

NEW HAMPSHIRE HOME

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Second anniversary issue

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green
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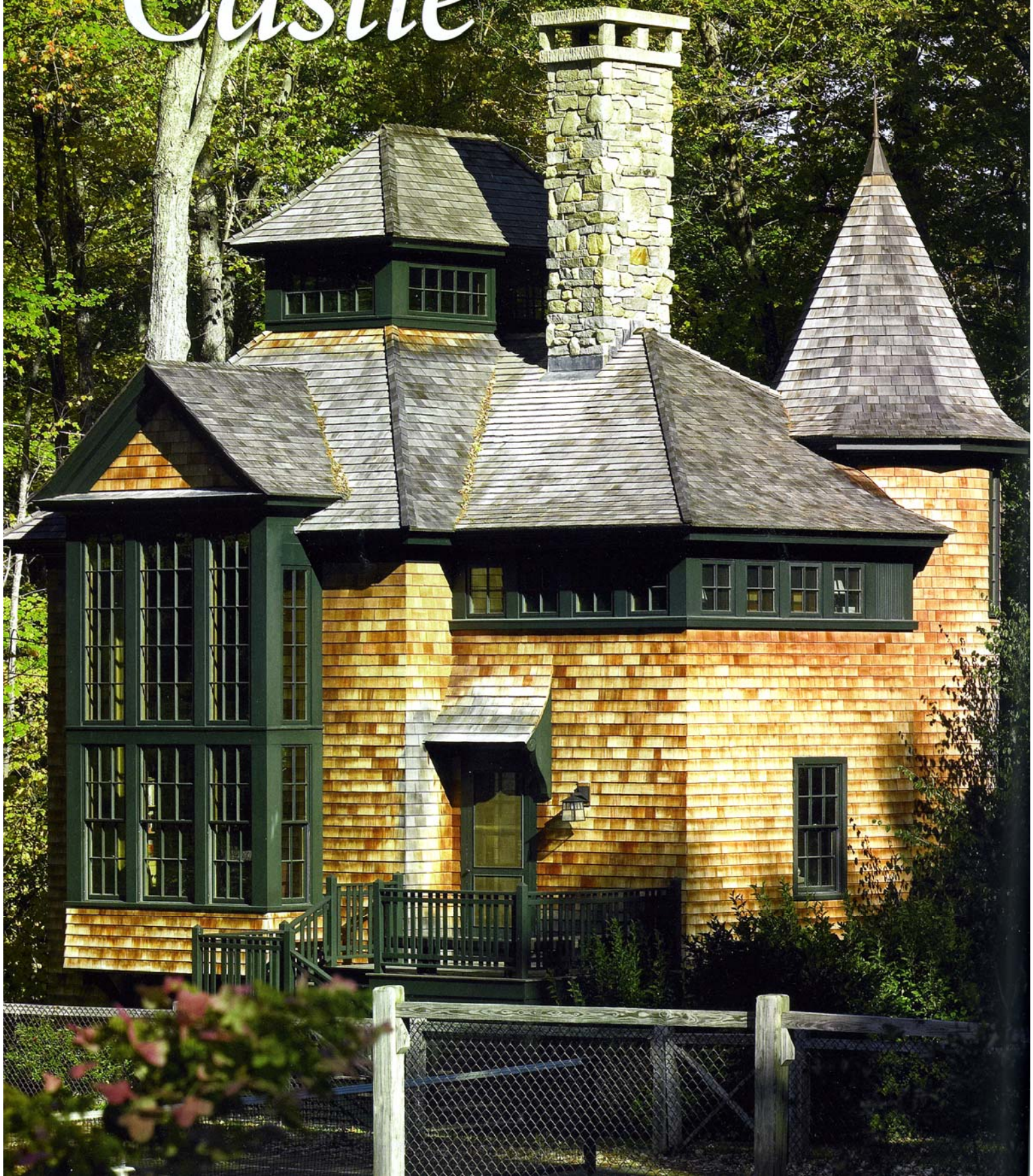
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A Miniature *Castle*



WORKING WITH LIMITED SPACE, A BOSTON ARCHITECTURAL FIRM CREATES A MULTIPURPOSE NEW HAMPSHIRE GUESTHOUSE THAT WINS THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS (AIANH) NEW HAMPSHIRE CHAPTER'S 2009 EXCELLENCE IN RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE DESIGN AWARD.

