

Although this home is striking, its design is relatively basic. "I think one of the things that sets it apart is the form of the house is very simple; it's just a rectangle with four corners," says Logan Leachman of JLF Architects. "We used a lot of our signature reclaimed materials and offset that with a commercial-type contemporary window."

# Harmony With the Land

A couple camped out on their property for several summers before starting their eco-friendly house build.

BY EMILY IRBY  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY AUDREY HALL



Although homeowners Henry and Kathy no longer camp on the land under the stars, the home's design allows for ample views of the sprawling property. As soon as you open the front door, you have a direct line of sight to the outdoors so even as you enter the home, you're still immersed in the natural beauty of the landscape.



What if you had time to learn about your land before you built on it? That was the case for homeowners Henry Smedley and Kathy Chow. When they purchased 40 acres of land in upstate New York, they knew they needed to take some time to learn about the land. In fact, “some time” is an understatement; they spent five summers camping on their property before materializing their dream home. The couple embraced this period of pause and fell into perfect flow with the surrounding landscape. “The land is very friendly,” Kathy says. “All the critters are friendly. We really could live in concert with nature.”



One of the home's most noteworthy motifs is the vintage taxidermy on display. There are 17 pieces total (sometimes Henry and Kathy make a game of having visitors find all 17), and Henry and Kathy are very fond of the pieces. “They’re not mounted in a ferocious way,” Kathy says. “They’re mounted in a noble way.”

### Tip

If you have windows looking out to a beautiful view, arrange your furniture around the window rather than in front of it, so nothing inhibits your enjoyment of the scenery.

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## PERFECT FIT

Given their beginnings on the property, Henry and Kathy wanted an architectural firm that also cared about the symbiosis of nature and homestead. They hired JLF Architects, a Montana-based firm, for the build. “One of the wonderful things about this house is its simplicity,” says Logan Leachman, partner and designer at JLF Architects. “It’s been boiled down so there aren’t extra parts and pieces, and they’re not needed.”



# 5 Architectural ELEMENTS THAT WOW

Discover some of this New York home’s most striking farmhouse details.

- 1. GABLE ROOFLINE.** Nothing shouts “farmhouse” more than a pitched roof, and because the rest of the home’s exterior structure is so simple, the eye is drawn even further to the simple but striking design.
- 2. RECLAIMED WOOD.** This home is made of old barn wood, so even though it’s new, it holds its own against the many historic farmhouses in this area of upstate New York.
- 3. ALUMINUM WINDOWS.** JLF Architects used materials that ensure the home is built to last. The sleek aluminum windows will withstand all types of weather in the years to come.
- 4. RECTANGULAR SHAPE.** Once you step into the home, you’re struck by the coziness and warmth of Henry and Kathy’s interior design. But from the outside, the building’s simple shape (four walls and a roof) makes you wonder if this wasn’t a working barn not too long ago. “This could have been an old barn at one time that was repurposed,” Logan says.
- 5. PERGOLA.** One of the property’s best farmhouse features isn’t a part of the house at all, but the detached pergola. With 40 acres of land, the open but shady structure is the perfect place to look out onto the old apple orchards.

(above, right) The team of JLF architects and designers spent two days camping on the land at the beginning of the project. “Even though we weren’t there through storms, we got a sense of prevailing winds and the best views and sunsets,” Logan says.




“We really could live in concert with nature.”  
—Kathy Chow



(left) The door to the garage seems to encapsulate all the best parts about the property: eco-friendly and a mix of antique and new. “There’s an isolated core in there so it’s energy efficient but it utilizes the same material as the outdoor siding,” Logan says.





The home's main common space contains the living room, dining area, kitchen and even a room up in the loft. "That's a sliding barn door because Kathy wanted a sewing studio up in that little loft area and didn't want to be isolated up there," Logan says.

## 3 WAYS TO Incorporate WOOD

How to use wood without it overwhelming your home.

