



“Once they came on a
maple ...”

—ROBERT FROST



THE House Between THE Maples

3,200 square feet of living space
two-car garage and full basement
open floor plan living room
dining room and kitchen
den
three bedrooms
three baths
farm office

In February 2012, it was awarded
Energy Star Status by Efficiency Vermont
with a home rating of “Five Stars Plus.”



The setting on the Vermont hill is dominated by two magnificent maples perfectly spaced to cradle the farmhouse. Until recently, there was a 19th century white clapboard residence in the spot. Today, there is a 21st century farmhouse, though a quick glance at photos of past and present structures give the same message of being rooted in the landscape built around a working farm containing hundreds of acres.

“The owners were very motivated to do what is right for the land,” says Donald Glendenning of Glendenning Vermont Country Homes, the Wallingford contractor for the project. “The farmhouse is central to the whole operation. Originally, the plan was to renovate the old structure, but too many factors made this unfeasible. It would have cost a lot of money, without getting the desired result.”

The practical reality had to be faced, but Glendenning observes, “We had to



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—DONALD GLENDENNING,
BUILDER



take down the old farmhouse, but that was a struggle because there was a lot of history connected to it. The owner wanted to have the feeling of the old farmhouse but with the mechanics that would service a 21st century lifestyle of Vermont winters and summers.”

Integral to the process was Daniel Pratt, architect and president of Robert Carl Williams Associates in Pittsfield, Vermont. “I was originally contacted because the old house was in such sad shape,” he says. “I was asked to do a proposal to restore it with a big addition. We eventually felt the best course of action was to take down the house and make use of some of the beams in a new house.”

Then came the economic downturn in 2008, and the project was put aside until

last year when Glendenning, Pratt and the owner sat down to re-engineer the plan to stay within budget.

“We reduced the square footage 20 percent,” Glendenning says. “And the cost by 30 percent. It was a collaboration between myself and Daniel to see what construction elements we could eliminate while still maintaining the farmhouse feeling with its big front porch.”

Construction began in March 2011 and was completed in time for the family to move in for Thanksgiving.

MODERN STYLE

The design of the house appreciates the site. “It is isolated from the farm, but visually connected from various parts of

the house,” Pratt explains. “For example, the garage at the end of the house is situated between the living quarters and the farm but windows look out at the meadows all around it. The office has a view of the meadows and daily operations so the farmer can observe the comings and goings of grain, hay, and workmen, and keep a pulse on what’s happening. There is also a proper entryway for family and guests. The circulation in the house is really compact; there is an open kitchen, living room and dining room with a see-through fireplace to the den. The set of stairs leads to the master bedroom, office and two other bedrooms.”

The majestic setting with the two maples was critical to the placement of the house. Protecting the trees required



special efforts. “We fenced them off and for eight months did the construction around them,” Glendenning says. The result of this care is that the trees proudly stand over the new structure, just as they did over the old.

This attention to detail is a hallmark of Glendenning’s style of building, honed over his 40 years in the industry, first in New Jersey and for the last 10 years, in Vermont. He has a degree in industrial engineering and worked for GE in the Aerospace and Jet Engine Division.

“I took the production and manufacturing focus from GE — of being on time, on budget, and with high quality — and brought it into the building industry,” Glendenning says. “I expanded that focus to create a total customer experience beginning with a good design of a product able to be built at a



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— DANIEL PRATT,
ARCHITECT



price meeting the market. I have always worked to serve the market, not create a market. In building a house, you are working for someone who does this only once or twice in a lifetime so it is important to control the process so it is a good experience for them.”

In the case of the modern farmhouse project, the timely start and conclusion of the construction was informed by Glendenning’s awareness of “the window of opportunity” between the end of a Vermont winter and the start of another one.

The first step was taking down the old house in such a way to salvage the materials intended for the new one. The list included the roof slates, beams, and floors. With that removed, the foundation was put in before the roads were posted for mud season weight limits.

“We framed the house over the late spring and early summer,” Glendenning says. “Daniel would come by. It was a team effort. He is a talented designer with a great sense of design and scale.



Toward the end of the project, I joked with him, ‘You can come in, but don’t bring your pen, pencil and pad because we are almost done!’”

The house was completed in November 2011, and it is indeed something new that looks old, and is easy to maintain. A few stand out details of the maintenance-free exterior are the vinyl clad windows and doors, the factory finished clapboards, and the white PVC lifetime exterior trim.

Not only that, but the house was built with a high level of energy efficiency. In February, it was awarded Energy Star Status by Efficiency Vermont with a home rating of “Five Stars Plus.”

In a design and construction plan, there are thousands of decisions to be made. In the end, the collaboration of Glendenning, Pratt, the owner and the entire team resulted in a topnotch new farmhouse.

“I am honored to have been selected for this project,” Glendenning says, recalling a beautiful day, sitting with the crew at lunchtime at a picnic table under the maple trees. “I related to them how fortunate we were to be able to work with this view. All of us involved realized it was a special project, and the result is something everyone is proud of. The owner commented to us that they now have a farmhouse central to their operation to serve generations to come.”