BY JENNY DONELAN | PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREG PREMUR

Charged with the difficult task of creating a versatile building on a parcel just 650 square feet, architects Jacob Albert, Jim Righter and Craig Gibson of Albert, Righter & Tittmann Architects delivered not only the requisite structure, but one that seems to tickle people's fancy. The Boston-based architects' design for this "castle in miniature"—a combination library, guesthouse, tennis-viewing pavilion and boathouse on the shores of a New Hampshire lake—strikes an appealing balance between function and whimsy.

Certainly Lake Library, as its creators refer to it, appealed to the jurors of the American Institute of Architects New Hampshire (AIANH) Excellence in Architecture Design Awards, who chose it as the top residential contender in the 2009 competition. "It made me smile," says juror Grace Chiang, AIA, a principal with HOLT Architects in Ithaca, New York. "I would like to own one."

Albert, Righter & Tittmann Architects has designed many vacation houses, says Albert, but never one quite like this—so compact and resourcefully playful. The project came about because the homeowners wanted a new outbuilding to complement their existing lake house, a one-hundred-year-old structure that Albert describes as "big and sprawling, sort of a cross between Shingle-style and Arts and Crafts, with all unpainted wood inside." Not only did the new building need to incorporate the above-mentioned uses, zoning laws restricted it to the modest footprint of the old garage that the new structure was replacing. (Under current regulations, the garage sat too close to the lot line. However, because the garage was considered a "structure pre-dating current restrictions," the homeowners could build in—but not exceed—the existing footprint.)



A granite fireplace and pine walls help create a comfortably rustic interior (this page) for a lakeside guesthouse with a castle-like exterior (facing page). Lake Library, as its architects named the project, was designed as a fanciful complement to a one-hundred-year-old vacation home.



THIS PAGE: In order to provide additional interior space without violating footprint restrictions, the architects designed a large bay window that extends from the living area. The window provides views of the tennis court and lake.

FACING PAGE: The unfinished pine interiors and “wall of books” might have made for a dark room, but the bay window and rooftop monitor (not shown) let in plenty of natural light.

GOING UP

Because the architects didn't have a lot of floor space to work with, they built up—instead of out. This created a three-floor, 1,500-square-foot structure. The lowest level, which is visible only from one side of the house, where the grade falls away, contains a boat storage area and an exercise room. The main level includes a double-height living room/library, a bathroom and a deck that overlooks the tennis court. The top level has a guest bedroom with a band of windows wrapping around.

In addition to creating vertical space, the architects gained a little extra horizontal room by designing a bay window—supported on the outside of the house by decorative large-scale, dark-green brackets—that extends from the living area. In this way, they cleverly provided some additional interior space and a dramatic light source while adhering to the footprint restrictions. In a similar space-saving tactic, one side of the living room's cabinets conceals a kitchenette.