- 1. SWITCH IT UP.** It's a common misconception that you have to stick to one type of wood when designing or decorating your home. In reality, mixing different types of wood can add dimension and versatility to your spaces. Try to keep the undertone of your wood consistent, but branch out when it comes to different shades and grains.
- 2. BREAK IT UP.** Too much of a good thing can ruin a design, and wood is no exception. Rugs, throws and large paintings or prints are a great way soften, add color and provide texture to a room that may have too much wood. Attract the eye to a particular wood piece by pairing it with decor of a different material.
- 3. CHANGE IT UP.** If you're looking at all the wood in a room and something feels off, it might be a matter of placement. Furniture placement makes a bigger difference than the placement of smaller décor pieces. Try balancing your room by ensuring that not too many large wood items are on one side or clustered in the center of the room. Don't be afraid to break apart sets and put matching pieces in separate rooms.

### Tip

Choose stone or tile flooring for high-traffic areas like the mudroom and kitchen for easy cleanup.

The kitchen design allows easy access to the back porch with a clear linear walkway. Geometric tiles serve as a permanent kind of runner rug and break up wood in the space. "It creates a durable work surface without just completely making a whole area of tile that ignored the wood," Logan says.





Henry escapes to his workshop when he's creating one of his beautiful woodworking projects, and the room was certainly designed with its use in mind. "The exposed piping is a dust collection system for the equipment," Logan says.



(top, right) A powder bathroom sits right off the kitchen to provide easy access to both the functional spaces. The door between the two rooms is a reproduction of a freezer door. Brace yourself when opening it because yes—it's as heavy as you would think a freezer door would be.

### HUNTING FOR MATERIALS

Even though the land and owners were a perfect match, there were still some obstacles when the time came to get down to the nitty gritty of the home's construction. Henry and Kathy were very clear that they wanted the building materials to consist only of recycled barn wood so that no new trees would be cut down.

But reclaimed barn wood doesn't always come cheap and isn't always readily available, so Henry and Kathy offered to aid in the search to source reclaimed wood. They ended up connecting with a Mennonite wood broker who supplied them with 15,000 board feet of barn wood that allowed them to execute their vision. "We wanted a new house that looked like it had always been here," Henry says.





The striking peaked doors were a necessity. The doors had to be taller than the home's structure would generally allow, so the solution was a uniquely-shaped doorframe that allowed Henry (who is very tall) to comfortably travel through the rooms. "All but two doors were custom made," Henry says.

Due to the home's simple barn-like structure, Logan had to think of clever ways to break up the openness. *ways to break up the openness.*



(above) Although the couple originally used the house as a vacation home, functionality was still top-of-mind during the design process. "We go through a fairly extensive programming phase where we really go through a long interview process and determine exactly what spaces are needed and how they will be used so the house will be designed to be as efficient as possible," Logan says. Style and practicality collide in the open laundry room with retro-inspired flooring.

(right) The design blurs the line between interior and exterior with its rich rustic wood walls. "JLF does a great job of bringing the outside in," Henry says. A whimsical window in the wall and lantern sconces add to the rustic farmhouse feel.

#### INNOVATIVE INTERIORS

The team considered everything from where the sun sets and the wind blows most fiercely to the best views of the surrounding mountains when figuring out where to build the house and position the windows.

Due to the home's simple barn-like structure, Logan had to think of clever ways to break up the openness of the interiors. "The entry corridor divides the house in two halves," Logan says. The home's private and public spaces are broken up by the staircase and mudroom entryway. "It doesn't feel like a big open cavernous space," Logan says. For maximum views, he designed the main living area with lower windows.





Henry and Kathy knew they wanted the structure to be made of reclaimed barn wood. “[We used] old materials and sheathed new, properly-engineered structures with old materials to give the whole thing a patina of historical reference and none of the nightmares that come with old buildings,” Henry says.

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— Kathy Chow



(above, left) This powder room captures the country charm of an upstate New York farmhouse. The wood wainscoting with a natural finish, along with crimson pastoral wallpaper, is the perfect example of how to balance a busy pattern with a timeless material.

(above, right) So much of the home's charm comes from vintage and reclaimed materials. “There are lots of salvaged bits and pieces,” Kathy says. “One of the most fun parts was going around and finding these special treasures.” Custom cabinets in the bedroom add to the character while also providing practical storage solutions.

“[No lower windows] allows us to keep the sightline of the upper windows as narrow as possible because we don’t have to make them operable,” he says. Another clever design trick was using hopper windows, which tilt in rather than out, so you can enjoy the calming sounds of rain and fresh scent of damp earth without worrying about rainwater coming in through the windows.

The result of each minute decision is a home that looks and feels as if it’s been on the property for 100 years, and yet will still last 100 years more.

