

Rooms With a View

A clever architectural plan gives a not-so-big New Hampshire mountain getaway everything its owner wanted—and then some.

“A challenge.” That’s how architect Catherine Truman describes the brief she received for a client’s getaway home in rural New Hampshire. “Yep, it was a real challenge,” she says as she laughs. “And that’s putting it mildly!”

The owner had purchased the house nearly two decades ago because he had fallen in love with its isolated, rural location and its drop-dead views of the White Mountains. “He was crazy about the views and the lot. The house; not so much,” explains Truman, whose office is in Cambridge, Massachusetts. “In fact,

it was a mess, and he had long intended to have it torn down and replaced.”

To make the most of those mountain vistas, Truman’s client wanted windows, lots of big windows. But there was more: he wanted a master bedroom and a double-height great room on the main floor, three guest bedrooms upstairs, a huge deck, a garage, and a generous mudroom to hold all the gear he and his three children have as avid skiers and hikers.

Because it would be a second residence, the client also stressed that he needed a house that could stand

Overhanging roofs help keep snow away from the front door—one of the owner’s many low-maintenance wishes for his getaway ski home.

| TEXT BY ROBERT KIENER | PHOTOGRAPHY BY NAT REA |



up to the region's severe winters and be as maintenance-free as possible. For example, he specified no plumbing fixtures on outdoor walls that might freeze on a frigid winter night. Also, while he favored a contemporary house, he didn't want it to be sterile or cold. Rather, he hoped for the intimacy and warmth of a cabin.

To keep costs down, Truman came up with the idea of building the new home atop the old 900-square-foot foundation. That was a small footprint and, as Truman soon discovered, fitting in all the client's requirements was "like solving a Rubik's cube."

The architect "cheated" a bit by adding a one-car

garage and the mudroom outside the footprint. Rooflines proved to be tricky; she came up with a novel asymmetrical gable design for the square footprint that, when coupled with an overhanging garage roof and the front porch, helps shed snow and keeps it from piling up at the home's main entrance. Another nice cold-weather touch: she added a grate right in front of the home's front door to help "swallow" snow.

Because of the isolated location, Truman didn't have to worry about having to match the architecture to an existing neighborhood style. "Instead of designing this home as an object to be looked at, we focused more on how it would be accessed, how the snow works, and how you experience it from the inside," she says.

Landscaping was also designed to be as maintenance-free as possible. "We

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Large windows take advantage of mountain views on the isolated, forested lot. The dining area anchors one end of the two-story great room. A horizontal window between upper and lower cabinets ushers light into the kitchen. Architect and designer Catherine Truman kept to a quiet palette of whites and grays.

