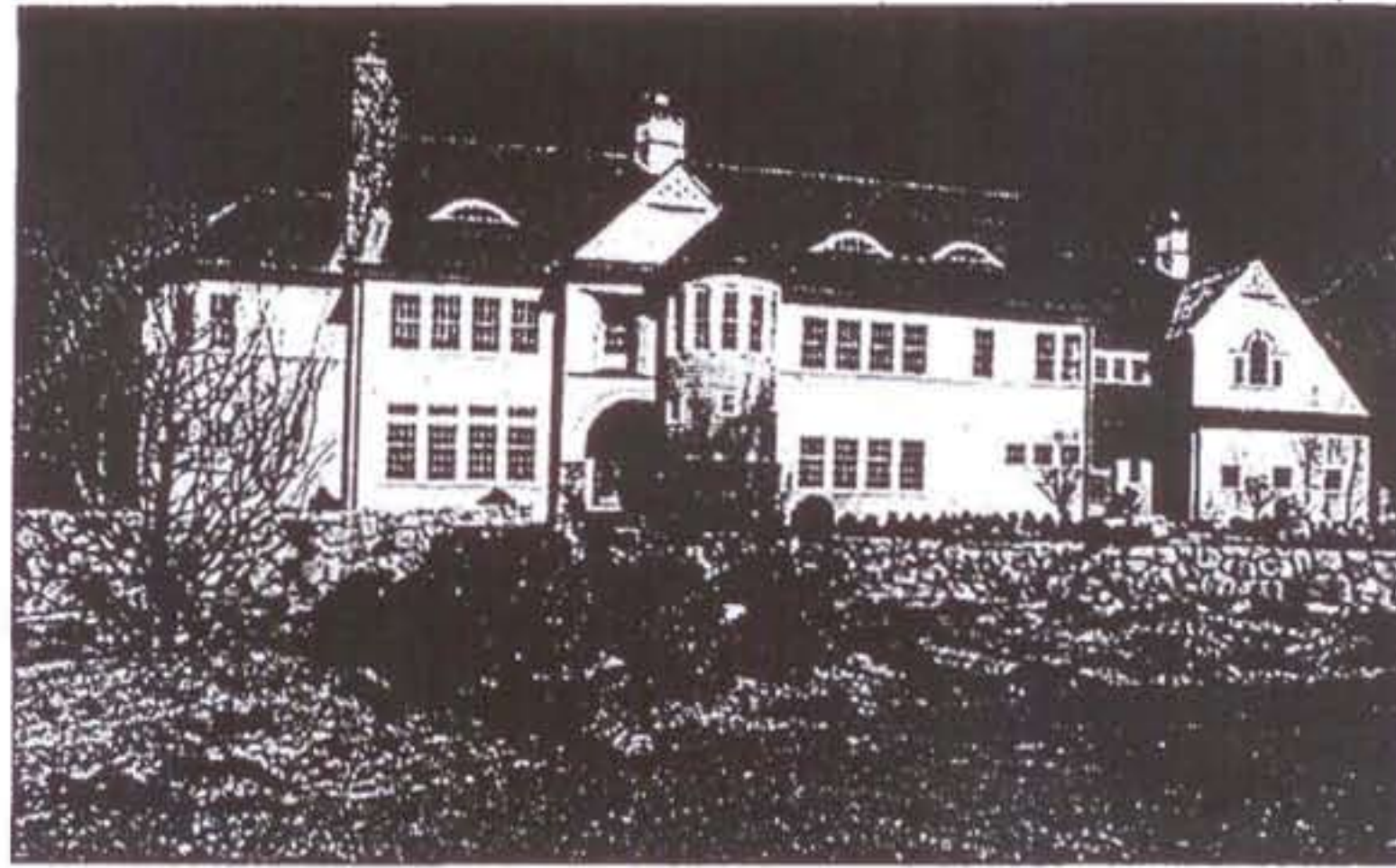


# The Commercial Record

Connecticut's Weekly Business Newspaper Since 1882

Vol. CXXIII No. 45



The Home Builders Association of Connecticut, which recently presented its annual HOBBI Awards to builders and remodelers from across the state, selected this New Canaan residence as the best spec home worth between \$6 million and \$7 million. The house, designed by Gill & Gill Architects in Norwalk, was built by New Canaan-based R.R. Builders.

## ► AWARDS

# Home Builders Association Honors State's Top Projects

By Katie Gurnutte

**A**N ACTIVE-ADULT COMMUNITY IN Greater Hartford, a \$7 million spec home in Fairfield County and a project that changed the character and look of a ranch house squeezed onto a rocky peninsula were among the winners of the 2006 Home Building Industry Awards.

