

essential KITCHENS+BATHS

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“We could stay in
the kitchen all day.”

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM WESTPHALEN

MOXIE HILL FARM reveals itself as the visitor drives up the lane: pool house, entertaining barn, living-dining-kitchen wing, family house, “door yard,” garage. Although a large complex, the small units of the design create a human-scaled experience. The ensemble is a contemporary update of a 19th-century Vermont dairy farm.



Moxie Hill

ARCHITECTURE
TRUEXCULLINS ARCHITECTURE
+ INTERIOR DESIGN

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
WAGNER HODGSON
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

INTERIOR DESIGN
LILLIAN AUGUST
FURNISHINGS + DESIGN



Farm

A DESIGN EMBRACES THE NEW ENGLAND BIG HOUSE, SMALL HOUSE, BACK HOUSE, BARN TRADITION WITH A FRESH, MODERN APPROACH

WRITTEN BY WILLIAM MORGAN • PHOTOGRAPHED BY JIM WESTPHALEN

THE TALL BARN interior brings in a lot of light, while the large space is divided into entertaining zones; white pine walls create a cozy ambiance. Entrance to the farmhouse (FACING PAGE) is through a traditional Greek Revival-inspired doorway.





S

et in a meadow in Vermont dairy country and named for a beloved Labrador retriever, Moxie Hill Farm is the dream home of a couple who met when he was coaching football for his alma mater, Middlebury College, and she was playing basketball for rival Colby College. (Later, their son shot hoops for Middlebury and one of their twin daughters played basketball for Colby.) The athletic thread extended to their choice of architect to design their house: Lee Grutchfield of TruexCullins Architecture + Interior Design in Burlington, Vermont, stood out not only for his work but also because he had played point guard for Brandeis University. (Grutchfield's father also had an illustrious basketball career at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in the early 1960s.) Coincidentally, Keith Wagner of Wagner Hodgson Landscape

Architecture of Burlington and Hudson, New York, the landscape architect on the job, had played basketball at the University of Vermont.





THE KITCHEN DESIGN is centered on a 6-by-12-foot island topped with Danby marble. The Waterstone sinks have polished nickel pull-down faucets, and the range (RIGHT) is by Wolf. Canine family members have a built-in dining nook in the island.

➤ **KITCHEN INSIGHT**
WINDOWS TO GREET THE DAWN

Walking the land for the first time with their architect, the clients located where the kitchen would be, a spot they picked because of the view. To take advantage of the panorama of mountains and steeples in the distance, they asked there be no cabinets above counter height. So this cooking and family space has a wall of windows that greets the dawn. A full pantry behind the kitchen's back wall provides plentiful storage and additional refrigeration.

The kitchen feels as if it were the oldest part of the extended farmhouse. At 22 feet square, with a raftered ceiling reaching 18 feet, it acts as a fulcrum between the home's private areas and public entertaining spaces. The intimate center of daily life for a family of five, the kitchen offers primary refrigeration, sinks, abundant counter space, and storage cabinets to serve scores of guests.

In the center of the kitchen is an island topped with a single 6-by-12-foot piece of Vermont marble and seating along the side facing the view. The island and the cabinets are limed white oak; the waxed finish offers a serene, barn-like hue that contrasts with the white walls and ceiling.

Even while acknowledging the comfort of the library and the drama of the barn room, the wife says, "We could stay in the kitchen all day." Nancy Galasso and Richard Cerrone of Lillian August Furnishings + Design in Norwalk, Connecticut, worked on the interior design for the entire home. They enjoyed the project so much that, says Galasso, "We were super sad when it was finished."





Still, with the exception of three rusted scrap-metal sculptures that could be mistaken for oversize basketballs punctuating the grounds (these are “interpretations of round hay bales,” says Wagner), there is not a sports metaphor to be seen on the property. Rather, the house takes its cues from the substantial farms and barns that dot the Champlain Valley.

The long driveway is testament to the agrarian tapestry of Vermont. The house, which is not visible from the road, does not come into view until the third-of-a-mile approach is half completed. Combining pastoral beauty and meandering cow path, the road traverses a hill and a meadow, turns past an orchard, and ends at what Grutchfield calls the “door yard.” The house is U-shaped, and its arms shelter the parking area. In the spirit of most Vermonters’ preference for entering their homes through the back, this welcome area offers three options: access to the garage and mudroom, entry to the house through a formal Greek Revival door, or passage to the large family wing that reads as a barn.

