

welcome to paradise

California couple finds slice of heaven in a place called Eden



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“Listen,” says Anne Ford as she sits on a comfy brown leather couch in the living room of her brand-new house on Lake Eden. “Do you hear that?” she asks as she explains to a visitor why she loves living here. “Nothing but silence. It’s just so incredibly peaceful.”

She smiles and explains that she and her husband, Steven, both San Diego residents, bought this 7.5-acre lakefront property and recently built their three-story second home here, partly because the location is so serene.

“I’ve lived in California all my life and the crowds and noise were getting too much for me,” says Ford. “Every day in California I hear motorcycles roaring up and down nearby Catalina Boulevard. It drives me crazy. Pretty much all I listen to here is the occasional loon. This is paradise!”

Then, after a pause, she adds, “I see why they named this part of Vermont Eden.”



As architect **Andrew Volansky's** renderings show, the Lake Eden house he designed resembles a compact Scottish-inspired cottage from the front, but, as the rear view shows, is actually a deceptively spacious three-story home. At left: The view of Lake Eden from the living room.



At the rear of the house a walkout basement leads to a flagstone terrace complete with firepit and barbecue that the owners refer to as “our outdoor kitchen.” Inset: the “speakeasy” in the front door opens to reveal a gate depicting the thistle, Scotland’s national flower.



As Ford escorts a visitor around her new home, she confesses that Eden—as much as she loves it—was her second choice for what she freely describes as “my dream home. If I could have built anywhere, I would have built a home in Scotland,” she says, explaining how she and her entire family fell deeper and deeper in love with that country’s moody mountains and magical moorlands on numerous visits. “It just spoke to us, and we found ourselves returning to it on holiday again and again.”

Scotland was too far away for frequent family visits, so the couple turned to Vermont, which they loved for its beauty and “soul.” They had a checklist of requirements that were, as Ford says, “non-negotiable.”

They wanted to be on a lake. It couldn’t be too big or too small; they wanted to be able to water ski on it. Steven grew up in Minnesota and spent summers at a family lake house, so he wanted a second home that was big enough to entertain their extended family on a lakeside lot.

They wanted a secluded, quiet location.

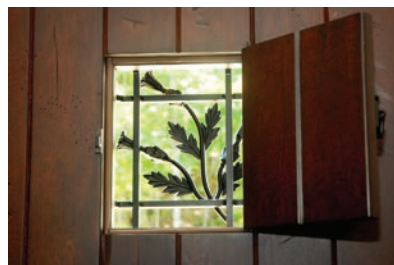
Last, they wanted to build their own house. Because they had ruled out buying a second home in Scotland, they wanted to design and build a new home in, as she says, “the manner of a Scottish manor.”

They began their search near Lake Champlain and moved eastward. Nothing met all their requirements. Finally, working with

Stowe-based Pall Spera Company Realtors, they happened on a lakefront lot that had been for sale a while ago but had gone off the market. After some tense negotiations, the land became theirs in early 2016 and it was time to turn dream into reality.

Enter local architect Andrew Volansky. “The Fords were so easy to work with,” remembers

Volansky. “They knew exactly what they wanted—a home that would not look out of place in the Scottish countryside—and came to me with a very clear vision. In fact, after meeting them and listening to their wish list over



cups of coffee, we had a rough, working sketch drawn up in just over an hour. Then we went to walk their lot at Lake Eden.”

As Volansky quickly realized, Anne Ford had a very good idea of what she wanted when it came to designing her new house.

“I had walked through this house so many times in my head, I knew exactly how I desired the house to work and look,” remembers Ford.

Volansky understood that his main responsibility to his clients would not be providing design leadership but would be more about listening to the Fords, hearing what was important to them and helping them carry out their vision.

The couple wanted a traditional design that was reminiscent of a Scottish cottage. Ford had done her homework; she knew she wanted a 12/12 pitch for the roof and a traditionally balanced look for the front door and windows.

Inside, instead of asking for a great room that incorporated an open-plan kitchen and dining area, as so many clients do, they wanted separate, compartmentalized kitchen, dining, and living rooms.

“I also wanted a traditional floor plan with fireplaces at both ends of the main floor, one in the living room and another in the kitchen,” says Ford. “Being able to see both fires burning at once makes the home that much cozier and more cottage-like.”

The couple tweaked their home’s traditional design by opting for larger windows and higher ceilings (10- and 9-foot) than would be found in a classic Scottish cottage.

“And we also did bend to convention and went with indoor plumbing,” jokes Ford.

In response to Vermont’s harsh climate, which closely resembles Scotland’s, Volansky specified 10-inch walls, energy-efficient windows, heavy insulation, and radiant floor heating.

