



Meet Bruno Schickel, owner of La Bourgade on Seneca...

1. Describe Your Business:

La Bourgade on Seneca is a year-round rental community just eight minutes from Watkins Glen. Designed to resemble a European hillside village, La Bourgade is a tight-knit development with houses nestled in groups of three. The homes average one thousand square feet, and each has a beautiful view of Seneca Lake. Residents of La Bourgade enjoy 24-hour access to the community center 'Meeting House', gym,

and mailboxes — in addition to the in-house washer and dryer, granite countertops, and stainless steel appliances. La Bourgade on Seneca is also pet-friendly.

2. Tell us your story:

I always introduce myself as a builder. I've owned a construction company, Schickel Construction, for 35 years. In 1996 I began building Boiceville Cottages, a 140-house rental community in Brooktondale, which is about 10 minutes from downtown Ithaca, Cornell University, and Ithaca College. All 140 units are brightly colored in a gingerbread-style. They definitely make you stop in your tracks and smile. We typically have 98 to 100 percent occupancy. With La Bourgade On Seneca, I wanted to build a European-style hillside village. All of the houses have what I call a 'French flare' in the eaves of the roofs. We opened the community last summer, and folks are already moved in. In January alone we signed six new leases.

3. What has helped you succeed and gain experience?

"I think being a keen observer of what makes things beautiful," Bruno said. "And designing things that evoke an emotional response in people. I'm a big believer in trying new ideas and staying agile in the market. I speak directly to prospective customers. I ask them what features they enjoy most as well as the ones they wish we offered. From there, I tweak the design and make little adjustments as I go along. That's a big part of it."

4. What inspires you?

"My travels throughout France, Italy, Germany, and Spain have inspired many of my projects. La Bourgade On Seneca was inspired by a trip to the French countryside. I saw these beautiful houses built right into the hillside, and I decided that I would build a community like that — but in a way that folks could afford. I'm inspired by the community that has grown out of the rental developments I build. What started as a trio of houses at Boiceville Cottages in '96 grew into a community of 140 beautiful rental units and the nicest people you'll ever meet. The people who call Boiceville home are wonderful tenants, and I feel very lucky that these folks love their homes as much as I loved building them. I have no doubt that the community at La Bourgade will be just as strong. Bruno went on to explain that the gingerbread-style houses in Boiceville were inspired by the children's book *Miss Rumphius*. "In this book, there are beautiful illustrations of this little gothic gingerbread cottage on the coast of Maine, and the village where she would bicycle through and plant her lupines. It really was inspiration for me to design and create something that looked like that." He added that originally, people were drawn to the cute little houses, but as time has gone on it has become the community at Boiceville that people are drawn to. "It's an incredible community, and people absolutely love living there. I have no doubt that once La Bourgade gets completely built it will become a community, and people will love it for the community it is."

5. What keeps you up at night? What are your challenges?

"Not much keeps me up at night," Bruno joked. "You can ask my wife. I sleep very well. Time management is probably the biggest challenge, though. I'm managing, building, and designing. I'm running a construction company. I'm managing the other rental property at Boiceville. So, I have a lot on my plate. But life is good!"

6. What is your favorite local activity?

"I love dining at Graft in downtown Watkins Glen. I love the food and atmosphere. It's a great restaurant" Bruno said. He added he really loves the beautiful views of Seneca Lake. "The breweries, the vineyards, the wineries, the distilleries," he elaborated. The whole experience is phenomenal. It's incredibly unique. So, my favorite activity is enjoying the scenic beauty of the area."

7. Is there anything else we should know about you?

"Two things come to mind. Firstly, I'm a big opera fan. Every year my wife Amy and I attend the Glimmerglass Festival in Cooperstown, New York — and I've even sponsored two opera productions with a new local company, Opera Ithaca. Secondly, folks are surprised when I tell them I'm very involved with site work. I'm usually the guy down in the trench with a shovel, laying the pipe, and so on. There's a ton of physical work, and it's pretty exhausting. I like being involved, though!"

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