



Quality Craftsmanship | Stowe, Vermont

the craftsman.

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Great collaboration leads to great success



By Kate Carter

When the perfect team comes together to build the perfect house, it is as if they were all members of the same orchestra, bringing their best performance to the music, ending with a grand finale, and receiving a standing ovation. That pretty much sums up the construction of this Spruce Peak ski house. The collaboration of all parties involved created nothing short of a masterpiece.

The owner has a passion for building houses; this was his eighth. He had visited Spruce Peak in the early stages of its development and was struck by Stowe and its beauty. “I put one of the

best lots under deposit and waited a decade to build,” he said. Meanwhile, he did his homework and found an architectural firm whose style suited his vision.

The firm, Shope, Reno & Wharton, out of Connecticut, has an affinity for the Adirondacks, and much of their work embraces the Adirondack feel. “I studied their mountain houses for years,” said the owner. “They do amazing shingle-style work, very striking, but not over the top.

John Gasset, the architect with Shope, Reno & Wharton, who designed the house, said the owner felt the Adirondack look was appropriate for the Spruce Peak site and fit the context and character of the region. “The site certainly lent it-



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self to that. There's no bad view," he said. It was Gasset who steered the owner to Sisler Builders, because he was familiar with their work and recognized a symbiotic construction style.

The 7,500 square-foot, 5-bedroom house did not come without challenges, one of the first being the topography and steepness of the site, combined with the small triangular shape of the lot. These were solved with a collaboration between Sisler Builders, the architect, the landscape architect, and a civil engineer. "We modulated that well, and it's nice to see how the house grows out of the topography," Gasset said.

Sisler Builders rose to the challenge of orchestrating details, such as curved soffits, curved pilasters on outside corner elements that buttress those corners, curved trim on front entry windows, an interior staircase with one single uninterrupted run of handrail going two full flights of stairs, three floor-to-ceiling fireplaces, and a spectacular balcony off the master suite with panoramic views from Smugglers Notch to Camel's Hump. Sisler Builders' woodworking shop built dozens of custom cabinets and a number of custom interior and exterior doors. The interior design firm, Tracker Home Decor, out of Martha's Vineyard, played an important part in the interior design details, blending the mountain-house feel with modern touches.

From the onset, energy efficiency was a priority, and Sisler Builders brought a great deal of knowledge and experience to the table. "The envelope is very tight, with no substantial leakage," said Mike D'Muhala, Sisler Builders' BPI-certified energy division manager, who ran the blower door test to determine the level of efficiency. "It has an ACH50 of 0.72, which is more than four times tighter than the national energy code and an amazing achievement for a house that size," he said.

"This is consistent with our approach of achieving the best bang for the buck on energy efficiency," said Steve Sisler, owner of Sisler Builders. "We don't try to achieve an arbitrary level of performance going down the path of diminishing returns. We build to a cost-effective, high standard."

"It was a great collaboration with everyone involved, and a great partnership with Shope, Reno & Wharton," said Sisler. "The owner was hands-off, yet enthusiastic and supportive. All players stayed consistent with the architect's theme and came together to yield a home the owner is really pleased with."

"The level of quality blew me away," said the owner. "Sisler Builders did a magnificent job and the entire crew was amazing. Everyone worked well together and my involvement was limited. They only communicated when they needed input from me. The house exceeded my imagination and I am thrilled with it."

The Spruce Peak ski house is a perfect example of great collaboration leading to great success.



Master bedroom with mixed-width "beam-face" oak flooring, custom-milled white oak paneling on walls and ceiling, Douglas fir timbers, fireplace surround in Vermont Woodbury granite.



View from kitchen to dining room, with library in background, red pantry cabinets in foreground. Library fireplace made from same stone as exterior veneer.



Left: Sinuous handrail from lower level to upper floor. White birch twigs as part of balustrade. Right: Dining room and living room showing volume of space highlighting the Douglas fir timbers, white oak wall paneling, and massive stone fireplace. Interior photos by Erica Allen. Cover photos by Kate Carter.



Three-season porch detailed with the same materials and curved shingle elements as found on the exterior of the house. Painted timbers are high in the cathedral ceiling, mimicking the timber rafter tails seen on the house's perimeter. The porch provides close views of the ski trails and expansive views of the Green Mountains to the west and south. Right: Kitchen and breakfast area share a stunning Mt. Mansfield viewscape. Color and material interplay curated by Tracker Home Decor. Master bath with twin vanities and a freestanding bronze tub.

Holy audits!

What if Noah's ark were this leaky?

By Luke Sisler

Sisler Builders recently had the privilege of performing energy audits and retrofits on some of Vermont's old churches. Though Vermont is classified as one of the least religious states in the country, no one can deny that church buildings throughout the state are centerpieces in each community. These buildings are meeting houses that strengthen community and deserve attention. Our investigations revealed that these old buildings vary from "fairly leaky to ridiculously leaky... but always drafty," said Mike D'Muhala, our energy specialist. These qualitative descriptions help us interpret the data. Quantitatively the numbers mean energy loss. Many of these old gathering places have mechanical systems that are only meant to be used during church services or community gatherings. Draftiness puts a higher demand on the under-designed systems during heating cycles. A moderate retrofit focusing on air sealing will successfully stop 30 to 40 per-



Clockwise from upper left: Newport's St. Mary of the Sea Catholic Church, Montgomery Methodist Church, Eden Congregational Church.

cent of air leakage. Air sealing is the most cost-effective way to improve thermal performance of most old Vermont structures. Many of these unique old churches in our towns need further updating to continue to provide use for future generations.



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In the News

New employees

Steve Beal comes to us after running his own building and remodeling business in Maplewood, NJ, for 15 years. Prior to that he worked for Turner Construction as a project manager on commercial and institutional buildings in the NY Metro area for 11 years. He has degrees in architecture and construction management.

Blake Cote comes to us after having worked as a lead carpenter for another local builder for over six years. He is a native Vermonter, hailing from So. Burlington, and has a degree in finance. He enjoys running and was on the team that held the state high school record for the 4 x800 meter running relay. He also enjoys gardening, tending and harvesting more area than many people's houses!

Dustin Jones has also joined us full time. Many of you know his father, Noi, who has worked for us over 20 years. Dustin has years of landscaping experience and brings the attributes of hard work and mechanical aptitude to our team.

We also had two summer interns. It was a pleasure to have Sam Robertson from Stowe and Jesse MacDougall from Waterbury Center join us for the summer.

They both made valuable contributions and we enjoyed hearing about their construction experiences from a neophyte's perspective. We wish them well in their academic pursuits at UVM and University of Toronto respectively, and hope they join us again next spring.

Continuing education

Consistent with our goals of promoting from within and finding paths for our employees to enhance their skill set and knowledge we recently enrolled Nate Lewis and Luke Sisler in a 13-week Project Manager Professional course at UVM. Luke successfully completed this rigorous program and is now utilizing the lessons learned to facilitate smoother, more efficient project management. Due to Covid related day care closure, Nate was unable to attend, but is still slated to attend once the stars align and make it possible. Congratulations to Luke, and soon we'll be offering the same to Nate!

