



Lofty Ambitions

European Copper has transformed the lowly chimney top into a thing of beauty. Now the company wants to hide a number of very important home products inside its pots, which should provide hearth dealers with a major opportunity.

Let's face it. No one really gets excited about chimney tops. For the most part they're an ugly necessity designed to keep out rain, snow and critters, and perhaps help improve chimney draft. About the only innovation and technology in chimney tops has been to hide or improve the look of these metal mushrooms.

That was true until 2004, when famed

(L. to R.) Pat Keegan and Jack Arnold.

international architect Jack Arnold and his business partner Pat Keegan established European Copper. What started out as just another company offering very decorative venting terminations, or chimney pots, has evolved into one that is taking the lowly chimney top into the 21st century with exciting innovations. Consider the following:

- Hiding a satellite dish in a chimney top.
- Installing a device to boost cell phone reception in a chimney top.
- Adding a device to improve Wi-fi throughout the house.
- Including a carbon monoxide reduction filter to reduce CO emissions and combat global warming.

That's right. All of the above will be available in a chimney top that also replaces that monstrous metal mushroom with an appealing, decorative chimney termination.

High-tech and environmental concerns were not the reasons European Copper was established. Arnold designs homes all over the world and has pioneered the European Country French and Tuscan styles in North America. The company began because of Arnold's frustrations as an architect.

"We didn't intend to get into fireplace products," says Keegan, president of European Copper. "Jack's frustration was that he would design these beautiful houses with stylish roofs, copper gutters, real stucco and gorgeous details. Then he would get to the chimney termination. He'd have a home with great details, costing maybe more than a million dollars, and he'd end up with an ugly metal mushroom on the roof."

Arnold's architect customers would complain that there must be a better answer than those horrid chimney terminations. So European Copper, based in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and housed alongside Arnold's architectural offices, began as a privately-owned, stand-alone company that would offer stylish, decorative, copper chimney terminations.

Today the company offers three basic designs – round, square and octagonal – in seven sizes in "Patina" and "Freedom Gray" solid copper finishes. A more contemporary line will be introduced early in 2010. These chimney "pots" are UL and OMNI listed, and offered for use on masonry flues, manufactured metal chimneys, B-vent and vertical direct-vent gas venting, zero-clearance fireplaces, plumbing vents, ventilation vents and exhaust fans; almost all roof vents are now allowed to be covered or replaced by these stylish chimney pots.

"When you get to the top of the house, it traditionally has all this visual dandruff," says Keegan. "There are all these industrial things poking out, like gas vents or fireplace terminations made of metal. Not only can we hide them and remove something that basically has an unattractive, industrial look, we can make it into something very cool." ("Cool," by the way, is Keegan's favorite word when describing his chimney pots.)

"So we said, Let's do the best product, the strongest, the safest, a product

that will last hundreds of years – the coolest looking." They started with terminations for masonry fireplaces and expanded into being approved for virtually all zero-clearance fireplaces and manufactured metal chimneys. In the design and testing process, the company discovered its chimney pots also could improve draft by about 15 percent.

But Arnold and Keegan had just begun to develop "cool" ways to make venting terminations functional as well as decorative. "We wanted something that looked cool," Keegan says, "but we wanted it to be a problem solver, too, in what we see as the new 'normal' in home design and construction.

"Although Jack designs and builds homes as large as 30,000 sq. ft., we think the new 'normal' is that the extravagances that people put into houses are not going to be size. We're going to see fewer of the huge homes and building codes will be tougher. The details of a house will be more important because the homes will be smaller with nicer finishes and more curb appeal."

Keegan points out that, five years ago, builders were not much concerned about curb appeal because they could sell all they could build. "Now the houses with the most curb appeal sell the fastest because of their perceived value. We think our chimney pots add to that curb appeal and perceived value. We also think Green is the wave of the future, and we want to be part of that."



Installing a traditional chimney pot.



