

New England HOME

Celebrating Fine Design, Architecture, and Building

Bright Beginnings

Ring in the New



Great Escape

Designed like a remodeled barn, this Vermont guesthouse offers welcome refuge.

Text by FRED ALBERT

Photography by
READ MCKENDREE/JBSA



The two-story dining room features a steel-framed window wall overlooking trees and pasture. The light fixture was designed by Sargent Design Company and made by Beacon Custom Lighting, and the painting is by Anne Sargent Walker, architectural designer David Sargent's sister.



When a Boston couple commissioned David Sargent and Ann Shriver Sargent to create a guesthouse for their 1820s cape in Hartland, Vermont, the design team found their inspiration just outside the front door.

“When you drive down this road, there are three other examples of white capes with giant red barns behind them, so it was very clear to us that this

guesthouse had to look like a converted barn,” says Ann, who orchestrated the interiors while husband David handled the architecture.

Modeled on a bank barn, which has entries on two levels, the timber-frame structure is awash in sepia hues, offering a warm respite when temperatures plummet. Pale poplar paneling treated with a translucent

A custom hooked carpet wraps around the living room’s fieldstone hearth, avoiding awkward gaps between rugs. To expedite construction during Vermont’s abbreviated building season, the structure was built with a timber-frame armature from Bensonwood then finished off by Housewright Construction.



ABOVE: The guest barn boasts a full-size kitchen with a pantry (at far left) that includes a half Dutch door to secure a friend's dog at Thanksgiving. **RIGHT:** A masonry vault on the bottom level supports the living room fireplace above and doubles as a bar. "That was a challenge," concedes Jeff Page of Housewright Construction, which fashioned the self-supporting vault from fieldstone and reclaimed brick.

whitewash alternates with tinted plaster walls, which Housewright Construction applied in a rough-hewn "brown coat" to suggest the textured finish one might find in a real barn. A tapestry of ruddy reclaimed hemlock animates the floor underfoot, its rough-hewn demeanor tempered by custom hooked rugs that nod to traditional New England handiwork.

An offset the monochromatic backdrop with a comfortable mix of antique and new furniture. "We brought color into the house with rugs and draperies, throws and furniture, fabric and pillows," she says. A cerulean blue sofa animates the living room and is echoed in window treatments and kitchen cabinets, as well as doors bound with hand-forged strap hinges. The artisan's touch is also evident in the handblown bubble lights cascading from the dining room ceiling and in the bespoke chestnut table below, which expands to seat sixteen.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Designer Ann Shriver Sargent topped the entry's heated slate floor with Oriental carpets because they're durable, hide dirt, and are relatively easy to clean. An interior window brings extra light into the bottom-floor game room, where a Thomas O'Brien chair from Century flanks an antique chest. Like the other four bedrooms, the primary was kept compact because people don't spend as much time in their bedrooms at a guesthouse.

The living room's fieldstone fireplace is supported by a reclaimed-brick vault on the bottom level, which doubles as a bar for the neighboring game room. Walls are covered in a canvas mural by Susan Harter depicting the surrounding landscape, which the owners commissioned sixteen years ago for a previous house.

With five bedrooms and six baths, the guesthouse was intended to serve as a welcoming retreat for the owners' three adult children and their friends. And if mom and dad often find themselves sneaking over to sleep there instead of in the main house, who can blame them?

EDITOR'S NOTE: For details, see Resources.

ARCHITECTURAL AND INTERIOR DESIGN: Sargent Design Company

BUILDER: Housewright Construction

TIMBER FRAME: Bensonwood

LANDSCAPE DESIGN: Shepard Butler Landscape Associates