This quiet, ceremonial approach reflects Grutchfield’s practical, Vermont-centric aesthetic. The white clapboard dwelling is essentially a small house in a large envelope, articulated by various contributing elements — service, living, and entertaining — connected in the northern New England way of big house, small house, back house, barn. “Lee’s architecture,” says Wagner, “is a thoughtful and wonder-

ful blend of vernacular architecture with a twist of modern.”

This unpretentious Shaker-plain composition has been accomplished by a onetime philosophy major who played college basketball in Massachusetts with hopes of turning professional. Grutchfield’s love of Vermont instead brought him to the Green Mountains, where he worked as a carpenter for a dozen years before going to Norwich University to become an architect. Working in construction, he says, sharpened his appreciation of materials and imparted an environmentally driven rural aesthetic.

Of their house, one of the owners says simply: “We wanted a white farm.” Having purchased land, and mindful of a prototypical Vermont barn visible on a neighboring property, the couple had liked what they saw of TruexCullins’s residential work and asked Grutchfield to do some drawings of a traditional farm. From there, the scheme got “more contemporary as it went along,” says the architect, until owners and designer reached a happy balance with a place that looked as if it had occupied its knoll for a century and a half.

“Our plan is to retire to the Vermont house,” says one of the clients, using it as home base, “as well as a holiday house with the children.” Now the place is enjoyed for summer vacations and entertaining, such as graduation celebrations, Thanksgiving, senior night for the Middlebury men’s basketball team, and renewal of the clients’ wed-



BREAKING WITH THE farmhouse white of the rest of the house, the library walls (FACING PAGE) are a rich dark blue. These provide a dramatic background for displaying the clients' contemporary art and photography collection.

CONTINUING THE MOTIF of connected spaces, the dining area (RIGHT) and the living room (ABOVE) form a natural extension of the kitchen, where hand-rubbed antique brass pendants with white glass designed by Thomas O'Brien hang above the island.





ding vows for their 25th anniversary. So, while the house sleeps a dozen college-age friends and the barn can handle groups of 100 or more for a party, the library, living, and dining room are friendly, small-scale spaces. Thus, the big farmhouse kitchen feels cozy, serving as the heart of the house while offering views of fields and mountains.

The dramatic 50-by-30-foot barn, with its second-story loft, wet bar, wine cooler, and game area, can absorb a 16-foot-tall Christmas tree or a college weekend party. But with comfortable seating, large fireplace, and 33-foot-high, end-of-wall windows that frame the landscape, it can be a contemplative space as well.

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For his part, Wagner respected the understatement of the domestic design with strong outdoor lines, stone walls to define space, and the strategic placement of trees and plants. The whole purpose of the landscape design, says Grutchfield, commenting on Wagner's work, "is not to interfere with the views."

And what views. A native of Maine, the wife misses the seacoast but has found mountain views amazing in their own right. "I love to watch the sun rise in the morning when I am out there with the dogs." And she embraces the changing weather across the Green Mountains, "when you can see snow on the mountaintops in the distance or the flaming colors of fall." ■

► BATH INSIGHT LUXURY WITH A VIEW

The owners of Moxie Hill Farm have a special master suite. The self-contained enclave above the living and dining rooms is reached by its own staircase. Beyond the cozy bedroom and sitting area is a large bathroom (ABOVE AND TOP) designed by Susan DesGrosseilliers, owner of Fixtures Designer Plumbing Showroom in Rockland, Maine. The space reinforces the theme of Vermont farmhouse vernacular enhanced with contemporary, luxurious products and hardware.

Echoing the exterior sheathing, the walls are white clapboard, while the giant walk-in shower has a marble floor and walls and ceiling of porcelain tile that looks like Carrara marble. The same tile is used for the bathroom floor.

California Faucets supplied the bronze-colored hardware; the British-designed Victoria + Albert double-slipper tub, a blend of Volcanic Limestone and resin, was handmade in South Africa. Two-over-two farmhouse windows above the bath frame the spine of the Green Mountains. Once again, everything in the house embraces the views.

PERCHED ABOVE THE living room, the separate master bedroom (THIS PAGE AND LEFT ON FACING PAGE) provides a private sitting room for the owners. The ceiling is open to the rafters, while the “canopy” bed is a modern shorthand version of an 18th-century four-poster. The Adirondacks, as well as the Green Mountains, are visible from here.

