

Agape Husband/Wife Move Into Final Meramec Highlands Home

Kevin & Amy O'Brien invite public to view final home in historic Meramec Highlands

by Kevin Murphy

It has been challenging — at times “a struggle” — but ultimately gratifying for developers now that work is complete on the last of nine new homes built along Barberry Lane in the historic Meramec Highlands neighborhood.

Ten years in the making, the subdivision's showpiece and anchor is the fully-restored Frisco Train Depot, completed in 2006. The station, constructed in 1891, had fallen into disrepair since ceasing operations in 1931.

Who better to take up residence in the final lot than the couple responsible for developing Meramec Highlands — Kevin and Amy O'Brien, owners of Agape Construction.

The O'Briens said they never intended to leave their Kirkwood home for a new place at Meramec Highlands.

“Over the years, Kevin and I fell in love with trains, the location and the history of this place,” Amy said. “So, when we downsized, we built our empty nesters dream home on the final lot.”

The O'Briens moved into

their custom-built Meramec Highlands home a couple of months ago, and are now preparing to show it off to the public. An open house and art show has been scheduled for June 14, then again on June 21 and 22, from noon to 4 p.m. The home's second floor will feature the art work of Michael Aaron Williams. Williams is a painter and street artist from Knoxville, Tenn.

The open house and art show is located at 1051 Barberry Lane, located off of Big Bend Road just two blocks west of Interstate 270.

Before development, the strip of ground where nine new homes now stand was once owned by the Frisco Railroad. At the time of Agape's purchase, the old Meramec Highlands resort buildings were long gone, with the exception of the train depot.

Kevin O'Brien, president of Agape, said that neighbors fought hard to keep the property undeveloped, hoping that the city of Kirkwood would purchase the land for use as a possible dog park.

“The neighbors were losing land that had been treated as common ground, and they were not happy,” Amy O'Brien said. “But now neighbors up the street and on adjoining Ponca Trail are very happy with how nice everything turned out.”

The O'Brien home features

exposed wood trusses and many custom wood built-ins by Agape's master carpenter. The O'Briens took advantage of a natural, limestone wall in their backyard and transformed it into a waterfall garden.

“I think, overall, we have a great sense of gratitude for the opportunity to live here. We've been so blessed,” said Kevin O'Brien.

Of course, the “crown jewel” of Meramec Highlands is the old Frisco Train Depot. The O'Briens initially envisioned the station restored for a commercial use, but the city would not allow commercial in a residential neighborhood. They tried to give it to the Museum of Transportation, but the museum turned them down, saying restoration would be too expensive.

Ultimately, the O'Briens turned the 1,100-square-foot building — too small for a modern-day house — into a 5,000-square-foot luxury home. “The original building is all there,” said Kevin O'Brien.

The Meramec Highlands was named as Kirkwood's first historic district in 1989. It once served as an exclusive resort, and was particularly popular with commuters during the period of the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. The resort, however, gradually lost its reputation as a popular tourist destination.



Kevin and Amy O'Brien in their new Meramec Highlands home.
photo by Diana Linsley



The Frisco Train Depot was restored in 2006.



The O'Briens home at 1051 Barberry Lane.
photo by Diana Linsley