Good Bones

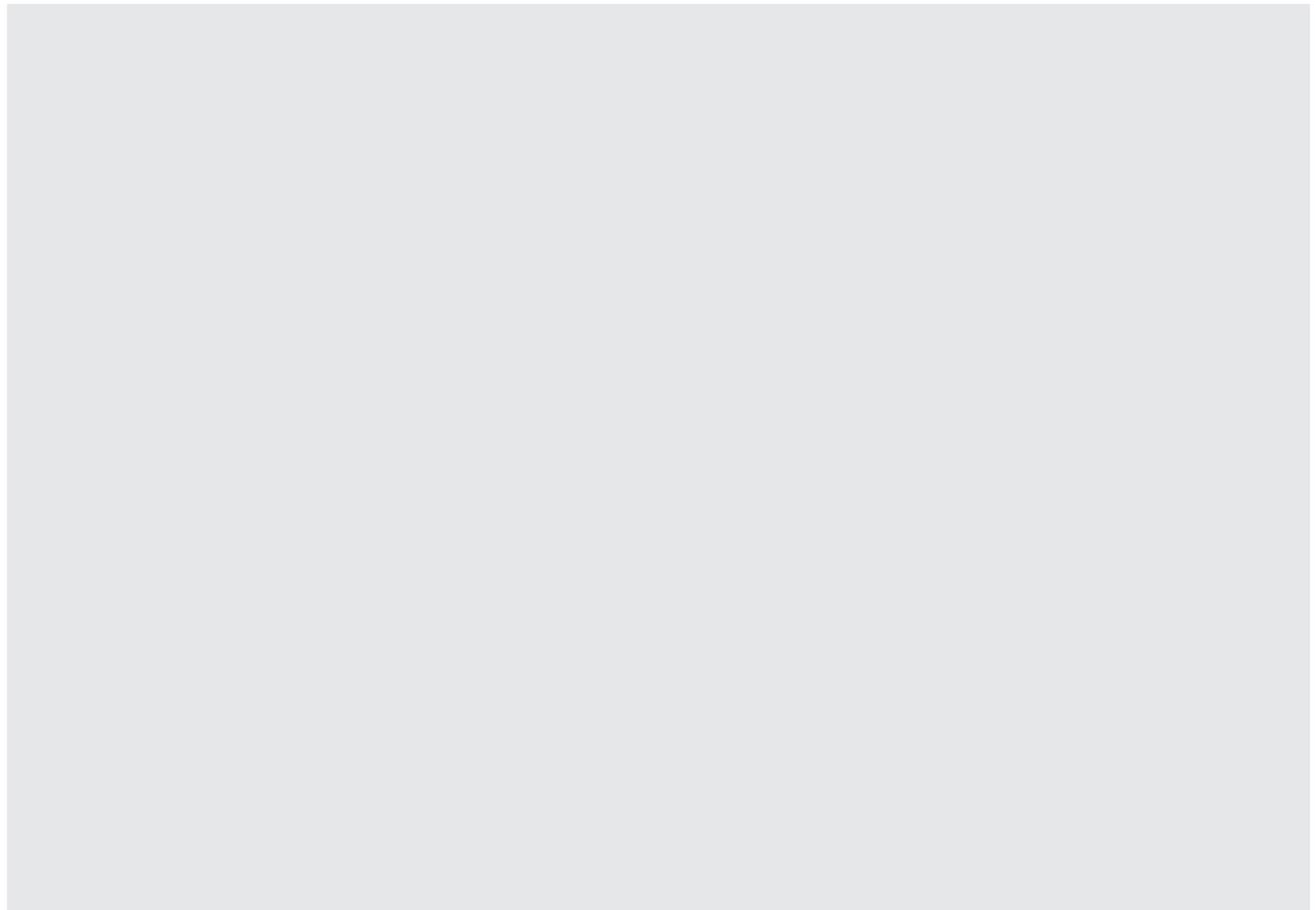
RIGHT: An open balcony runs past the second-story bedrooms. **FAR RIGHT:** The first-floor master bath is a minimalist's dream. **FACING PAGE:** The master bedroom opens onto an expansive deck with dramatic views.



chose perennials and hardy ground cover such as pachysandra because the deep snow would have killed more fragile plants,” says landscape designer Jane Hilliard. “And because the new design was built on the old foundation, we didn’t need to remove any trees for the renovation. That was one of the owner’s big requests.” Indeed, the new garage could have been

larger, but that would have meant cutting down a much-loved apple tree.

Inside, thanks largely to the high-ceilinged, open great room with its massive two-story windows, the house feels much larger than its 2,000 square feet. Nothing detracts from the close forest and distant mountain views. A wood burning stove is tucked



PROJECT TEAM

Architecture and interior design:

Catherine Truman, Catherine Truman Architects

Builder: Jason Keeney, Twin Oaks Construction

Landscape design: Jane Hilliard, Hilliard Landscaping



away from the windows, and no curtains obscure the vistas. Instead, the windows have motorized shades that recess completely into the ceiling. Another Truman detail that invites the outside in: the kitchen backsplash is actually a long horizontal window. “It brings more light and a sense of nature into the kitchen,” she explains.

Truman also took her interior design cues from the home’s lushly forested location. Inspired by the birch bark and snow she saw on walks in the nearby woods, her palette comprises mostly cool, clean whites and grays. She chose to offset these tones with a floor of rustic, character-grade hickory. “The hickory gives the inside a warm, comfortable feel,” she says. “It keeps

the contemporary design from being too stark.”

Happily, the owner agrees. “I love the house,” he told her recently. “I really appreciate how elegant the solution was to the multiple things I was trying to achieve.”

Challenge met—and mastered. ■■

RESOURCES : For more information about the professionals involved in this project, see page 188.