



Interior designer
Crystal Collinson
helped Tina and Ian
design a distinctive
lighting scheme for
their home, including
low-voltage bulbs that
highlight the rafters in
the upper hallway.

On Solid Ground

Open communication and design flexibility come together in a bright, spacious timber home nestled on a Christmas tree farm in rural Ontario.

STORY BY HOLLY O'DELL | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBIN STUBBERT

Large windows that afford countryside views were a priority for homeowners Ian McSweeney and Tina Clare. The rear of the home also features two decks with retractable awnings and shatterproof glass between the posts. Copper roof flashings, sills and downpipes provide a nice contrast with the local fieldstone used on the home's wainscoting and in the backyard firepit.



Tina and Ian wanted real stone for their great room fireplace, so timber producer Normerica chose this local field-stone and sliced it into a veneer. "The stone masons even incorporated a stone with a fossil imprint that our 10-year-old son and a friend had dug up on the construction site," Tina says.





The time had arrived for Ian McSweeney and Tina Claren pursue their dream of building a second home in the country. The Toronto couple knew they wanted a post-and-beam structure with an open floorplan, but the rest was up for discussion. That's when Ian, a lawyer, did what he knows best: He thoroughly researched his options.

Ian turned to the Internet, where he found both the perfect parcel and timber-frame producer. He and Tina purchased a 75-acre Christmas tree farm on the Niagara Escarpment near the village of Hockley Valley, about an hour and fifteen minutes northwest of Toronto. Ian then compared the web sites and producer offerings of timber companies, selecting Normeric of Courville, Ontario, based on its quality producer, proximity and organization.

After visiting a Normeric model home, Ian and Tina found they loved the grandness of it but wanted a house that reflected their

individual tastes. They began working with the company's senior project manager, John Murphy, and soon discovered that their home would be just as much a result of the relationship between producer and homeowner as it was the architecture and construction. "There was a lot of trust from the beginning," Ian says. "We really dealt with them on a handshake."

The open relationship also allowed Ian and Tina the freedom to make changes to the design along the way (the couple swapped out some windows and withdrew a mudroom from the original floorplan, creating a larger dining room) while Normeric handled everything from the building permit to construction.


John appreciated such candor from the homeowners, allowing that it created a better home. "They participated all the way along," he says. "They knew what they liked and didn't like. We never had any type of disappointment or disagreement, and they are proud of their house."

ABOVE, LEFT: "We needed more space between the kitchen bar stools and the breakfast table to accommodate traffic through the door to the back deck, so we pushed the breakfast area into the great room a bit," Tina says of the curved bench made of cherry and mahogany. The back of the bench, which faces the great room, serves as a storage area.

ABOVE, RIGHT: A mix of materials imbues the kitchen with a unique flair. The upper cabinetry was painted to match the white-washed tongue-and-groove pine ceiling, while the tumbled marble flooring and lower walnut cabinetry bring an earthy quality to the space.

A large, rustic billiards room with a wooden ceiling, a pool table, and a staircase. The room features a high, vaulted ceiling with exposed wooden beams and a large, dark wood pool table with a green felt top. A staircase with a wooden railing is visible on the left side. The room is well-lit with a large pendant light fixture hanging over the pool table. In the background, there are large windows and a bar area.

Switchback stairs lead to the main-level billiards room, which also houses a granite-topped, eight-seat bar. Bay windows surround the bar and provide additional seating. The space flows into the den, and a set of French doors lead to the back deck.

A curved wooden staircase with a railing, showing the intricate joinery and the smooth curve of the stairs. The railing is made of dark wood with vertical balusters. The ceiling above the stairs is also made of wood, with exposed beams.

Curve Your Enthusiasm

To add dimension to their open floorplan, homeowners Ian McSweeney and Tina Clare introduced curved elements throughout the home. The tumbled marble floor of the kitchen and Brazilian cherry in the hallway form sweeping arcs where they join. A cherry breakfast nook doubles as a curved storage area, while an upper-level rounded bridge accents the arched braces.

