

# STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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## Expanding Your Market with Showpiece Trusses by Anna L. Stamm

*Using Amish craftsmen and cabinetmakers to craft trusses using mortise and tenon, Amish Timber Framers is able to deliver hand-hewn trusses for specialty construction.*



Have you considered expanding your market for component sales by offering showpiece trusses? There is a market for exposed trusses in new home construction for those buyers looking to capture a natural look. The vast majority of the framing for such a house should rightfully be metal plate connected and covered in the usual way, but then the customer seeks something dramatic for a living room or entryway. What would you usually do in this situation? Would you be able to capture the sale of components with the exception of the showpiece trusses? Or, more often, would you lose the entire job to a company that would use conventional framing for every aspect of the work being done? There is one more option—work in cooperation with a fellow WTCA member to provide all of the framing needed on that project. An excellent WTCA member to work with is Amish Timber Framers in Doylestown, OH.

Using Amish craftsmen and cabinetmakers to craft trusses using mortise and tenon, Amish Timber Framers is able to deliver hand-hewn trusses for specialty construction. According to Jeff Orr, President of the company, "We don't compete with our fellow WTCA component manufacturer members. Rather, we fill a niche that complements their sales forces."

## **TRADITIONAL CRAFTSMANSHIP MEETS SOPHISTICATED ENGINEERING**

In addition, Orr emphasizes that Amish Timber Framers brings traditional craftsmanship together with the sophistication of engineering. "We provide our clients with the engineering needed to do the job right. Stan Koehlinger [of Koehlinger Engineering in Bolivar, OH] has been in our shop and understands how we put our trusses together. Often, the truss manufacturer on the job will be using Koehlinger Engineering too, so it is even easier to coordinate the truss plans."

While many of the repeat customers are in Ohio, Amish Timber Framers is able to ship trusses throughout the country, and has had notable jobs in Michigan, Missouri, Virginia and Florida. Trusses are shipped either assembled or disassembled, depending upon what the trucking company will need to clear the bridges in between. "While we prefer to ship assembled, about half of our jobs are disassembled. In those cases, we carefully mark and label all of the pieces, and the crews find it very easy to assemble the trusses once they reach their destination."

The most important thing to know when seeking specialty trusses, however, is that it takes six to twelve weeks from order to delivery rather than the week's time that many builders expect from typical component manufacturers. Amish Timber Framers will complete the engineering first, work directly with the mill to obtain the 6x8, 8x10 or 10x12 timbers needed, and then perform the very labor-intensive process of hand crafting the trusses with chisels and hammers. Even so, Orr takes great pride in delivering on time. "We will not take an order unless we know we have a 99 percent chance of meeting the date the client needs."

## **FANTASTIC SHOWPIECES & SATISFIED CUSTOMERS**

The customers agree that the trusses from Amish Timber Framers are exceptional. According to Ken Simon of Stark Truss Company in Canton, OH, "About one out of every two dozen jobs will call for a decorative truss in an entranceway or an open great room, and we refer the customer to Amish Timber Framers. When Jeff drove one of his trusses over to Stark so we could all take a look at it, we were amazed at the craftsmanship. It was really more like a piece of furniture than a truss, crafted in solid oak. Not only is he a great guy to work with, but we both keep the customer happy and make the sale."

Willing to contract with fellow component manufacturers or work directly with the project's architect or builder, Amish Timber Framers provides the showpiece trusses for the custom jobs. Able to ship these trusses throughout Ohio and beyond, Amish Timber Framers helps capture what might have been lost sales opportunities for component manufacturers. According to Orr, "We build it the strongest way we know how at a fair price." No one should expect anything less.

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