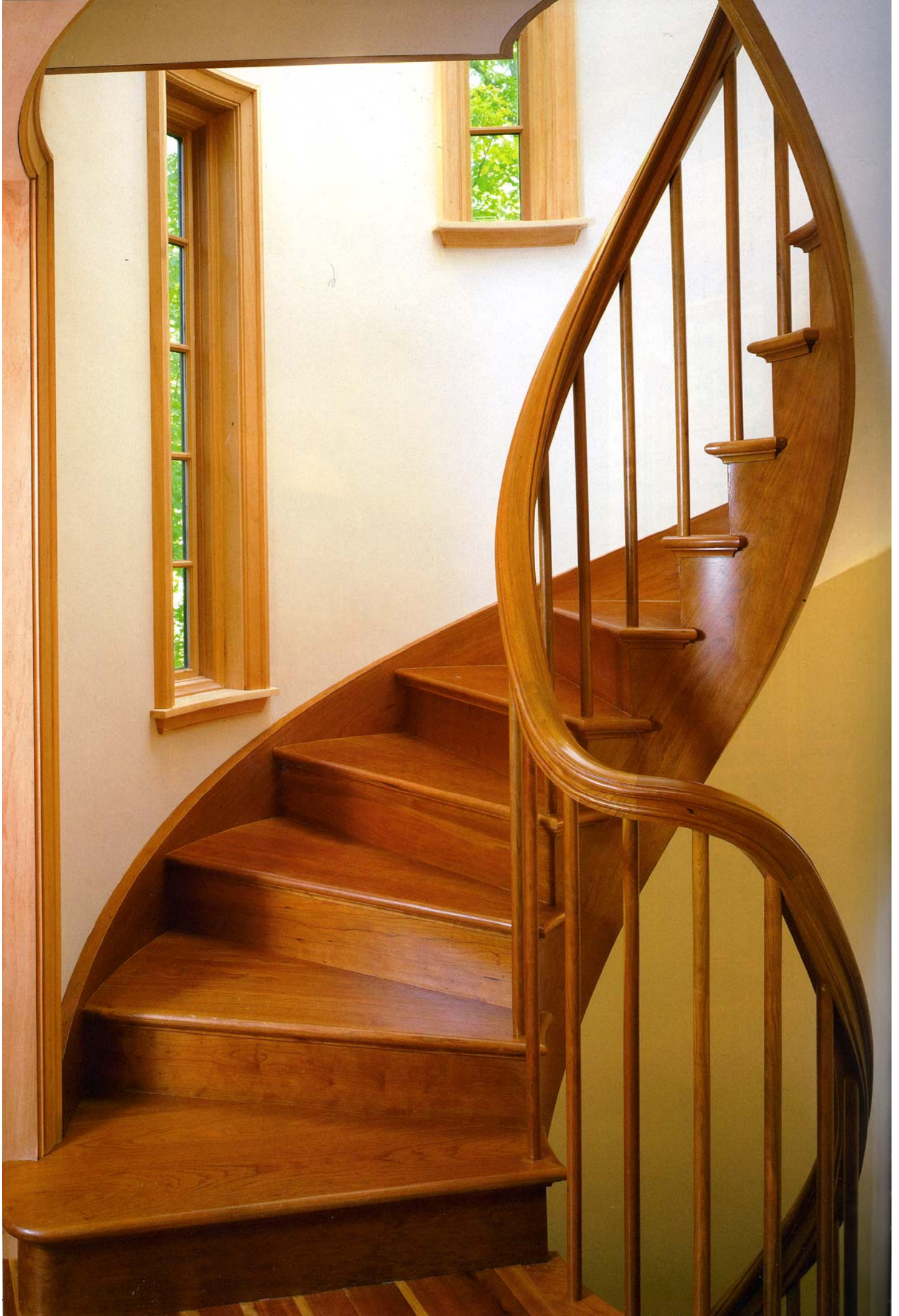
CASTLE OUTSIDE, COZY RETREAT INSIDE

Throughout the design process, the architects worked to ensure Lake Library complements the main house while maintaining individuality. To provide a cohesive feeling, Lake Library's exterior is shingled with red cedar and trimmed in dark green wood, which echoes the appearance of the main house. However, the vertical positioning of the new structure—with its circular stair tower capped with a conical roof; peaked roofs and eaves; tall bay window; and stone chimney that rises above the rest of the structure—clearly provides character. “It's more whimsical than the [main] house itself; sort of like a folly,” Albert says.

Inside the “folly,” the walls are made of unfinished pine, just as they are in the main house. Plus, angular decorative trim over Lake Library's interior doors was designed to relate to the original structure's interior.

The homeowners designed the interior of the guesthouse with elements including Navaho rugs, ship models and waterfowl decoys. A major focal point of the main living area is the fireplace, built of local granite and extending from the floor to the two-story high ceiling. A ceiling fan from the Woolen Mill Fan Company in New Park, Pennsylvania, tops the space. “Whenever you have a high space like that, you have to keep the air circulating,” Albert says.





True to its name, Lake Library is home to many books, housed on bookshelves that occupy the west side of the living area. The shelves are divided into shorter sections to bear the weight. "We don't like bookshelves that sag," Albert says. As avid readers, the homeowners are often found in Lake Library, even though it is a guesthouse. "They like to be able to get away and read here when the big house is full of family and friends," he says.

Another focal point of the main living area is the bay window, which provides views of the lake, main house and tennis court. Despite the dark materials—wood and stone—used in the construction, the living area is generally bright—flooded with natural light, thanks to the bay window and a rooftop monitor. This was a feature that in particular caught Chiang's eye: "All that natural light coming into the library made it special," she says.

