



Quality Craftsmanship | Stowe, Vermont

the craftsman

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The outside/inside house

Photos: Lindsay Ramondjack



By Kate Carter

The owners of this house were living in Minnesota when they decided to return east to be closer to family. They had skied all over New England, but it was Stowe Mountain Resort, as well as Stowe's community, that captured their hearts. "Skiing brought us here and skiing kept us here," the husband said.

The couple had bought a small house in Stowe Hollow where they came on weekends year-round. When the kids graduated from high school, the parents decided to move to Stowe full time. But the house they owned was old, dated, and not appropriate for year-round living. They loved the land, with its direct views of the Stowe Pinnacle and the Worcester Range, so they decided the best approach would be to demolish the existing house and start anew.

They consulted with architect Ernie Ruskey of Tektonika Studio Architects. Ruskey showed them many

houses, including his own, which Sisler Builders built a decade ago. They loved the look of Ruskey's house, and that alone convinced them to hire Sisler Builders for their tear-down, new-build project. Ruskey encouraged them to use the contour of the land to get the best Worcester views from many rooms.

Project manager Luke Sisler said they began by demolishing the original structure and getting rid of an in-ground pool. "Deconstruction Works facilitated the tear-down and donated anything worth salvaging to Green Mountain Resource," Sisler said. "Not only did we provide construction materials and fixtures such as toilets and sinks to people in need, but the owners got a tax credit."

continued on page 2

Outside/inside cont. from page 1

For their new home, the couple's main desire was to take advantage of Stowe Pinnacle and Worcester Range views. "We wanted higher ceilings and we chose Zola windows and doors, which use a European tilt/turn open/close system. They had the window style we wanted to take advantage of the views, which change throughout the day. We never get tired of it," the husband said." The windows were the largest and most energy efficient Sisler Builders had ever installed, he added.

Also high on their list was energy efficiency. "Because the house is super tight, the geothermal system we installed, along with roof-top solar panels, allow it to be a nearly net-zero building that provides a lot of energy to the grid during the summer," Sisler said.

Other desires included a home suitable for four dogs. "We went with 'select' ash flooring, which features light, cool-toned, or creamy white colors," Sisler said. It's a durable, sustainable, and popular alternative to oak, often utilized in modern and Scandinavian-style homes to create a bright, airy feel, and it holds up under heavy use, such as multiple-dog roughhousing.

The house's overall flow was also important. It's not grandiose, but accommodates their whole family. It has two floors: the primary suite and a guest suite on the main floor, plus kitchen, dining room, family room, and powder room. On the walk-out basement level there are two bedrooms and a game room, which Sisler Builders made sound-proof so the owner could practice on his golf simulator without bothering anyone else in the house. There is also an oversized two-car garage, and a three-season, outdoor room accessed directly from the house via large sliding doors. This three-season room has a kitchen area, cabinets, dining table and chairs, a massive masonry fireplace, and of course, views of the Worcester Range.

For ceilings, they went with engineered white oak timbers over white oak paneling, which carried over to cabinetry and trim. Sisler Builders' custom woodworking division played a huge role in the project, creating custom cabinetry for kitchen, office, mud room, laundry room, and pantry applications. The vanity in the primary bedroom, a bar in the basement, and stair treads and handrail, also came out of Sisler Builders' woodworking shop.

Builders' woodworking shop.



From top: The ceiling flows from inside to outside, continuing on the overhang; fireplace stonework by Matt Karlin, high-efficiency wood-burning insert by Stuv, blackened steel framing the stonework by Iron-Art. Engineered white oak bench, cubbies, and oak paneling in the mud room fabricated by Sisler's woodworkers. Custom cabinetry in the kitchen by the woodworkers, including the matched-grain panel-ready refrigerator door; counter tops by Burlington Marble and Granite. The woodworking shop also created the paneling and shelving in the pantry, all hidden by a pocket door. Outdoor room has same siding material as the house's interior and a traditionally built fire box with clay flue and block chimney, 4-foot floating stone hearth, and same stone veneer as living room fireplace.

The most challenging aspect of building this house was timing. They began during the pandemic. “Covid made it way more difficult,” Sisler said. “The geothermal parts took much longer to obtain, and were the last link in the construction chain. But everyone worked through it and in the end appreciated the process of keeping the owners informed, which had to

be done remotely, and we met in person whenever possible. They trusted us as professionals and ended up with a beautiful house.”

The owners concurred. “The Sisler Builders team was great and it was Luke Sisler’s first time as a project manager,” the husband said. “We could not have asked for a better experience.”



Clockwise: Centrally located staircase has steel balusters and handrails by Flywheel Industrial Arts, with handrails covered in white oak custom milled by Sislers’ woodworkers. Hard-wired Trackman golf simulator. Primary bathroom floating vanity by the woodworking shop, same countertop as kitchen’s. Primary bedroom has views of Stowe Pinnacle, roller shades are hidden in ceiling, custom cubbies on left.



Photos by Lindsay Ramondjack.

Company News

Community service often means volunteering

In 2010, a few local parents decided to build a skatepark for their kids in Waterbury Center’s Hope Davey Park. They heard that some old metal ramps down by the river in Middlesex were up for grabs, so they called Steve Sisler to help bring them to Hope Davey Park. He agreed, and they hauled the metal ramps up a steep hill and into his truck. They built a modest skatepark that was a big hit with the kids.

Five years later, the town was putting the finishing touches on a new, state-of-the-art concrete skatepark in the same location, replacing the original one that had fallen into disrepair. A 200-pound bronze sculpture was being delivered and a fork lift was needed to get it off the truck. The newly formed Waterbury Skatepark Coalition called



Sisler again, and without hesitation, he replied, “Sure no problem, we can do that. Do you need help with the installation? Sisler Builders would be happy to donate time to the skatepark to make it work.” he replied.

The new-and-improved Waterbury Center skatepark took hundreds of volunteer hours to complete. The Coalition is incredibly grateful to Sisler and Nate Lewis, a project manager for Sisler Builders and skatepark neighbor, for helping out when they needed it most. Sisler’s willingness to help and his strong spirit of community volunteerism, integrity, and generosity is part of what makes Sisler Builders the outstanding success that it is!

—Belle McDougall, Waterbury Skatepark Coalition



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Ask the craftsmen.

What is the purpose of faux beams?

Faux beams are primarily used to create an appealing aesthetic in a building. They differ from structural beams in that they can be placed where an architect, homeowner, or designer wants them, rather than where they need to be to support structural loads. It is fairly common to intermingle faux beams with structural beams that have a similar covering, so the beam “package” is aesthetically consistent and pleasing. For instance, say there is a horizontal structural steel beam that the design team wants to wrap with oak boards to make it look like an existing wood beam in the same space. They may have a series of non-structural oak-wrapped faux beams that interact with the structural beam to mimic the appearance of a timber frame floor system, all oak and similarly detailed.

Occasionally Sisler Builders is asked to use antique solid wood for faux beams. That is easy if the beams are non-structural. The challenge comes when a solid wood beam needs to be milled, so it fits around a structural steel beam and still looks like a solid wood beam.



This photo has real and faux beams. Can you tell which is which?

Hint: the faux beam is in the foreground.

