

BY JLC STAFF



A Blend of Old and New

“The house as a system” is a modern concept. But long before that phrase was coined, houses functioned as systems—or else they failed the test of time.

Husband-and-wife team Robert LaPorte (builder) and Paula Baker-LaPorte (architect) are bringing one such time-proven system into the 21st century, making modern homes using ancient systems—such as a wall assembly with natural clay and straw infill, mixed on site and packed into Larsen trusses wrapped around a timber frame. In scheduled workshops, the couple teaches the method to owner-builders and professional contractors alike (website: econesthomes.com).

Says Robert LaPorte: “Clay in a wall, being hygro-

scopic, can handle all the moisture without the need for a vapor barrier. The inclusion of clay is the best insurance I’ve discovered for preserving wood in buildings.” Historically, says LaPorte, “Half-timber framed buildings right across Europe were infilled with a mixture of clay and straw. They’re everywhere. It’s a common formula.”

Using Larsen trusses, says LaPorte, lets “any mainstream builder wrap his head around this with his existing tool set. We streamlined a way to quickly and efficiently create a 12-inch-thick wall that’s natural, that’s healthy, and that can be adopted by any builder with a day or two of training.”

Photos: Econest