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J. Thomas Garage Doors
Crafts Distinctive Doors

J. Thomas Garage Doors | Houston, Texas



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Crafts Distinctive Doors | By Kathy Bowen Stolz

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Elegant. Sophisticated. Warm. When these words are used to describe a garage door, you know it's a distinctive door.

J. Thomas Garage Doors, a family-owned business with a 40-year history of creating garage doors, specializes in manufacturing beautiful garage and carriage house doors. The doors are meticulously handcrafted to the builders' or owners' specifications and are made from the finest materials. J. Thomas Garage Doors has a door to suit every design style, according to its owner, John Thomas.

In addition to the hundreds of design possibilities from its standard design collections, Thomas Garage Door can handcraft a one-of-a-kind design that meets the homeowners' architectural preferences. These wooden doors become the focal point of many of the homes they grace, alerting passersby that the builders and homeowners take extra care to make their homes distinctive.

The company uses modern steel doors from CHI for strength and durability but covers them most frequently in smooth or rough cedar, which may be stained or painted to match the home's decor. Some customers

choose cypress, redwood or mahogany, other woods which can withstand the demands of Houston's climate.

Thomas said his company installs 1,200 doors in a typical year in both insulated and non-insulated styles and standard and non-standard sizes; the company is able to build a door to fit any size or design. Prices range from the economical to those associated with high-end craftsmanship.



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Its clients are usually custom builders. Most doors take only 7-10 days to deliver after the order is placed, thanks to the company's eight employees.

One of those employees is Sam Basile, grandson of John Thomas. Sam said he has worked full-time for the company since 2008 after getting his start as a summer intern. (A 16-year-old cousin, Alex Jernigan, worked as a summer intern this year.)

Sam found he liked working with his hands and liked working with garage doors, especially building custom doors. Certainly he was very familiar with garage doors, learning about them "since I could walk" from both his grandfather and his father, who makes and distributes garage doors himself. A late uncle was also involved in the business.

At age 29 Sam runs the manufacturing shop. He also enjoys making custom shutters and sees shutters as a possible business opportunity. He oversees two employees, talks to customers and works on the computers, tasks which his maternal grandfather is happy to delegate.



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His grandfather told Sam he could give himself whatever title he wanted, but the title wouldn't change his pay. "King of the World" was an option that Sam declined, choosing vice president instead. Sam expects to take over the family business after John Thomas "makes his millions," which is a family joke, Sam said.

But don't look for John to leave the business soon. Thomas retired once but got bored and returned to work to start the carriage house door operation about 11 years ago, Sam said. John likes the challenge of difficult projects but doesn't like the stress of short lead times. Modestly, he said his role in the company is to measure and to interact with customers.

Thomas began to sell steel garage doors 40 years ago after the Ohio steel mill where he worked shut down. He used his knowledge of steel and construction to start a new career, focusing on the Houston area where housing was booming. At first he manufactured the doors in the north and took them down to Houston, but eventually he and his whole family moved south. He and his wife Karen have been married 55 years.

J. Thomas Garage Doors survived the economic slowdown because it had no debt, Thomas said. Most of its business comes from builders although some referrals come from homeowners. It also advertises with the

Greater Houston Builders Association.

Although he enjoys playing golf and his grandchildren, John said his plans for the next five years include building the business for his family. (Sam noted that he has a bunch of younger brothers and some cousins who may choose to work at J. Thomas Garage Doors.) With another generation involved, this family-owned business will stay in business for a long time!

You may contact J. Thomas Garage Doors at P.O. Box 2834, Cypress, TX 77410 or by calling 713-725-8787 or by e-mailing jthomasdoor@hotmail.com. Its website is www.jthomasdoor.com.

