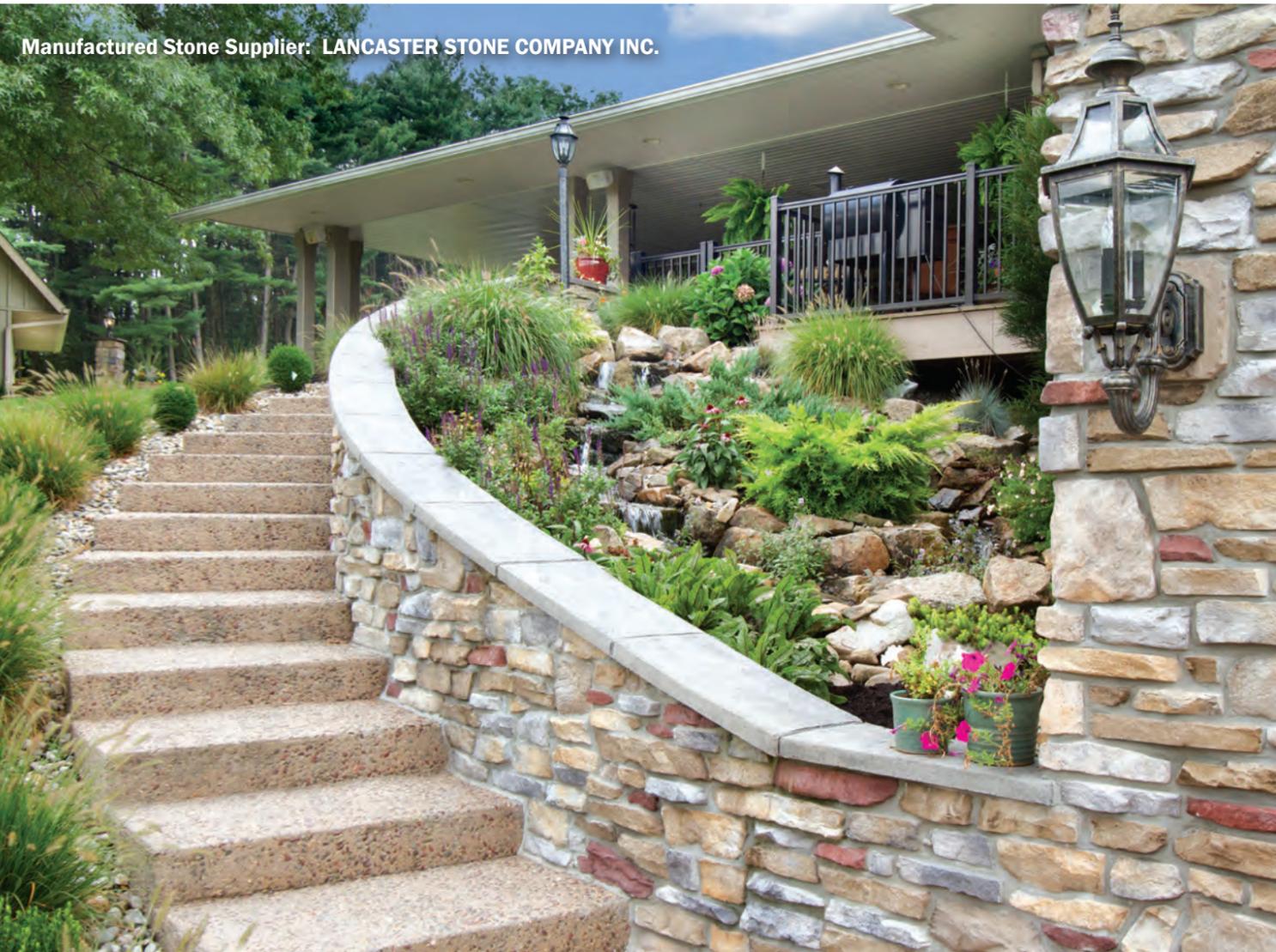
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I knew Linda was a horse person and the idea of using horseshoes as brackets just kind of clicked. The blacksmith who did the fabrication work was really excited about the idea and, even though he had never tried it before, thought that it would work perfectly. And it did.

Linda: And that's pretty much how things went. I'd casually mention something or share a thought and Matt would just take it from there. I think it would be very difficult if you didn't have a contractor that was a good, careful listener. As a result of our free-wheeling exchange of ideas and the ease in which we hashed things out, I developed a tremendous amount of respect and trust in Matt. I think it was a perfect match...L.H. Construction in general, and Matt specifically.

Given the fact that the home was designed and built by your father, how difficult was it for you to change things?



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Linda: To be honest, I had a funny feeling doing all this knowing how much it meant to my father. What helped was knowing that he was never one to stop progress...like Matt, his wheels were always turning. He was always receptive to improving things. Throughout each phase, I was very sensitive to his design and tried to be respectful of his work-

manship. In taking our time and doing just one area at a time, it gave me an opportunity to really get a feel and to think things out. In the end, I believe the changes that we made were actually a compliment to my father's original work and that he would approve.