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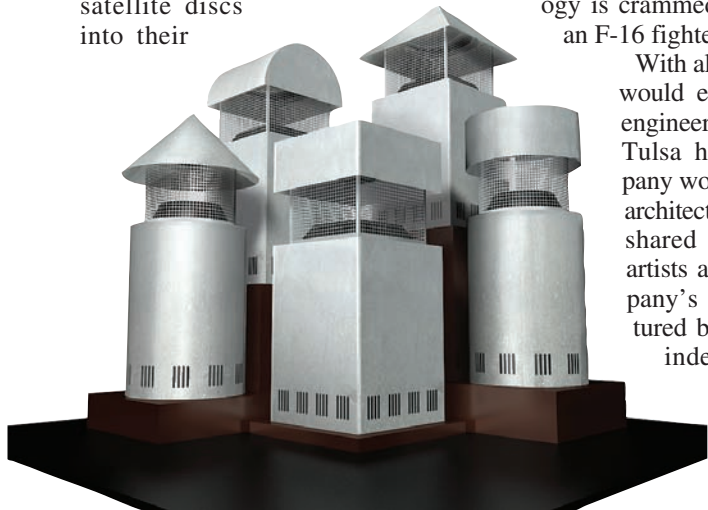
Installing a traditional chimney pot.

From the start, European Copper was environmentally friendly and used recycled copper for its products. This earned the company one of the first ICC (International Code Council) Evaluation Service (ICC-ES) Sustainable Attributes Verification and Evaluation (SAVE) reports. Keegan claims the ICC-ES SAVE program is “the new standard for Green products.” The evaluation report also verifies that the company’s chimney pots meet the requirements of the International Building Code (IBC) and the International Residential Code (IRC).

Arnold and Keegan are taking their products and the chimney termination category to a new level of being Green. Soon to be introduced as an extra-cost accessory is a carbon monoxide reduction filter that also can be retrofitted to its existing pots. Much like a catalytic converter on an automobile exhaust, or the catalytic combustor on some wood stoves, this is a ceramic filter coated with platinum alloys to remove CO as the flue gasses pass through it.

According to Keegan, almost all states now have mandated requirements to lower their carbon output. California, for instance, is requiring a 20 percent reduction in 2010. “CO coming out of homes has never been a big issue, but we felt it would be good if we could help reduce that CO,” says Keegan.

And that’s just the start for environmentally-friendly and high-tech solutions from European Copper. The company has eight patents and 11 patents pending, including international patents, for its chimney terminations. One of those just-filed patents is for a satellite television receiver built right into the chimney pots. “Architects like Jack don’t draw satellite discs into their



Contemporary Pots.



PHOTO COURTESY: ©2009 TODD PHOTOGRAPHIC.

Sagewood Development, 203 Heat & Glo direct-vent fireplaces and 203 European Copper Chimney Pots; Phoenix, Arizona.

designs. And they certainly don’t want a satellite disc hanging on a gutter like a mobile home,” Keegan emphasizes. “Now you can hide that eyesore in a chimney termination.”

Next on the company’s list of cutting-edge innovations is adding a cell phone booster to the chimney termination for better reception in the home. Right behind that will be a Wi-fi booster to strengthen Internet signals throughout the house. “It sounds like we are putting a lot into these chimney pots, but just remember how much technology is crammed into the nose cone of an F-16 fighter jet,” Keegan explains.

With all of this technology, you would expect to see dozens of engineers at European Copper’s Tulsa headquarters. The company works out of Jack Arnold’s architectural offices, utilizing the shared 18 employees, mostly artists and architects. The company’s products are manufactured by Copper Craft, a large independent contractor in

Fort Worth, Texas. All of the company’s research and development is hired out, currently to three different engineering firms.

European Copper’s focus has been on architects, getting them to specify the chimney pots. But the products are sold directly through hearth products retailers. CAD drawings and specifications are on the company’s Web site, allowing architects to easily spec in the pots and retailers to order them. Suggested retail prices currently range from \$1,267 to \$1,626 with gross retail margins topping 40 percent, according to Keegan.

The company’s efforts with architects certainly have been successful. European Copper averages three chimney caps on every installation. One home recently received 24 European Copper terminations, and an Oklahoma City home in September had 18 pots installed.

A Florida housing project includes 30,000 fireplaces to be built over the next 15 years, and European Copper chimney pots are specified on all 30,000. Another Utah housing project includes the company’s chimney pots on 10,500 homes. But European Copper continues to look forward.

“We cannot wait for all this exciting stuff,” says Keegan. “We can make your house look better, make your chimney draw better, improve your television, cell phone and Internet reception, and we’re helping to save the planet.”

Lofty ambitions, indeed. 