The compound-curve staircase, which rises through the home's three stories, is at the core of the circular theme but also represents one of the home's biggest design challenges. John Murphy, senior project manager with Normerica, says that because the staircase was so massive, it had to be fabricated on site. Using large fir timbers that were shipped to the home site, the crew ripped the raw fir into quarter-inch planks; screwed, glued and clamped them into the required curve; and sanded them down.

"Putting this together on site was unusual," says John of the month-long project, "but it was a great feat."

-H.O.



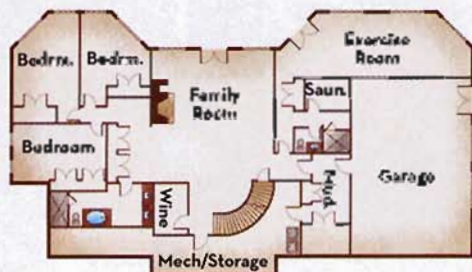
The upper-level guest bathroom features tumbled marble tile and a cathedral ceiling clad with tongue-and-groove pine.

The couple's front door is based on a design lan spotted in a magazine and dreamed would someday grace his and Tina's second home. A local craftsman replicated the design out of mahogany.

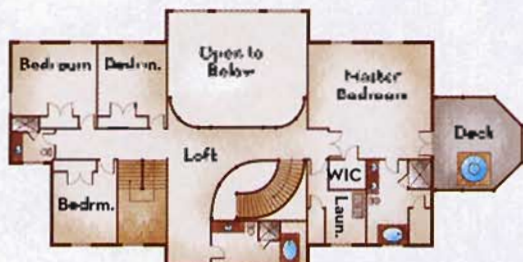
The 14-month construction process yielded a 10,000-square-foot Tudor-style home that lan and Tina lovingly refer to as "the farm." The home's Eastern white pine and Douglas fir timbers seamlessly meld with other surface materials such as tumbled marble, Brazilian granite and engineered maple.

The home features a double-sided fireplace in the great room featuring Ontario fieldstone accent and a great room, with its 30-foot vaulted ceiling. The room is flanked on one side by an open kitchen, and on the other by a billiards room with a bar. A bridge on the home's upper level connects the bedrooms and Tina's art studio. The home features geothermal technology heats and cools the home, and the marble floors feature radiant heating.

lan and Tina, along with their two young children, stay at the home on weekends and many holidays as possible. The surrounding area offers plenty of recreational opportunities,



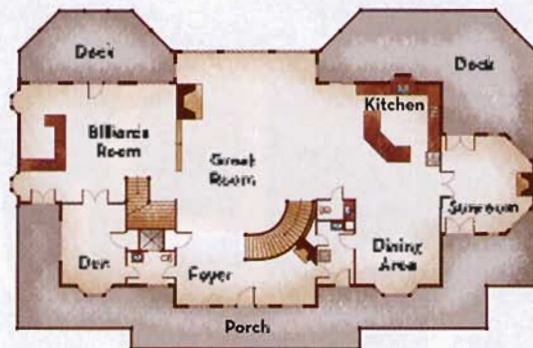
LOWER LEVEL



UPPER LEVEL

including hiking, skiing and eventually fishing on the property's quarter-acre pond. The home itself offers pockets for retreat as well. "It's difficult to pick a favorite room because we love every one, but I enjoy hanging out in the billiards room," lan says. For Tina, the great room presents the perfect place to escape. "It's very cozy," she says. "You can curl up on the sectional and look into the kitchen."

The home is exactly what lan and Tina wanted from the moment lan went online to explore their options. "The whole idea of this house was to bring the outside in," he says. "The combination of the wood species, windows and views makes you feel like you're outside. It gives us an appreciation for being in the country." ■



MAIN LEVEL

Home Details

SQUARE FOOTAGE: 10,000
MEMBER PRODUCER: Normerica
FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE FIND IT HERE
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