

# THE BUILDER'S JOURNAL <sup>TM</sup>

Greater Dallas Edition



**Ferrier Custom Homes**  
**Leader in Green Building**





Photo by Kris Topher

## Ferrier Custom Homes Leader in Green Building

By Ron Berwick, Jr.

In 1882, Don Ferriers' grandfather traveled from Scotland, becoming head stonemason on the Texas Capitol Building. While cutting stone for the capitol, he married his partner's sister, had 12 children, built four of the original courthouses in Texas and numerous churches and schools. Don's father continued the business, supplying concrete from a Redi-Mix plant in Seymour, Texas and building bridges for TX DOT.

Don worked with his father for 15 years and after graduating from the University of Ozarks, Don became the third owner. In 1980 he had his first introduction into residential construction from a couple who were building an

earth shelter home in rural Seymour, Texas and were seeking consultation from him on the foundation. Soon after, Don consulted on additional projects, and on about eight of those he constructed the concrete walls as well as the foundation. In 1986, the economy took a turn for the worse, and as the bridge and road business became difficult, Don turned his primary focus towards extreme energy efficient homes.

As Don began working with clients, he found a point of great satisfaction. When building bridges for the State, there was no contact with the end user. You bid the work, did the work, and were paid for the work. No commuters walked up

and said "Nice bridge, we'll enjoy it for years to come". However, working with individuals to build the home of their dreams was a refreshing experience, which energized Don. He obtained a 30' travel trailer, four crewmen, and "we set up camp at a site and started building". In 1986 Don completed his first Structural Insulated Panel (SIP's) home, and there he found his niche.

Word of mouth began to spread. Don says "I came into contact with Mr. Ray Booth, an architect specializing in earth shelter homes. Ray couldn't find a General Contractor, he heard of us and we began working with each other." Don's experience in other types of construction





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worked well with his new passion. “We were using Symons Forms from the Dallas area and found that the years building pre-cast panels and other structures used in highway and bridge related well to this new type of home building”.

Ferrier Custom Homes quickly established itself in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. “About 60% of our business is in Fort Worth, the rest in Dallas. However, we have done a few in Colorado, Oklahoma, and recently spoke with a doctor in Shreveport interested in our homes”, says Don. Being a true custom builder, the size and scope of their projects vary widely. Don says “Our projects range from 60x100 lots to homes situated on 55 acres. Half are in county areas, the other half in the city. 20% of those are renovations.” However, due to increasing interest from the 29-42 yr old age group with limited budgets, Don says “We are rolling out four unique building designs for this



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demographic, affordable yet efficient; we call it “medium green”.

Don borrows his core concept in “managing someone’s dream”, as he defines his business, from the popular book “7 Habits of Highly Effective People”. Don states, “I think it is very important to first “define and clarify ones expectations””. Don interviews potential clients just as they interview him, “For a project to work well, I ensure both parties work well together”. Being a true green custom home builder is what sets Ferrier Custom Homes apart from other builders. “Our projects vary drastically; individuals have different needs. Our homes are extremely energy efficient, healthy, comfortable, durable, and designed for minimum maintenance; controlling things like air, water, and vapor.” Don doesn’t do competitive bidding- he places great value on his product, and his customers ultimately benefit from that.

A five step process defines each project: Site, Design, Finish/Exterior, Interior, and





