



THE GREAT ROOM: A view of the grand fireplace from the second floor

A Peaceful Retreat

This Adirondack-style home brings a bit of the mountains to Rhode Island

As I approached the circle drive at the Asher home, I noticed two lounge chairs side-by-side, angled for the best view of the pond. That peaceful vignette captured the essence of this house – a retreat.

I'd traveled down a narrow dirt road to find it tucked away in the woods. The exterior, with its natural cedar shingles and forest green trim, resembles an Adirondack lodge. You know, the main house where everyone gathers for hearty food and fellowship after a long day of fishing or hunting.

Karen Asher, who lives here with husband Ira, a physician, says, "It feels like I'm on vacation, but I live here. That was the goal."

After years of living in a colonial off South Road in Wakefield, the Ashers looked for land to build their dream house. They searched for almost a decade. Finally, one of Ira Asher's patients directed him to property on a pond in South Kingstown. "It was love at first sight," Karen recalled after visiting.

A pink log cabin with turquoise trim and several outbuildings stood on the eight acres. To satisfy my disbelief, Karen showed me a photograph from her extensive shelf of scrapbooks. Sure enough, it was a log cabin the color of bubblegum. Apparently the previous owners loved the Caribbean so much they brought the festive colors home to Rhode Island. Karen tried to work with the existing house, but upon the advice of several contractors, eventually tore it down. They managed to keep an original stone patio and a deck overlooking the pond. The

outbuildings – two garages and a potting shed – were rehabbed with new roofs and siding to match the main house, imparting the feel of a compact and tidy estate.

The Ashers chose South County Post and Beam to build the new structure. "We designed it together," Karen says, adding that the work was all done by locals within five miles.

They wanted their new house to feel grounded on the site, "to look like it belonged here and not stick out," says Karen. It sits on a wooded bluff overlooking the picturesque pond. With its earthy color palette, stone work and cedar, it merges seamlessly with the landscape.

We stood in the great room, the center bay of the home, with its soaring ceiling and sweeping views of the woods and water. Pointing to the beams overhead, Karen says, "There are no nails in the frame, just pegs. It was put together like Lincoln Logs." The leather chair and couch are grouped around a marvelous floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace, crafted meticulously by local masons.

I can't help but notice all the antiques. There's a fascinating claw-footed curio cabinet with unusual bowed glass, which displays her mother's collection of china tea cups and saucers. There are other sturdy pieces perfect for the rustic setting.

An old fashioned Hoosier – a baker's station with bins for flour and a pull-out surface for kneading and cutting – is used now as a drop spot by the front door

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LIFE/STYLE



THE LODGE LIFE: The Ashers seamlessly merge South County style with mountain influences

for mail, purses and briefcases. A vintage oak table and buffet furnish the dining room, and in the kitchen, a punched metal pie safe serves as a pantry. Karen actually measured and designed space in the house with their antiques in mind.

The home is made of three bays. The center bay is a great room; the kitchen and dining room are on one side. On the opposite bay side is the master suite. “The builder recommended we put it on the first floor.” All of the bedrooms – the master and two more on the second floor – feature views of the pond. Karen said it’s wonderful to wake up to birdsong. “You never know what you’ll see on the pond. We get osprey, heron, all kinds of migrating birds here.”

The most striking view is from the “bridge,” a walkway between the two bedrooms on the second floor. It’s a balcony that overlooks the great room and affords a spectacular shot of the pond through the top tier of windows. From here I can also see that although there’s a lot of wood and stone in this outdoorsy home, Karen has softened the hard surfaces with various textile hangings. There’s a colorful crocheted afghan she inherited, an area rug ingeniously pressed into service as a wall decoration, and several handmade quilts from friends.

Walking around, I get a genuine sense of the personalities who live there. Avid readers, the Ashers have bookshelves in every room, and even books tucked into unused spaces in the hall. Their unique collections are also showcased throughout, like Ira’s antique eyepieces and Karen’s historic kitchen gadgets. It’s clear they’re nature lovers as well. There are plants and found objects from the woods everywhere, and I’d noticed the “Certified Wildlife Habitat” sign as I drove in.

On the bluestone patio, I spot the steep wooden staircase descending to the dock. Karen says they swim across the pond for exercise in the summer. They also like to kayak, and Ira is a fly fisherman. “The inspiration for the house came from the hunt lodges in places like Utah and Colorado,” Karen says. So my original hunch was right – a little slice of the mountains in southern Rhode Island, and it looks like it belongs here.

