

Vermont builders and architects take a look at some of their best work

BY D. R. BOARDMAN

For Julie Andrews, it's raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens. But for professionals in the building trades, it's all about steel beams and stairways, salvaged siding and reclaimed slate.

We asked some of Vermont's builders and architects about their favorite recent project. The answers were all different, but most had a common theme—a commitment to preserving Vermont's lifestyle, landscape, history and architecture, and an interest in keeping the past alive in the homes of today. (A few other projects, of course, were just plain fun.)

The farm bar

"When some clients asked me to get creative and design an interesting bar, I didn't have any ideas in the bullpen," says former UVM ski racer Brendan O'Reilly, who founded Gristmill Builders 16 years ago in Stowe. "Then, on a sunrise run by a farmer's field, I saw all of this great old antique farm equipment. Bingo! I bought the plow and an old steel tractor wheel. From there, the whole project came together. We planed down some old barn board for the cabinets and paneling, etched copper with acid for the countertops and appliance panels, and used some old sliding barn-door track for the footrest. The result was a great, eclectic living space.

"As much as possible, we like to buy local, build local, and live local. We try to reclaim old farm buildings and barns, and to use those materials in our new and restored homes. We're telling a story about the past. When



you look at that plow, or that tractor wheel, you can picture the farmer and his family; it's living history, built into your house. Most of us live a fast-lane life in a throw-away society, so it's nice to recapture those old stories and old materials before they get lost."

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