

A Home for The Motorhome

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"It's a whole new way of motorhome living that makes staying in one spot as appealing as driving to the next."
(from the Dynasty brochure)

BACKGROUND

The Owner is 55 years old, self-employed, divorced. He travels a great deal and lives, full time, in a 36 foot luxury motorhome, called "The Dynasty", manufactured by a company called Monaco. The Dynasty is equipped with furnishings and equipment found in the average American single-family house: queen size bed, solid wood cabinetry, televisions, stereo, 36" shower, a large refrigerator with ice maker, and sophisticated electrical, gas and power management systems, all fit into a 288 square foot plan. It is adequate for one person, maybe two, to live in a modicum of comfort.

When he first contacted us, the Owner told us that he wants a building, next to which he can park the Dynasty when he is at "home", and which will provide amenities not available in the motorhome (as he put it, "a big living room, where I can put my grandkids and my books"). This building will also serve as a "docking station" into which he will plug his electrical and plumbing services. Even when parked here, he will continue to use the Dynasty for his bedroom, kitchen and bath.



PRE-ENGINEERED METAL BUILDING SYSTEMS

The Owner requested that the roof over his motorhome be cantilevered and set a rather strict budget. To accommodate these needs, a pre-engineered steel construction system was selected for the superstructure. In a certain way, pre-engineered buildings are the agricultural and industrial equivalent of the trailer house. They have many positive attributes: economy, speedy erection by semiskilled labor, desirable span characteristics, high tolerances, package delivery. Their ubiquitous presence on the American rural landscape attests to their popularity; They can go virtually anywhere: all you need is a concrete slab. And like the trailer house, these buildings suffer from a deadening banality, an inflexible manufacturing technique, and a resistance to customization at the time of their fabrication.

EXPLORING THE MARGIN BETWEEN PRE-MANUFACTURED BUILDING AND STICK-BUILT CONSTRUCTION

For most people who inhabit them, the as-delivered, industrially-produced building (trailer house, metal building) is merely the beginning of the design and construction process. This is the approach we adopted in this project. Our aim with this building is to capitalize on the positive attributes of the system, while avoiding the pitfalls. Where we can, we accept the manufacturer's standard specifications, details and materials. But when it becomes necessary to demand more, in terms of spatial and material quality, for the habitable portions of the building, we utilize traditional stick-built construction. The aim is to buy as much of the building from the manufacturer as tolerable, have it delivered and erected on the site, and then to use it as an armature under which to finish the building using traditional construction techniques.

We accept as given here the manufacturer's standard specifications for the roof canopy: steel columns, beams, purlins, cross bracing and roofing material, and for selected exterior walls, we accept their girt, wall and window systems. For certain walls in the living room and for secondary elements (closets, bathroom, screened porch), we rely entirely on custom, stick-built construction and windows manufactured by others.