The Home Builders Association of Connecticut recently presented the awards to builders and remodelers from around the state. Judges for the HOBBI Awards spent three days earlier this year traveling across Connecticut visiting the homes

and projects that were entered. The trip also gave them the opportunity to note trends in building and remodeling.

The winner of the award for the best spec home worth between \$6 million and \$7 million went to builder Richard Rosano of R.R. Builders in New Canaan.

Rosano credited the heavily landscaped exterior of the Nantucket shingle-style home, as well as its unique architecture, for the win.

"I think ... in general, the architecture of the home has a very unique presence to it," he

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# Home Builders Association Honors Connecticut's Top Projects

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said. "The unique external features of the home [were another factor]."

The home has 8,700 square feet of finished space on three floors, according to the Home Builders Association.

"The detail is carried through from the exquisite exterior of this home with its dove-coat birdhouse to a mahogany library with curved coffered ceiling, a beamed front room opened to the kitchen, a spectacular craft room, a master sitting room wrapped in curved windows, a laundry room with drying cabinet, a polymer-coated garage floor and a beamed pergola with freestanding fireplace and built-in barbecue," according to the association.

The Home Builders and Remodelers Association of Fairfield County recently named Rosano as Fairfield County Builder of the Year. He builds between \$30 million and \$40 million worth of spec homes every year, and does so without a project manager.

"So I'm always working," he said.

Rosano specializes in construction, and so far works only in New Canaan. He grew up in the industry, doing commercial build-outs in Manhattan, N.Y., through a family business. About five years ago, he decided he wanted to focus his attention on residential construction, so he started building luxury homes.

"I like that I'm building a tangible product that's going to be enjoyed for generations ... It's a good feeling, at closing, to hand over a set of keys to a family who's going to enjoy a home," Rosano said. "It's a very rewarding and fulfilling career for me. The check is great, but what I find more rewarding is twofold. Someone's going to be living in this product and raising a family. Also, in building these homes, I'm employing many, many

families."

Rosano is now building a home for his own family, working on a 12,000-square-foot home for some family friends and building two new spec homes.

## 'The Good News'

Rosano's award-winning home is indicative of some of the larger trends HOBBI Awards judges noticed while traveling around and looking at homes across the state.

According to the Home Builders Association, winning homes and communities revealed a continuing trend to Art and Crafts, Tudor and shingle-style architecture.

"Natural red cedar with deep overhangs or corner swoops and crown molding, highly detailed wood- and copper-tooled roofs, and sunlit cupolas, as well as wraparound porches and side porches, all echo early 1900s design," said Joanne Carroll, director of the association, in a prepared statement. "Riverstone has become increasingly popular for exterior accents, from chimneys to patio walls, and on the interior of homes for fireplace hearths. Mud rooms are still getting a lot of attention; they are larger and more luxurious with wainscoted walls, slate or limestone floors and built-ins for coats, shoes and sports equipment. In master baths, split-marble vanities and porcelain-console sinks, claw foot and pedestal soaking tubs and radiantly heated basket-weave marble floors are in vogue."

Another amenity that is gaining popularity is one that is usually only seen in high-rises or office buildings.

"The elevator is in style because so many luxury homes have finished lower levels and finished attics, but the elevator has even made its way into more moderately priced empty-nester homes," Car-



**Phillips Farm, an upscale 55-and-older community in East Hartford built by Avon-based Sunlight Construction, won the HOBBI Award for best active-adult home over 2,000 square feet.**

roll said in a prepared statement.

A community of homes aimed at empty nesters was another of the HOBBI Award winners. Bill Ferrigno of Sunlight Construction in Avon won the award for best active-adult home over 2,000 square feet. Ferrigno, who is president of the Home Builders Association of Connecticut, is building an upscale 55-and-older community called Phillips Farm on Silver Lane in East Hartford. Fourteen of the 66 three-bedroom homes sold before construction began. The award was given for a 2,100-square-foot Cornwall model home that features a 2-story great room, which opens to a breakfast room, an optional sunroom, a formal dining room and a first-floor master suite.

Also among the HOBBI Award winners was a property that started out as a

ranch on a rocky peninsula called Pratt Island in Darien. Darien-based Brindisi & Yaroscak, along with Bartels Pagliaro Architects, turned it into a single-style home by weaving in small parts of the ranch, according to the association. The home was honored as project of the year.

"The HOBBI Awards celebrate the good news in the Connecticut housing industry," Carroll said while giving out the awards. "For starters, mortgage rates are down, and lumber prices are at their lowest in 10 years. In Connecticut, we are in so much better shape than states like Florida and California, because our market is not investor-driven, and at 9,000 building permits, we are certainly not overbuilt. However, in whatever price range, creativity and value are key to selling in today's market." ■