Matt: From the very start, I could tell that this was an extremely well built home. I told Linda that over and over again. And here I was ripping it apart! I knew it was tough for her to see but she battled through it. In the end, she said she thought her father would have done the same thing and that he would have liked our work.

The original reason for bringing in L.H. Construction was to redesign the pool area and to configure an addition to get the pool closer to the home. Why was the pool built so far from the home to begin with?

Linda: The pool was actually built first. When my parents purchased the farm in 1968, the first thing they did was install



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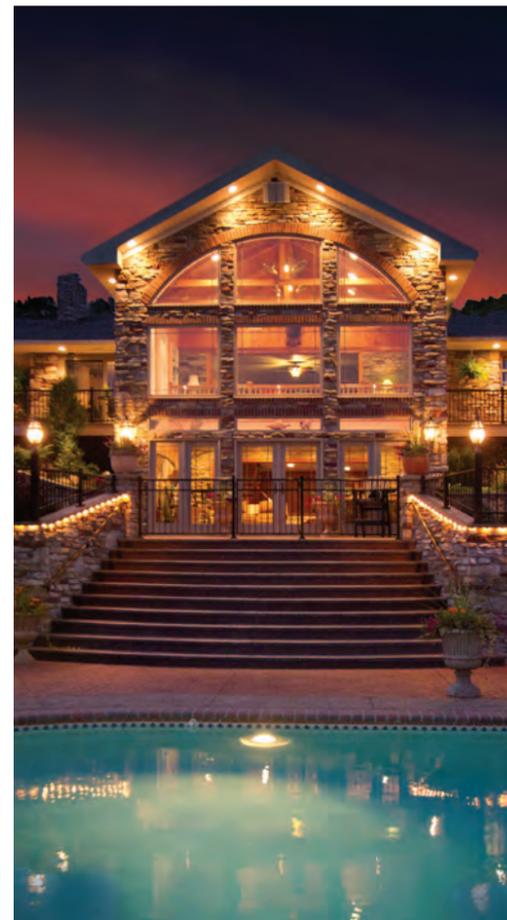
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the pool. We enjoyed the pool the whole time my father was building the house which wasn't completed until later in 1969. To my father, the pool was the pool and the house was the house—he wanted separation. Those who got wet were to change in the bathhouse—not in the house. Given my age at the time with all my girl friends coming and going, I guess he had a point. With our pool and a well-equipped game room in the basement that included both

a pool and ping pong table, our house was quite popular. As I got older, I wanted to bring the house and pool closer together. Granted it took me awhile to move on it, but I finally got off the fence.

The addition is absolutely beautiful and with the stone siding it blends in perfectly with the original home. Is that how you envisioned it originally or did the design evolve?



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Linda: I knew I wanted open space and I knew I wanted a cathedral ceiling. It wasn't that I needed to add more living space...what we had was more than enough. I just wanted the convenience of having the pool closer to the house. From there, the plans just seemed to evolve. As for the stone, I agree, it really does bring everything together.

Matt: Linda is being too humble—she gave us a fairly good idea of what she was looking for—we just filled in the blanks. Again, I'm a detail guy and this project provided me a great opportunity to get creative. With Linda's obvious interest in



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antiques, we incorporated a semi-rustic look by using re-cycled yellow pine from an old Lancaster County tobacco farm for the exposed rafters. Like the blacksmith we used for the railing, the barn wood came through connections we've made over the years. It amazes me the number

of little specialty shops and unique craftsmen that Lancaster County has to offer. We certainly made good use of them on this project.

Linda: The openness of the addition is just perfect and the large window surface gives us quite the view. And

even though the addition is technically in the rear of house, from the road below, it provides a level of curb appeal that we never imagined.

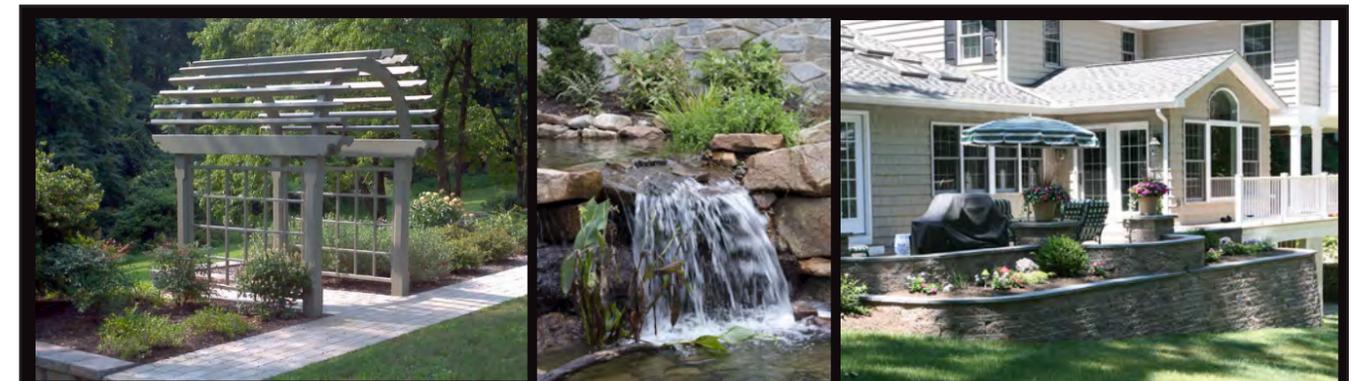
Matt: We spent quite a bit of time discussing window options including their size and placement. We even factored in the lines of the mountains so they would be visible from both levels.