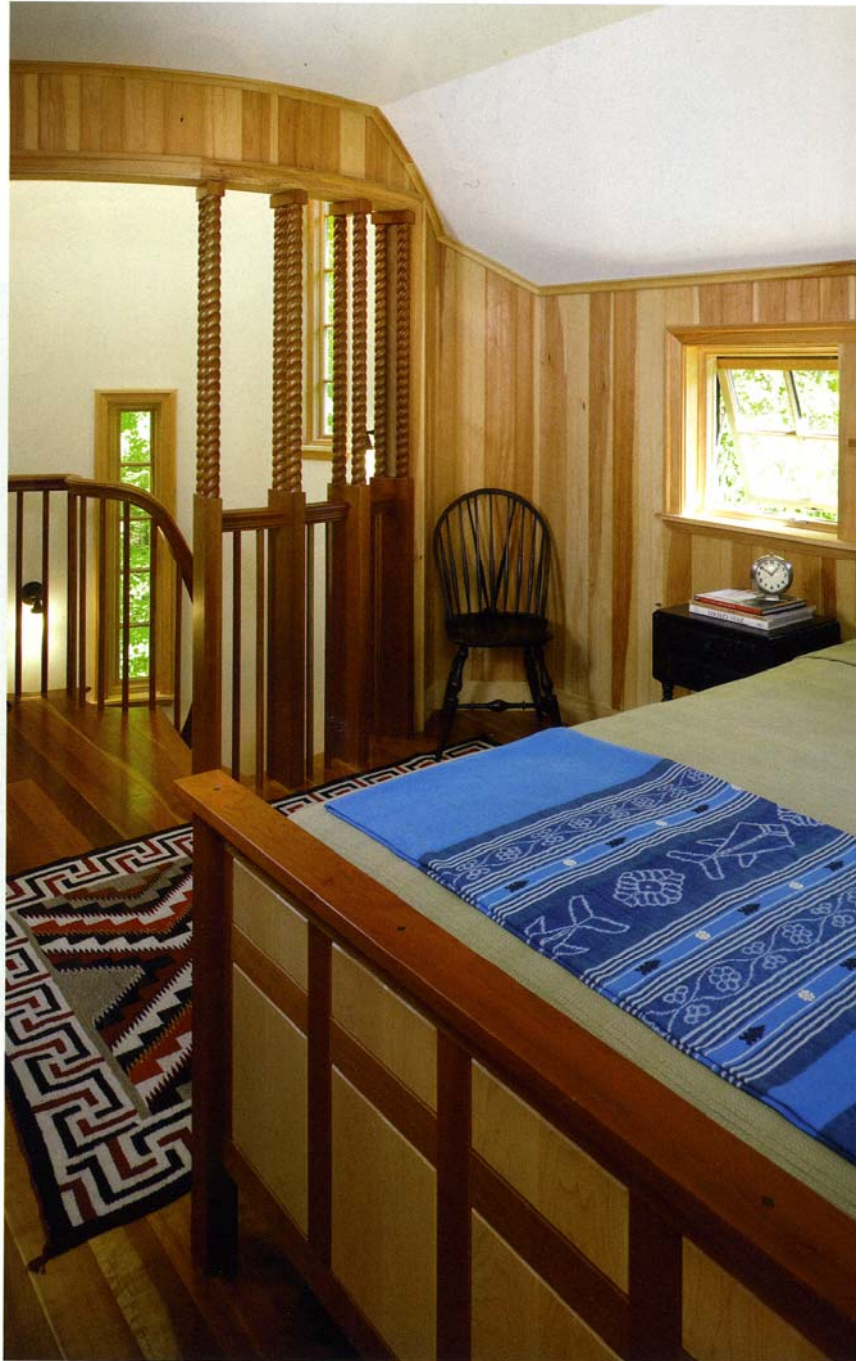
UP AND AROUND

The guest bedroom on the top floor has low eaves and small windows that wrap around the east and south sides of the house, providing views of the lake. From here, Albert says, "You feel as though you're in a tree house."

The circular staircase connecting the floors is made of cherry and built without a centerpost. The wooden handrails spiral from bottom to top in what Albert calls a "double helix" design. Tall slot windows along the stairway were designed to reinforce the vertical, castle feeling. At the top, turned wood spoolwork "colonettes" create a kind of screen for the bedroom, which doesn't have a door.

AT HOME IN A CASTLE

On the whole, the structure is "a little jewel," according to Chiang. "It is beautifully detailed throughout; the way the roof sits on the house, for example, and the way the different junctions come together." Inside, the overall effect—from the cozy treetop bedroom to the well-lit library area with its kitchenette concealed with wood cabinetry—is of a self-sufficient space that's homey, cozy and a lot of fun. **NHH**



THIS PAGE: The room at the top of the stairs offers a cozy tree house environment for guests.

FACING PAGE: An eye-catching spiral staircase connects all three floors. Narrow vertical windows along the staircase reinforce the idea of a castle.

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