The Fords credit Volansky with important design changes. “When Andrew saw that I had proposed a mudroom the size of small closet, he just laughed,” remembers Ford.

“He called me and said, ‘You must not have a mudroom in California.’ I told him we didn’t have mud! He said we’d need a mudroom about three times larger than what I’d proposed. He was so right.”

Floors are mostly oak and the traditional lintels over the windows and doors are limestone. A massive hemlock beam serves as a mantel over the living room fireplace that is a combination of stone and stone cladding. The textured plaster walls throughout the house were artfully hand-troweled by Craftsbury-based master plasterer Ron Bisson, who is known for his attention to detail and craftsmanship.

“To produce the classic travertine finish look the Fords wanted, we did a double-coat veneer, which consists of a gypsum base coat

The cozy living room is dominated by a massive Vermont granite fireplace, complete with mantle piece fashioned from a reclaimed barn beam. The custom oak staircase and bookshelves were fabricated by the home's builder, Donald P. Blake Jr., Inc.



>> live



Family dog Seamus rests in the living room beneath custom oak bookshelves, complete with a library ladder that provides plenty of space for knickknacks and family heirlooms, such as this antique globe.



The expansive, tiled-floor kitchen includes a butcher block table that does double duty as food prep station, as well as casual dining. A custom-built pantry (bottom left) and gray cabinets (with corner drawers) offer plenty of storage space for food and kitchen equipment.



Although, as they confessed

"We'd never built anything before," the owners fashioned their own three-trestle, 345-pound dining room table from solid birch and shipped it from California to Vermont. They found the 1720 English elm sideboard from an antique dealer in Pennsylvania.



>> relax



Like much of the house, this basement level family room features distressed oak flooring and textured, hand-troweled plaster walls. It includes a comfy L-shaped couch for views of both a large panel TV and Lake Eden in the distance.



>> powder

Stone and tile floors, along with radiant heat and a classic iron claw-foot bathtub, give the master en suite bathroom a classic country feel, while an expansive walk-in shower and built-in vanity offer modern touches.





eden

201<< with a lime putty finish over gypsum plaster board,” says Bisson. Instead of using wood trim, Bisson and his crew made half-inch bullnose plaster beading.

The Fords didn’t have to look too far for help with interior design. Their daughter Maren has started her own design firm, Embelish, and took charge.

Instead of recessed lighting, which the Fords decided was too contemporary, they opted for wall and lamp lighting. The walls are painted creamy white for a whitewashed feel and the floors are stained a rich brown. “We wanted a neutral palette that didn’t detract from the house’s features,” explains Maren.

They are mostly furnishing the four-bedroom home with antiques, such as an 18th-century pine armoire and a massive, 500-pound 5-by-8-foot 1890s stained-glass window they found in a New Hampshire shop. The dining room boasts a 300-year-old English elm sideboard.

Even the home’s interior five-plank doors are traditional, with one small exception. “Steven said no to traditional thumb latches on the doors,” says Ford. “So we went with custom-made handles.”

Travis Cutler, vice president of Donald P. Blake Jr. Inc., the home’s builder, reports that his team got very engaged with meeting the Fords’ expectations for a traditional-looking home. For example, they crafted a kitchen pantry unit from reclaimed barn wood and went to great lengths to give it an antique look that blended in with the home’s style.

“Like all the built-ins we made, the Fords told us they wanted them to look like they had been in the house and used for a few hundred years,” says Cutler. “We eased the corners and did some subtle, intentional wearing via strategic grinding and sanding on the pantry doors to look like they’d been used for centuries.”

While the front of the house is a very faithful depiction of a classic Scottish home, the back is more contemporary.

Says Anne Ford, “The house is all business in the front and party in the back.” A walkout basement opens onto a flagstone terrace and outdoor cooking/entertainment area that Volansky neatly tucked into the landscape. Because the Fords didn’t want wooden decks (“There were none in old Scottish houses,” explains Ford), Volansky built up the land to raise the grade and topped it with flagstone terracing.

Although the Fords only recently moved into their new house—construction was completed in August—they report that it is already feeling like home.

“It just gets better and better,” says Ford as she points out the engraved nameplate next to the home’s front door that reads, “Loch Ne’Amh.”

“Loosely translated, that’s Gaelic for Lake Paradise or Lake Eden,” she explains. “And it’s proof that, as I told you, we’re living in paradise.” ■



In the master bedroom, as in the rest of the house, the owners decided against recessed lighting and opted for more traditional hanging chandeliers and standing lamps. The basement bunk room (below) can sleep up to five in three bunk beds and a queen-size bed.