

An Extraordinary Home for an Extraordinary Site

BY JOHN CLAYTON | PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID BURNETT-MENARD
STYLING AND INTERIOR DESIGN BY ELIZABETH R. SWARTZ



NESTLED INTO A HILLSIDE, A THREE-BUILDING HOMESTEAD WAS DESIGNED FOR COMFORT AND TO BRING IN THE OUTSIDE—WHICH INCLUDES SPECTACULAR VIEWS OF TUCKERMAN'S RAVINE ON MOUNT WASHINGTON.



The majesty of the view from the master bedroom is complemented by the tranquility of the interior design, which resonates from the pillows to the dust ruffle, from the carpet trim to the window valance.



Custom cabinets, antique copper pendant lighting and a granite-topped island are among the highlights of the guesthouse's kitchen.



The simple exterior window array of the guesthouse (above) comes alive on the inside (top), where the barrel-vaulted ceiling helps lead the eye to the expansive view.

It speaks volumes about the splendor of a home when the people who helped create it struggle to find words to describe it. That is certainly the case with a hillside, three-building gathering in the village of Jackson that offers panoramic views of Mount Washington and the Presidential Range.

"I know poetic is a grand word," says architect John R. Tankard III of John R. Tankard III Architect in Waban, Massachusetts, "so perhaps as I approach this home from the meadow and see how it sits on the hillside without trying to dominate nature, I would describe it as serene."

Breathtaking is the only word to describe the views from the property, which are precisely what the homeowner wanted to savor when she first purchased the sloping twenty-acre parcel back in 2003.

"I grew up in the Mount Washington Valley, and I absolutely love the White Mountains," she says. "I wanted to be in a place where the mountains were an important presence in my daily living. I wanted to create a home where my family and extended



The pool pavilion (above) is a hub of family activity. From the pool house deck, one can also enjoy a sweeping view (right) of the main house farther up the slope.

family could come together and feel like they were getting away from the real world to a place where they could enjoy a beautiful environment and a beautiful view."

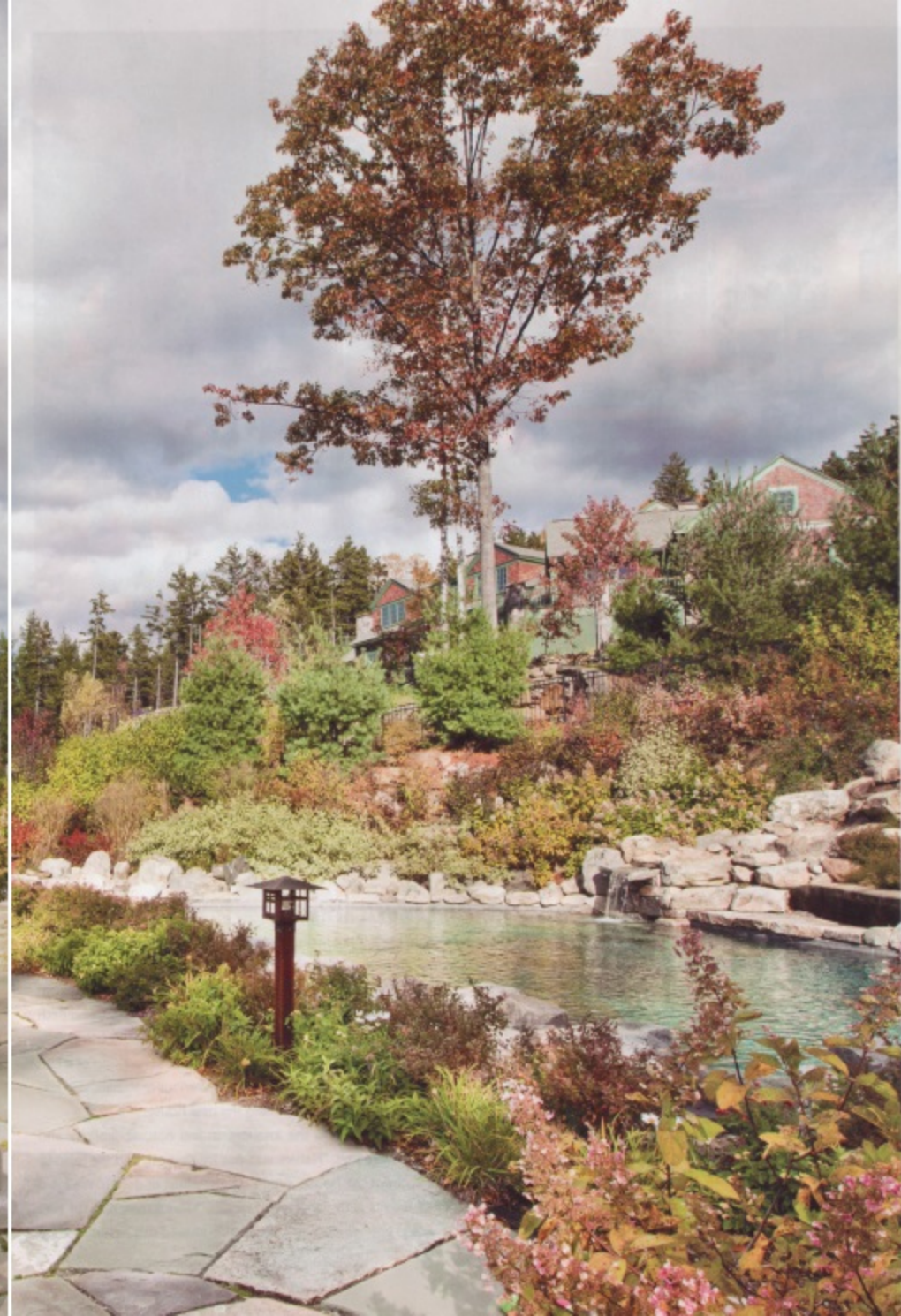
That view can be savored from all three buildings in the gathering ("the word 'compound' just sounds too military," Tankard says), which includes a main house, a guesthouse as well as a pavilion that serves as the hub for the outdoor tennis court and natural stone swimming pool that features a diving rock and a fourteen-foot-diameter, stone hot tub.

