



Timber Homes Illustrated - October 2005

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Living on the Ledge

Building for retirement in New Hampshire

Story by Cheryl Kenny • Photos by Rich Frutchey

The engraving on a granite boulder at the bottom of Don and Nita Jackson's steep, half-mile driveway reads "Tuckedaway." It's a fitting name for their 160-acre hideaway along the side of Pickett Hill in Bradford, New Hampshire.

The couple bought the scenic property, which includes an 1800s farmhouse, in 1986 as a weekend retreat. "Since the farmhouse was built in 1800, there was no insulation in the walls," notes Don, a retired mechanical engineer. "We quite



honestly would get wind burn some winter nights sleeping inside the house." They renovated the house in 1997, but it still had only one bathroom and no closets. As the Jacksons considered where to live year-round in their retirement, they knew it could not be in the old homestead.

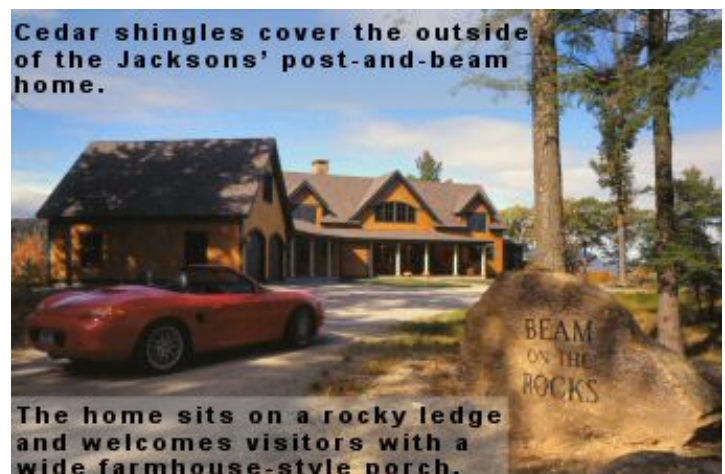
The couple thought about moving to California, Arizona, even nearby Lake Sunapee, New Hampshire, but something drew them back to their mountain retreat. And by that time, the idea of building a post-and-beam home had taken hold. "We liked the idea of voluminous space, high ceilings, exposed wood," says Don. "With our view, we wanted a lot of glass."

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Finding a View

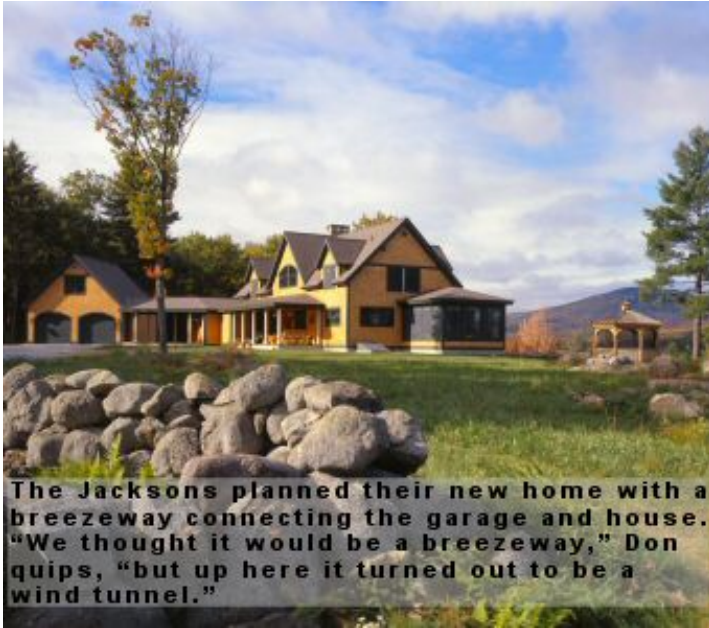
The couple hired Old Hampshire Design, the builder that had renovated the farmhouse, and which happened to be a representative of Timberpeg, a timber home producer in West Lebanon, New Hampshire. The Jacksons worked with Jim Driesche, chief designer of Timberpeg Design Services, to begin planning their 3,500-square-foot home.

Deciding exactly where to site the house was a job Don embraced. He and Nita wanted optimal views, but minimal tree removal. "We didn't want to cut any trees," says Nita. "It was like going to the hair dresser: 'Don't



Cedar shingles cover the outside of the Jacksons' post-and-beam home.

The home sits on a rocky ledge and welcomes visitors with a wide farmhouse-style porch.