After this came a series of other projects—at what point did you come to the decision that Matt and L.H. Construction would stay on as your contractor?

Linda: I think I came to that conclusion rather quickly. From the very start I felt comfortable with Kent and my feelings about their company only grew stronger the more I worked with Matt. As I mentioned earlier, Matt and I had daily dealings where there was a lot of back and forth sharing of ideas. It was, and remains, a great working relationship and I never once thought about bringing a different contractor into the picture. There was absolutely no need.

Your next project had L.H. Construction knocking down first floor interior walls to create an open space plan—what was your motivation to do so?

Linda: Back when the house was built, pretty much every home had formal living and dining rooms—partitioned off from the everyday eating and sitting areas. In our case, we hardly ever used those rooms, except for maybe Christmas or Easter. Here I was cleaning space that never got used...it just didn't make any sense. Redoing the kitchen was certainly on the agenda, so I just expanded that thinking to include opening everything up and actually use the space in our daily life. In doing so, we're now able to enjoy our beautiful views from almost everywhere on the first floor. You may have noticed that we don't have curtains or any window treatments in this area.



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Matt: Tearing into the solid plaster walls that Linda's father had done was a little rough going. Not so much physically as it was my concern for Linda and how she would react to seeing her father's labor being demolished.

Linda: It WAS tough...especially that first whack. The plaster work in this home was actually one of the last projects in the area where real plaster was used.

Matt: By that time drywall had become the standard material. Lucky for us, we were able to find a plaster guy who was able to patch things up the way they did plaster back in the day. When he was done, it blended seamlessly with the original work.

Linda: The work he did on the ceiling and the walls was just amazing. Even though I've been here forever, I can't tell exactly where the walls were anymore. The patch job is that good. And although I was sad when the walls were coming down, it helps that the repair work turned out so fantastic. Given the quality of the work, Dad certainly would have approved.

Another major change to the floor plan was moving the staircase leading to the basement from the side of the house to a more central location. This achieved two things. First, it provided a nice, subtle partition separating the kitchen area from the living room area. Secondly, when descending, you come down pretty much directly in front of the new



addition. Besides all that, thanks to Matt's creativity, the staircase looks awesome.

Matt: The location for the new staircase was another fun challenge. We did a lot of measuring and gave it a lot of thought. We even considered a spiral staircase. In the end, the location we decided on and the open design with the spiral wrought iron spindles and oversized oak treads seemed to work pretty well.

How was your experience with the various subcontractors that L.H. Construction brought in?

Linda: Everyone was just wonderful. There wasn't anyone I could say I wasn't comfortable with. It all went well...it didn't matter if it was stone guys or plaster or tile people. They were all very personable, respectful and professional.

Matt: That's something I look for in choosing our subs. My feeling is that the work they do and the manner in which they do it is a direct reflection on us—so the standards are high.

Linda: And as professional as they were, I was very impressed with how personable they were. In no time, I felt like I knew them. While most of these companies were new to us, Matt brought in some old friends such as Shank Door Company who we have been using for years for our warehouses in our Christmas tree farm and product businesses. We've known the Shank salesman forever and over the years, whenever we needed a repair or something adjusted, they were right there for us.





Somewhere along the way, I found out that Dale Groff, the owner of Lancaster Stone Company, is a black lab owner and we started sharing dog stories. One day, Dale and his four-legged buddy, Goose, made a delivery and I invited Goose to join my lab, Abby and our yellow lab, Lindsey, for a dip in the pool. They had a wonderful time splashing around together...it was a lot of fun to watch.

Throughout this discussion you've been very complimentary of Matt and L.H. Construction. How high of a rating would you give them?

Linda: Putting my teacher hat on again, I'd have to give them a grade of AAA+...they were absolutely great! I've actually recommended them to several friends, one of whom already had Matt do a good sized project. That too turned out beautifully and my friends couldn't be more delighted.

Do you have any advice for homeowners contemplating a major project?

Linda: I'd say...*go for it!* Let your dreams become reality. And, I'd point out that it's okay to do things in steps rather than everything all at once.

So, what's your next step?

Linda: I'm not quite sure yet, but as Matt will tell you, I'm always thinking.

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