ASSEMBLING THE TEAM

The three buildings share a mountain Shingle-Style, sloped-roof look, but if there is uniformity of design now, there was a great deal of improvising in the early going.

"Immediately after she bought the land, I was hired to do the land-use development and site planning," says landscape architect John Wacker, of John Wacker and Associates, Inc. in North Conway, who previously served as master landscape planner for the University System of New Hampshire. "Conceptually, in laying out the various pieces, the main house wanted to be on the highest piece where it best captures the view, so I laid out the locations for the three structures and the grading—it's on a continuous 15-degree slope. But in the early going, the homeowner decided to change architects.

"When you see the property, you won't wonder why she was ea-





Above: The kitchen area of the main house includes a dining area that features glass globe lighting from Earth and Fire Studio Gallery in North Conway and hammered copper fixtures from High Beams Lighting in Vermont that echo the wallpaper's leafy motif.

Right: Washing dishes can be a lot less tedious when Mount Washington's snow-capped peaks keep you company.

ger to get up there," Wacker continues, "so I said, 'I can design a guesthouse for you over the weekend.' So the following weekend, I sketched out this sweet little guesthouse"—on a cocktail napkin, according to the homeowner—"and then John Tankard tweaked it when he came on board."

Brothers Stephen and Michael Weeder from Tamarack Construction Co. Inc. in Jackson were brought on as building contractors, and the team was made complete with the arrival of interior designer Elizabeth R. Swartz, ASID, of ERS Design LLC in Boston and Vermont, who was asked to help shape a harmonious vision for the look and feel within each of the three structures.

"I was actually brought on board the day the foundation was poured for the guesthouse," she says, "so that footprint was done and the location of all three buildings had been determined. But while we were working on the guesthouse, we were planning the pool house, and while we were working on the pool house, we were planning the main house. So it was all very sequential."

Her bonding with the architect was equally linear.

"John Tankard and I had a very nice collaborative relationship,"

Swartz says. "We got together on everything from space planning and where windows would go, to the adjacencies of different rooms, even materials selection and layout. So I got to be involved in much more than the interiors."

