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GRAND PLAN

A family's renovated property on the shores of Lake Champlain is a master class in design execution and craftsmanship, both inside and out.



TEXT BY BOB CURLEY | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM WESTPHALEN

The mudroom's checkerboard floor is made of local Pantone stone, matching that used in the walls of the house and on the property.
FACING PAGE: The kitchen, with its eighteen-foot ceilings and copious food-prep surfaces, was the centerpiece of the renovation of the main house.



Opposing twin fireplaces warm this stone-sided room at the center of the house, enlivened by the face of an antique French clock. The custom mantel incorporates an oval design found on the transom over the front door, and the bench and sling chair provide extra seating in a compact room.



Painted in a blue tone to match the waters of Lake Champlain, the dining room features a landscape mural by a local artist and a chandelier with wax candles whose light reflects off a high-gloss ceiling that increases the sense of space. The bay windows are original to the house.



Covered by a wooden ceiling designed to resemble the hull of an upturned boat, the screen porch was the one major addition to the home. All-weather chairs surrounding a coffee table crafted from a tree harvested on the property afford lake views warmed by a crackling fire.



The attic above this guest bedroom was partially removed to add an extra window and more natural lighting, accented by a cut-crystal chandelier. **FACING PAGE:** The master bath's space-saving shower is set against a backsplash of locally quarried Danby marble and drains into a floor inlaid with an oval design repeated throughout the home.

Walls are typically built to keep people out, or keep things in. In New England, rock walls have been used for centuries to create boundaries around farmers' fields or property lines, but it's the rare wall that provides connection rather than separation.

The new owners of a 140-acre property on Lake Champlain in Panton, Vermont, knew they had a unique opportunity to reshape the mixed landscape of woodlands, open fields, and lake-shore to match their vision of a pastoral New England home.



ARCHITECTURE: Rolf Kielman and Josh Chafe, TruexCullins
INTERIOR DESIGN: Cathy Chapman, Chapman Design
BUILDER: Birdseye
LANDSCAPE DESIGN: Wagner Hodgson Landscape Architecture

A stone-sided house, dating to the 1920s, was ideally sited for spectacular lake views, but a historic farmhouse along the main road at the property entrance was too distant to serve as a guest house. Working together, builder Birdseye and architectural firm TruexCullins separated the old farmhouse and barn and moved them a quarter-mile deeper into the property, re-siting each close to the lake. The Arnold House—so named because Benedict Arnold once slept within—was renovated as a guest house overlooking Arnold Bay, while a onetime barn was restored as additional guest quarters facing White Bay.

Taking advantage of the spectacular views, however, necessitated placing the guest houses at a remove from the main house. That's where Wagner Hodgson Landscape Architecture stepped in, designing and building a gracefully arched, 350-foot-long wall and accompanying footpaths to provide a physical and design link between the three distinctive buildings.

"The serpentine stone wall becomes the stitch that links the main house to the other buildings," says the firm's Keith Wagner. "The arc of the wall traces the arc of the bay in a symmetrical way off the centerline of the house. How it dances through the trees and links the pool and guest houses is really about the wall taking a walk through the property."

Most of the interior design and construction took place within the existing footprint of the house. Birdseye combined a warren of smaller rooms into larger spaces: the first floor of the central, stone-walled section of the house became a spacious living room, while a sizable section of the former second floor was removed to create a generous kitchen and a circular stairway leading to the master bedroom.

The owners—avid cooks—"wanted the kitchen to be the most important room in the house," says TruexCullins architect Rolf Kielman.

Designer Cathy Chapman's vision for the interior included mismatched kitchen cabinetry for visual interest, a stove placed in an alcove designed to resemble a repurposed fireplace, and sconces and pendants used in place of recessed lighting to help retain a vintage feel. "It's made to look like an old farmhouse, which it was," says Chapman.

The one major addition to the house was an elliptical screened-in porch at the rear, warmed by a stone fireplace with comfy all-season chairs arrayed around a table made from wood salvaged from a tree on the property.

Kielman says the key to the project's success was restraint. "The owners understood that not everything needed to be pumped up," he says. "The house didn't need to get a lot bigger." Instead, the clients and their team wisely adhered to the "less is more" philosophy of New England's building tradition.

EDITOR'S NOTE: For details about this home, see *Resources*.



ABOVE: The screen house addition at the back of the house was built in a semicircle in order to minimize disruption of the lake views from the rest of the house. **LEFT:** Accompanied by informal foot paths, a 360-foot stone wall follows a long arc matching the lake shore. **FACING PAGE:** The main house is centered on a long drive and sits at the apex of curved stone walls, enhancing the sense of arrival.



A three-tiered terrace, blended into the natural landscape in place of an eroded hillside, complements an existing gazebo. Adirondack chairs can cozy up around the built-in firepit for sunset viewing.

*“THE ARC OF THE WALL TRACES THE ARC OF THE BAY IN A SYMMETRICAL WAY OFF THE CENTERLINE OF THE HOUSE.”
—KEITH WAGNER*