The Jacksons planned their new home with a breezeway connecting the garage and house. "We thought it would be a breezeway," Don quips, "but up here it turned out to be a wind tunnel."

cut, don't cut!" Don climbed a tall pine tree and took photos of the views from that location. "He showed me the pictures and said 'This is what we can see if we take some of these trees down, '" explains Nita. "And it was beautiful."

The spot they chose is about 300 feet from the old house, on a rocky ledge with a panoramic view of the Sunapee Mountains. Jim notes, "This was not a simple siting. The Jacksons wanted the building to be right up to the edge of the ledge, for a tremendous view of the valley."

The couple bought a gazebo and placed it on the ledge, then spent many sunsets there, contemplating the home they would build. The house, completed in 2003, includes a sunroom that sits just 18 feet from the gazebo.



Left: "You walk into the front door and see both the magnitude of the great room and the vista out that glass wall," Don says. "Everybody that walks in... you can almost hear their jaw hit the floor."



Right and opposite: Large arch-topped windows above French doors bring the New Hampshire mountain views in. No window treatments mean the Jacksons can enjoy their natural surroundings. "When there's a big moon, you do not need a night light," Nita says.





Left:
Tucked under lowered ceilings, the Jacksons' cozy kitchen is outfitted with wood cabinetry topped with granite.



Above:
Windows wrap around the kitchen and sunroom offering the Jacksons a panoramic view of their lot.

Open Spaces

A friendly, farmhouse porch invites visitors into the Jacksons' cedar-shingled house, which is stained with Australian amber oil and highlighted with forest green trim. Don and Nita chose to forgo a formal foyer, so entry is directly into the 32-by-24-foot great room, with soaring, 26-foot ceilings punctuated by a 36-light wrought iron chandelier. The spaciousness of the great room is further enhanced by the fact that there is no bridge joining the two sides of the second-floor loft, leaving a large opening between the sides that rise to the roof timbers. Each side of the second floor loft is accessible by a separate staircase, one leading to a guest bedroom and bath, and the other to a home office.

The Jacksons' choice not to connect the two sides of the loft offered a design challenge, Jim says. "There was no easy way to make the valleys all come together to make a truss. We added a ridge beam to support the center of the roof framing." That beam also helps support the peak of the roof during heavy snows, Jim notes.

Don admires the great room's timbers: "When I look up at the structure...at the joinery at the top, I just marvel at that."

Below:
With its prep sink and cook top, the island offers the chef a workspace that's connected to the action in the great room.





Above and right: High ceilings in the master bedroom add drama a window seat looks out over the home's wooded views.



Left: A glass-walled shower stands separate from the master bath's luxury tub. Wood detailing around the room echoes the look of the home's timber frame.



The open design of the great room meant eliminating two additional upstairs bedrooms. However, that space can be modified to connect the two sides and create those extra rooms at a future time.

Warmth of Wood

The great room, dominated by windows revealing expansive views, and a massive fireplace finished with fieldstone from the property, opens to a dining area on the right. The dining room adjoins a bright, tray-roofed sunroom, as well as the couple's kitchen—Nita's favorite spot because it is open to the great room and dining areas. A spacious master bedroom suite, which has high ceilings with its own loft, a stone fireplace, walk-in closets and a large bathroom, is to the left of the great room. The house reflects the couple's love of wood. Beams and trim are Douglas fir. The floors are red birch, in alternating widths of two, three and four inches; Don enthusiastically describes it as "beautiful with lots of color and a lot of life in it. This floor has personality."

The kitchen cabinets are cherry, as is the dining room table, which the couple commissioned from a local craftsman. "If you don't like wood, you won't like our house," said Nita, laughing. "I grew up in west Texas where there are no trees!"

Built-ins are another important feature. The fireplace in the master bedroom is flanked by built-in bookcases, and a window seat under a bedroom window offers drawers for storage below the bench. Walk-in closets include built-in drawers, eliminating the need for bureaus.

The dining room also includes a window seat—perfect for the couple's Yorkie—with storage beneath, and built-in cabinets on either side. Another built-in sits between the kitchen and the sunroom. "The idea was to have less furniture, to be very, very simple," Nita says.

In front of the Jacksons' house sits another boulder carved with the home's name: "Beam on the Rocks." The appropriateness of the appellation is two-fold, Don says. "It's a post and beam house on a rocky ledge," he notes with a laugh, "and the company I worked for also owned Jim Beam whiskey."



Left: Under the rafters to one side of the great room, a guest bedroom is highlighted by a beautifully framed dormer window. Hard-wood floors gleam underfoot.

Right: Guests feel transported to the shore in this bathroom, accented with diamond-patterned blue and white tiles.