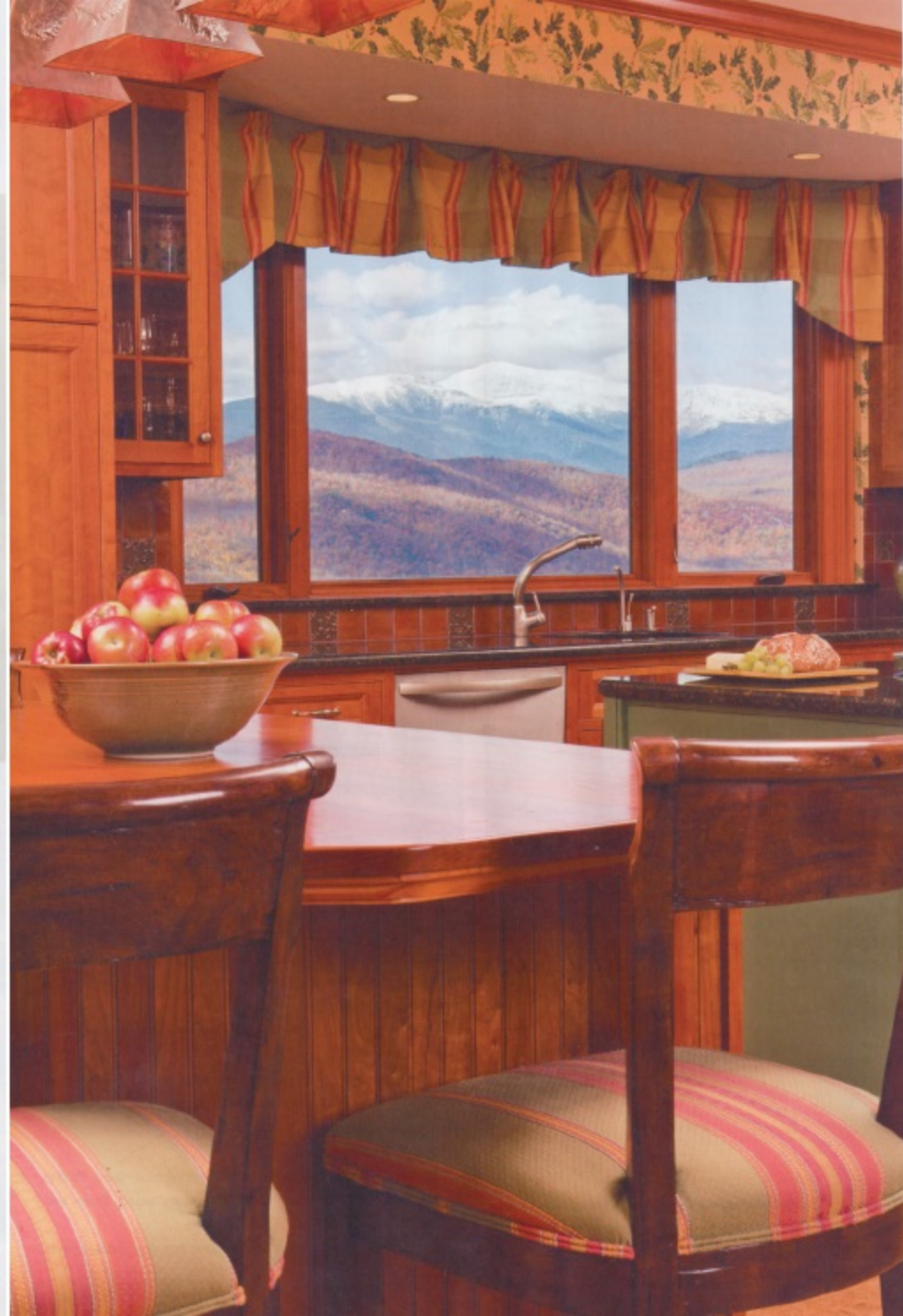
THE NATURAL DESIGN

Even with her input in many areas, Swartz's touch is clearly evident in the interiors.

