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Photos by Carolyn Bates

VERMONT HOMES AND GARDENS

Custom Creation

Both the designers and the owner love the results of high-tech detailing and innovative finishing touches to this fine lakeside home.



AS THE OWNERS OF Sheppard Custom Homes, Tom and Donna Sheppard have lived in many spectacular houses. When they were designing a new house for themselves, they saw an opportunity to experiment on a large scale. The result is visually stunning, technologically advanced, and

true to its environment. It is so great, in fact, that they never got to move in. As the Sheppard Custom Homes crew was starting work on it two years ago, Tom received a call asking if the house was for sale. “My wife thought it was a little big and over the top, so we decided to sell it,” said Tom. “The new owner was

great. His instructions were to finish the house exactly as we would if we were going to move in.”

Tom Moore crafted all the woodwork for the house. Donna wanted the house to have an open floor plan, but the space was so large that it would have been overwhelming. Tom’s woodwork



The marvelous woodwork in the house, including the grand front hallway with its classic vaulted ceiling, was done by master craftsman and contractor Tom Moore of Underhill Center, Vermont. The fine custom woodwork, incorporated throughout the house, ties all the various living spaces together in a unified fashion without compromising each room's unique characteristics.



The entire house is equipped with LED lights. Tom's son Peter did all the lighting installation. The use of LED lights helped classify the house as a high-energy home. There are more than 100 recessed lights around the house, and LED is much more efficient than conventional lighting. LED lights used to give off a dim, yellowy light but the LED technology used in this house is bright, crisp, and even closer to true light than conventional lighting technology.



The most exciting part of the house for Tom was the grand stained-glass window in the living room (above). Tom contracted Lawrence Ribbecke to create it. Tom had used stained glass for accent windows in other houses but had never thought to have a stained-glass window of this scale. The final piece measures 7 feet high by 17 feet wide and weighs close to 800 pounds. Another unique feature (below) is a palatial home movie theater, controlled by iPhone.

serves to make some separation and designate different rooms while leaving the floor plan open. Each room has its own angle, but the wood ties them all together.

The beautiful woodwork that Tom Moore fashioned presented a challenge when it came time to light the house—there was very little room to put light switches without ruining the detail of the wood. To solve the problem, Tom Sheppard decided to program the whole house to run on iPad and iPhone technology. No matter where you are, you can turn on the lights. “I never thought I’d get excited about an electronic house, but it eliminates more than half of the light switches in a house this big,” he commented. “It’s my first electronic house but it won’t be my last!”

The lights aren’t the only aspect of the house controlled electronically: Peter also designed the home theater and sound system to be controlled via iPhone. The sound system is linked



through the whole house, which makes it easy to change rooms without missing a beat.

Donna does all the interior design for Sheppard Custom Homes. She chooses all of the colors, fixtures, and appliances before the work on the house even begins. Donna and Tom have designed many homes for themselves, and this is the first they haven't moved into. In 42 years of marriage, Donna and Tom have moved 28 times in Vermont and Florida. "Donna has had plenty of experience decorating new houses since I've made her move so many times," said Tom, "I don't think she was disappointed not to make move number 29."

To get the house as close to the lake as possible, Tom decided to put the swimming pool between the house and the lake. The pool is still considered a structure, but it doesn't obstruct the view from the house. He built a stone retainer wall around the pool to comply with fencing, which is required, but it isn't like most pool fences. "The inspectors looked at it kind of funny," said Tom, "It's 4 feet high on one side, but only 16 inches high on the other!" The wall gives the pool privacy without interrupting the view.

"Landscaping is like the wrapping on the package," mused Tom. To complete the package on this house, he had large red maple trees planted all the way down the driveway for a Vermont twist on the look of big southern estates. "I don't think there's a thing that the new owner would change about this house," said Tom. "He loves it, and that's what counts." 🌲

Jordan Werner lives and writes in Burlington, VT. Carolyn Bates is a professional commercial photographer who lives and works in Burlington. To see more of her work, visit carolynbates.com.

Just the facts

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