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A wall of windows on the rear of the home allows the sun to bathe interior spaces in light and offers lush views.

## Nature First

With a bucolic Massachusetts backdrop and plenty of artistic inspiration, a home becomes a sanctuary for the soul.

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ABOVE: "We didn't close off a lot of rooms with doors, so there's an easy flow from one area to the next," Warren says.

LEFT: The hearth showcases a fieldstone fireplace and mantel fashioned from a salvaged piece of barn wood.

Early on an April morning in 2003, a convoy of concrete trucks filed down an old logging road in Massachusetts' Pioneer Valley. As they slogged through axle-deep mud on their way to pour the foundation for Warren and Anna Jane Krebs' timber home, thunder and lightning raged. It didn't seem as though things could get much worse—until the pump truck froze and stalled.

"It was jammed and hardened with concrete," recalls foreman Dave Virgilio of Kohl Construction. "Four of us tried to free the clog, and one guy ended up breaking his arm."

"That was the low point," admits project manager Steve Ferrari. "But it all went well from there."

In fact, aside from that one rain-lashed day, the project seemed charmed from the first time the Krebs ever saw a timber frame raising. At the time, they were living in a cozy 18th-century home on Nantucket, where they spend their summers. But the couple dreamed of designing their own home from start to finish, one that would accommodate their needs as they grew older. They had considered building a timber home, and that conviction was hammered home

the day they attended a Timberpeg frame raising and witnessed the massive posts and beams being hoisted into place by craftsmen.

The frame rose like an excavated skeleton of an ancient beast. "As soon as we saw the precision with which the beams are cut and the absolute intricacy of the raising, we were sold," says Warren, an artist who taught about the history of art and architecture at a Pennsylvania boarding school for two decades.

"That particular stage is so beautiful that you don't even want it to be completed," says Anna Jane, who's also a retired teacher. The couple was so impressed with the home—as well as the folks they met from Timberpeg—that they never seriously considered another timber producer for their home. They experienced a similar lightening bolt of revelation the day they found a wooded 5-acre lot in the Pioneer

## Editor's Note

Since the time we interviewed Warren and Anna Jane Krebs about their home, Warren passed away unexpectedly. We struggled with the idea of pulling the story, but we learned that Warren adored this home and was thrilled to share his story with our thousands of readers. Therefore, we offer this feature as a testament to a wonderful life and one amazing house.



**LEFT:** A Dutch door made of salvaged barn wood leads to the mud room. Next to the doorway, a built-in hutch showcases family heirloom china. The hutch and the island, which features a granite countertop, are distressed to make them appear older.

**BELOW:** A window seat plumped with pillows serves as additional seating for the dining room table, which was handcrafted in Ireland. It's also a great spot for taking in the views of the forest and the mountains in the distance.

Valley. Their real estate agent had taken them to a forested development 10 minutes from Northampton and led them to a clearing in the woods. "It was green and lush, but you could look through these openings and see the Berkshire Mountains in the distance," Anna Jane recalls. "It was so quiet, and the trees rustled in the breeze. We just knew this was the spot."

### Inspired Design

Having chosen their timber producer and lot, Warren and Anna Jane focused on their home's design. They drew inspiration from magazines, model homes and architectural elements they noticed wherever they traveled. Warren sketched preliminary elevations, incorporating arched windows, dormers and a steep, sloping roof that, together, evoke the feeling of a French Country cottage. But, above all, he and Anna Jane wanted their house to feel at home in the woods, so they chose wooden shingles for the roof and clad the exterior in board-and-batten siding. "By using vertical board and batten, we tried to echo the glory of the surrounding trees," Warren explains.



**ABOVE:** The second-floor studio is an inspiring place for Warren, an artist who has a gallery in his summer home on Nantucket, and Anna Jane, who enjoys quilting. Track and pendant lighting allow the couple to focus on the task at hand.

**RIGHT:** "This area is like a little personal museum," Warren says of the loft. The cello belonged to his father, a concert cellist. The sewing wheel in the corner was built by his great-great-grandfather. An illuminated niche was created specifically to showcase a much-loved sculpture.



## Landscape Perfection

When Warren and Anna Jane Krebs built a timber home, they asked landscape designers Michael Little and Melinda Reid of Little & Reid in Amherst, Massachusetts, to carefully integrate their home with its bucolic surroundings.

"We chose native New England plants, mimicking the forest floor in the beds and in the plantings," Melinda explains. Her selections ranged from river birch, dogwoods and service berry to azaleas, sweet woodruff, tiarella and ferns.

Michael headed up the placement of glacial boulders, which he used to direct rainwater. "When it's raining, you see a ribbon of water coursing through the backyard, then tumbling down big rocks into an embankment," he says. What might have been a liability has now become an asset—a rain-fed waterfall that's lovely enough to make you wish for a storm.

Kohl Construction built the first-floor deck atop the foundation using traditional stick framing, which had to be accurate to the quarter inch in order to ensure that the frame—which was erected by subcontractor Dick Bird—would fit properly. Kohl's crew then enclosed the walls with structural insulated panels and drywall. They weatherproofed the roof using Timberpeg's wrap-and-strap technique, which includes a layer of tongue-and-groove panels topped by rigid foam insulation and secured with 1-by-4-inch strapping that's nailed through both layers to the frame.

Despite the rocky start, crew members loved the project. "Every time the Krebs came to the site, they brought home-baked goods and coffee," Steve says. "But more than that, they were just fun to talk to—and they appreciated the work we did."

Inside, he and Anna Jane planned sunlit rooms that flow easily into one another, with a soaring great room that opens to the kitchen and dining room (both are nestled beneath low-slung beams). To foster a sense of Old World charm, they relied on the warmth of the pine frame, family antiques and painted bead-board cabinetry. To top off the motif, an arched brick fireplace warms the dining room and the sunroom.

The couple also required a master bedroom on the main floor, with two guest bedrooms above to accommodate visits from their grown daughters and grandchild. Warren also planned a second-floor studio where he could paint and draw while enjoying the wooded views all around him.

The couple took their plans to Timberpeg Regional Manager Vince Scamporino and Timberpeg's Chief Designer, Jim Driesch, who adapted their sketches into blueprints. "This is a pretty straightforward purlin-style frame," Jim says of the 3,916-square-foot home. "We could have done a number of different trusses and chamfering and fancier joinery, but that's not the Krebs. They like simplicity."

The home does have one tricky secret, though. Heeding the advice of Timberpeg's Nantucket rep the couple requested that the second floor be installed atop a sub-frame, 6 inches above the tongue-and-groove ceiling below. This gap between floors not only cuts down on sound transmission, but it makes it easier to run wiring, plumbing and ductwork to the second floor.



**ABOVE:** In the master bedroom, a four-poster bed keeps company with an antique French chamber chest. Two of Warren's paintings flank the window, where a Stephen Swift rocker is positioned to take in the view.

**BELOW RIGHT:** Warren and Anna Jane enjoy most of their meals in the sunroom, which boasts windows on two walls and a fireplace. "It's so bright, you can't be unhappy when you go into the sunroom," Warren says.

**BELOW LEFT:** The master bathroom is actually stick-frame construction, but a vaulted tongue-and-groove ceiling accented by pine beams ties it visually to the home's timber core.



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