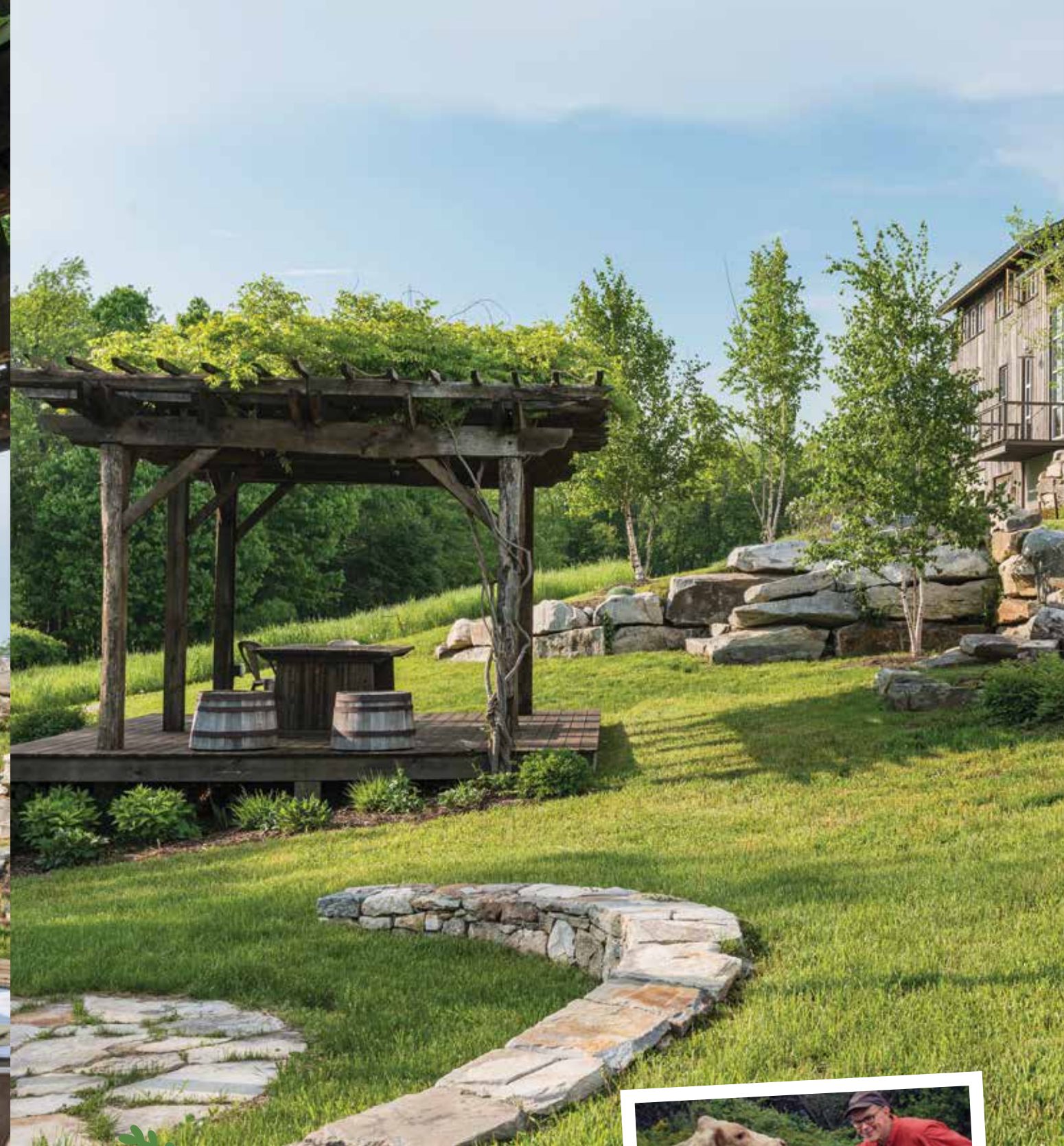
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The area next to the pergola is where the couple camped when they spent their summers here before building their home. They drilled a well and used a generator for electricity. Roomy white canvas tents suspended on platforms served as their shelter. "They were a cross between my girl scout camp tents and safari tents," Kathy says.



The couple embraced this period of pause and fell into perfect flow with the surrounding landscape.

