

BUILDER *Feature*



Trey Garner *Garner Custom Homes*

By Ben Schooley

Trey Garner, owner of Garner Custom Homes is well known throughout the area as one of the perennial custom home builders. Building throughout the Texas Hill Country, Trey and his team of professionals have established themselves via a stellar reputation earned through their hard work and determination.

"I didn't ever think I'd be building houses when I was growing up. I wanted to be in the FBI like my father." While Trey was sincere in his desire for law enforcement, including enrolling in criminal justice classes in college, his life was headed in different directions. Trey continues, "When I was a sophomore in college, I did framing work for a builder in the Houston area. I really enjoyed it. So I enrolled in the Construction Science program. I originally wanted to do large scale construction because I felt like that was my main goal. I enjoyed the residential construction, but I really wanted to do larger stuff."

Trey got his shot at working on the larger commercial projects while he was the Project Engineer for Austin Commercial. However, Trey quickly found the job lacking, because "I enjoyed the work, but it was far too disconnected. It wasn't a personal process building a commercial development. I wanted that connection." And with that, Trey was quickly granted an opportunity to move more in the direction of the more personal residential construction. "I had an opportunity to take over a business. The owner was a Houston builder that had a branch in Austin.

He was having a hard time keeping up with his Austin branch and I took it over so that he could focus on his Houston branch. We were building smaller houses, but I started learning more and more. Shortly thereafter I started Garner Custom Homes in 1998."

"We started doing several projects out in the Lake Travis area, and business continued to grow. I kept looking for more property to build, and was eventually able to find some lots here in the San Antonio market. I was able to find an opportunity to purchase lots in Tuscany Hills in the Vineyard (off of Blanco Road in San Antonio). We ended up with 11 lots. We then moved the family down here to develop that."

And as the Garner team finished one project, they have been blessed to go on to the next one. And the next one. At one point, Trey was building upwards of 12 houses a year, but like many builders, has slowed considerably. However, for Trey, the current pace of production is one that suits him just fine. "There for a while, I was doing 12 houses a year, and half of those were specs. Now we're doing 2 or 3 a year, but they are much bigger houses. I like these houses so much more – it's the details, the complexity, the challenge. It's more of an art piece. You're really building someone's dream - it's not just a place for them to live. When you're doing the \$600,000-\$700,000 price points, people are sometimes just passing through. With the homes we're doing now, these are the homes they've dreamt about their whole lives, and I enjoy that. That is my





favorite part; bringing someone's dream to a reality."

When building homes of these sizes, 'the devil is in the details' as they say. In order to handle so many details that are involved in the projects, Trey utilizes a state of the art web-based monitoring program for both the client as well as himself. "Basically, the customer can monitor the progress of the entire project from their computer. They can see notes that we add about issues we encounter, they can respond, and they can ultimately see the resolution. Oftentimes, customers request a change to the original plans, and we can show them how it will affect the cost. From there, they can approve or deny that change. It takes so much of the confusion out of the process, and enables the customer to be fully up to speed on everything that's taking place." And while technology has its place, there is little replacement for good, trustworthy staff. Trey continues, "I've got a construction manager that does a lot of our day to day stuff and every client we've ever worked for just sings his praises. It really makes the

process so much better. They trust him, and in turn, they trust all of us. It takes an awful lot of supervision to get houses like these off the ground. I go behind him all the time to review the house and check the details. His eyes are on it, mine are on it, we hire 3rd party code compliance professionals we call, and we just have so many layers of protection to the entire construction project. The checks/balances are pretty thorough. With a project of this size, it needs to be checked."

Trey, his wife Leah, and their two daughters reside in Boerne and continue to see markets improve for custom home builders. Like many builders, Trey and his team have weathered many ups and downs, but they continue to enjoy success. As Trey puts it, he has a very simple goal, both personally and professionally: "My goal is to continue to be blessed to live in the Texas Hill Country, and to continue building people's dreams. As long as this is where I'm at, and this is what I'm doing, then I'm very happy." **HC**



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