"Bring the outdoors in," the homeowner says of her vision. "That was one of the things I wanted to do right from the start, and Beth found ways to do that."

Swartz did so by using the guesthouse as something of a test lab. This allowed the homeowner to try various materials, vendors and tradesmen before beginning the new house.

"Our client wanted the interiors to feel natural, woodsy and green," Swartz says. "Nature was our inspiration, and we infused it throughout the house, even in the smallest of details. We introduced fabrics with various leaf motifs, natural materials for wall coverings and window shades, and continued this natural theme





The simple directive yet complex task for interior designer Elizabeth R. Swartz from ERS Design LLC was "to bring the outdoors in."



The sauna features real fern leaves embedded in handmade wallpaper; a teak bench and ceiling; and Jerusalem gold stone floors and walls in the rainfall shower.

with custom-made rugs as well. The custom-designed light fixture above the pool table is accented with dried red-maple leaves, and the wall sconces in the hallways glow with fern leaves applied to the mica. Everywhere you turn, there is a reminder of nature in its most beautiful form."

Lots of windows also helped Swartz achieve the homeowner's goal.

"Lighting was a key element in the success of the interior design as well, and we allowed for as much light as we could bring in, using window treatments for light control and privacy only where needed," Swartz says.

The color palette of soft browns and varying blue-green shades echoes the natural theme, as do the cherry wood floors and fir trim.

Just as Swartz took what nature gave her, the landscape ar-



The foyer of the main house is a showcase of custom design, from the lighting to the embossed wallpaper, and from the custom-made carpet to the millwork of the stair railing and balusters.

chitect followed suit. "Capitalize on the site," Wacker says. "That's always been a guiding principle for me. Let the site tell you what to do and try not to impose. I knew that John Tankard shared my feelings, because I'd done a ski house with him up the road, and I tried to impress upon the owner that I didn't want to work on her property and have it feel as if the structures had been dropped in by a helicopter.

"It takes a lot of hard work to make a project like this feel natural," he says. "Too much architecture and too much landscaping can be imposing on the land, so we worked hard to give it that natural repose you get up here in and around Jackson."

AN EMPHASIS ON COMFORT

Repose is a word used by both Wacker and Tankard to describe the three buildings that nestle into the hillside. "We deliberately positioned the

structures to be set into the sloping ground in such a way that they fit into the ground rather than appear as if they are trying to rise out of the ground," Tankard says. "We also sited them so what would look like a one-story house from the entry side would by default have a two-story elevation on the downhill side, consciously trying to bring the height of the building down by making the lower floors fit under the roof form.

"One thing I try to instill in my projects is the idea that comfort is still an important element in residential design," he continues. "So many newer homes don't feel like they'll be very comfortable. They might be dramatic, but the level of repose, which I consider to be important, might be missing."

In addition to that sense of repose, you get those world-class views in and around Jackson that the homeowner desired above all else.



Lighting is exquisite in the sunroom (above), on the grounds of the main house (right) and at the welcoming entryway (facing page, bottom).



TAKING IN THE VIEW

"When I bought the land, it was completely forested with no view," the homeowner says. "I did have a chance to see the view from a neighboring property, but I still didn't realize what I might have here."

The view she enjoys today exists in part because ten of the twenty acres she purchased are classified as a conservation easement.

"That means you can't build on it, but you can use it," Wacker says. "So we removed trees from a few acres and opened the space to create a meadow that gives her a better view of the mountains. She now has a 180-degree swing to get views of Mount Washington, Black Mountain and a lot of the valleys."

"It's better than I thought it would be," the homeowner says. "One of my favorite things to do at night is to sit on the couch in the corner of the sunroom with all the lights out and watch as storms roll across the valley. I can see them coming all the way across from Mount Washington."

She enjoys the grandeur of that view from a home that, according to Swartz, deliberately avoids going too far.

"Sometimes I think a home can be too grand," Swartz says, "but this home isn't. It's casually elegant and comfortable. You can put your feet up and relax. The entire property is warm and beautiful, but the grandeur is in the view. That is just what this homeowner envisioned." ■

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RESOURCES

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