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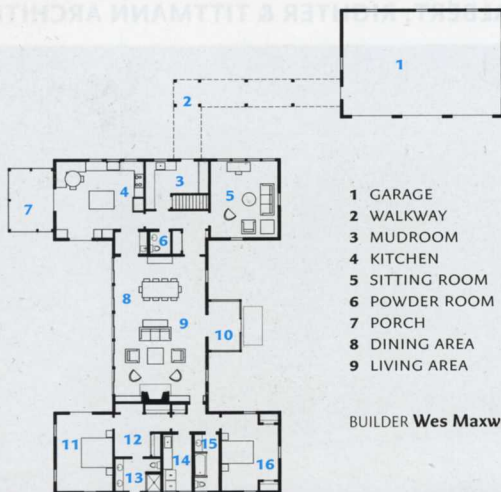
BECAUSE OF THE sloping terrain, the driveway and entrance courtyard seem to disappear into the land. The "lantern" entryway, flanking wings, and garage create a visual rhythm of peaks. Standing-seam metal roofs contribute to the farmhouse feel.

Connecticut Yankee



SIMPLICITY EQUALS BEAUTY AS THE ARCHETYPAL NEW ENGLAND FARMHOUSE IS UPDATED FOR MODERN LIVING

WRITTEN BY WILLIAM MORGAN • PHOTOGRAPHED BY ROBERT BENSON



Sensible yet elegant defines a new home nestled in the hills of southeastern Connecticut, a description that reminds how very difficult it is to create such a seemingly simple house.

Lantern House, so named because of its fully glazed entrance porch, is a refreshing take on domestic design. It eschews the dogmatism of Modernism, as well as the faux historicism that clutters up too many new houses. Its designer, Jacob Albert, a principal at the Boston firm Albert, Righter & Tittmann Architects, understands that traditional Yankee design is more fundamental than details from the past, whether porches, turrets, or shingles.

His clients, a couple with a clear idea of what they wanted in their new house, asked for a home that would eventually carry them into retirement. The husband's family has farmed or vacationed in these hills for almost 200 years, so the preservation of the land's wooded char-

ARCHITECTS JACOB ALBERT and Lyle Bradley designed the dining table, while interior designer Suzanne Tyler set warmth and texture against a minimal backdrop of white walls and gray concrete floors in the living/dining space. The warm palette is enhanced by a fireplace and contemporary art (BOTTOM). The house forms an agrarian prospect (FACING PAGE) with its clearing in the wooded setting.



acter was their paramount consideration. They also wanted a house that would deliver the ideal balance of comfort and style. "Our clients," says Albert, "asked for a Modern design that would recognize and respect its rural New England setting."

Like all good architecture, Lantern House began with the plan. "We tried at least five diagrams, but the H worked best," says Albert, who worked with associate Lyle Bradley on the design. "That configuration suits the one-story home: bedrooms in one wing, kitchen and study in the other, a living/dining space connecting the two. The plan has the added virtue of providing multiple exposures for good ventilation and sunlight throughout





MUTED HUES PREDOMINATE the more casual study (FACING PAGE, TOP) where a desk along the north wall serves as the home office. French doors in the master bedroom (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM) lead to the sheltered outdoor terrace. Works of art, including a riff on the Mobil Oil Pegasus (ABOVE), enliven the kitchen's elegant gray and white color scheme. A banquette around a Saarinen Tulip table creates a cozy corner for casual dining.

the day. It also creates a small, sheltered outdoor space on the entrance side and a terrace in the back that embraces the view of the landscape.

The 20-by-31-foot central living area, the main entertaining space, is a hall in the true English sense of the term. Entered immediately from the lantern porch, the room opens to a 15-foot-high ceiling. Hidden scissor trusses obviate the need for any visible tie beams or rods. With its wall of windows, polished gray concrete floors, and volcanic stone fireplace, the hall easily accommodates a dozen or more guests.

But the owner acknowledges that “as so often happens at a party, everyone congregates in the kitchen.” This comfortable work space, which has a banquette built into the corner and a tray ceiling that adds height to the room, opens through French

doors to the home’s rear porch. Beyond the kitchen is a real pantry — the old-fashioned walk-in kind — with glass-fronted cabinets offering easy access to crockery. The pantry also serves as mudroom and less formal entrance that opens from a covered walkway connecting the house with the garage. This practical, eminently livable wing includes a cozy study, where, as in the kitchen, the floors are a warm stained oak.

No-nonsense and livable, to be sure, the house’s real accomplishment is how it melds into the Connecticut landscape. Here, simplicity does equal beauty.

Lantern House is set near the top of a sloping meadow, surrounded by a hardwood forest. Approached via a long lane through the woods, the house sits below the level of the driveway, so the





THE OWNERS OPENED UP the meadow and had retaining walls built (ABOVE), but otherwise left the landscape untouched — deciding to wait and see how the house and the property grow together before making any transformative changes to the landscape. The terrace (FACING PAGE) can be accessed from the kitchen, living/dining space, and master bedroom.

blocky, elemental forms are seen first. “The white-painted wood gable forms of the New England farmhouse are here reinterpreted in a crisp, abstracted composition,” says Albert.

The red mullions of the glazed entranceway provide the only flash of color. Otherwise, the wooden house depends upon the proportions of its constituent units. Except for the wall of windows that opens onto the terrace, the fenestration consists of plain four- or eight-pane farmhouse windows. Initially blocked from view by the house itself, the topography of meadow, stone walls, and hills is not revealed until one enters the living space.

What at first appears to be just another unassuming white New England farmhouse is really an exquisite pavilion sculpted into the landscape. Concrete retaining walls form bold terracing, sunset-facing plateaus that act as 18th-century English gardens with ha-has to create unobstructed views from the house to the field beyond.

Land and dwelling are open, uncluttered, basic. This is design without gimmicks, without flash, without ego. Such self-effacement is rare in architecture, but as Lantern House demonstrates, always inspiring. ■

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