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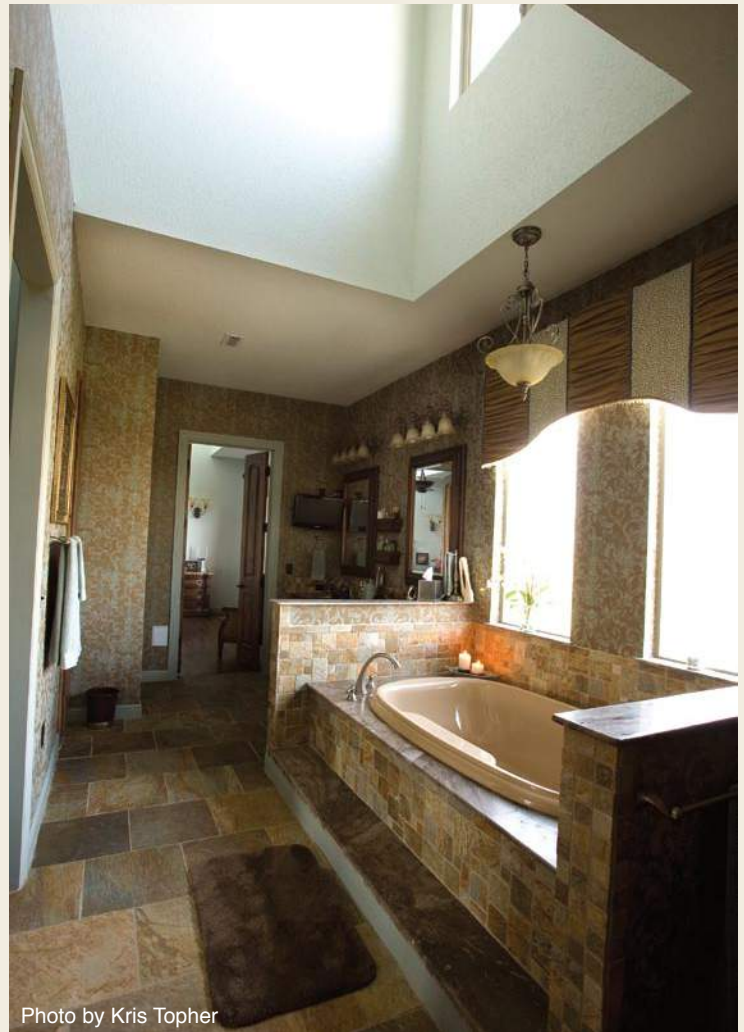


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GREEN! Projects range from \$100-250/sq ft. Don believes working closely with client's budget concerns is paramount. "We take great care to determine efficiency, details, and establish the budget. We talk early and often, constantly monitoring! We have to balance the client's dreams against their budget."

SIPs and earth shelter homes weren't a widely known market in the mid-1980's when Don started, but now this concept of extreme energy efficiency and durability has become more popular as consumer's consciousness of wasted resources and soaring energy costs has risen. "We were green before green was cool!" Don likes to say. Ferrier Custom Homes has been on the cutting edge for many years, receiving numerous awards. Don attends and speaks at conferences nationwide to help further educate both consumers & industry associates as well. "We are proud to be considered leaders in green building. I am honored to speak and teach at forums and conferences. We attend many events, not

only to speak, but to learn something new from others."

With that focus on learning, Don hired a consulting firm, Crossroads Business Consultants. Don says "It isn't always easy to be told what you are doing is wrong. Sometimes things don't change until pain is the motivation. It was expensive but rewarding. We put ourselves up to a 100 Day Challenge, setting 5 goals to meet before years end. The end result is to be the best we can be."

Don's team is a mirror image of these values. His daughter, Heather, began working for him at 9 yrs old. She is now the General Manager and had the "greenest" home built for her at 25 years old. She has had numerous offers to sell, always a larger offer than before, she answers the bids with "Go talk to my dad, he can build you one!" Don conducted a seven month national search for an Estimator/Project Manager. Using career search engines and a 200 question exam he found Mark

Wagner. Don has an all-star team, but plans to add one more Superintendent.

Don has a positive outlook on the future of Ferrier Custom Homes; he says "Our long term goal is to be the leading green builder in the DFW area by constructing efficient, high performance homes, all the while building client's trust. We help people reach their dreams!" For the industry, Don states "I would like to see the focus of low cost, cut throat bidding shifted instead to towards long-term health, efficiency, and quality".

In Don's spare time he cycles, runs and practices yoga. A private pilot and avid reader, he has also done mission work worldwide. An adventurous pioneer in his field, you could say Don Ferrier is cut from the same stone as his grandfather, and you'd be right.

You can contact Ferrier Custom Homes at [www.FerrierCustomHomes.com](http://www.FerrierCustomHomes.com). For more about Heather's home visit [www.HeathersHome.info](http://www.HeathersHome.info), and to view their first zero energy project, visit [www.ZeroEnergyCasita.com](http://www.ZeroEnergyCasita.com).