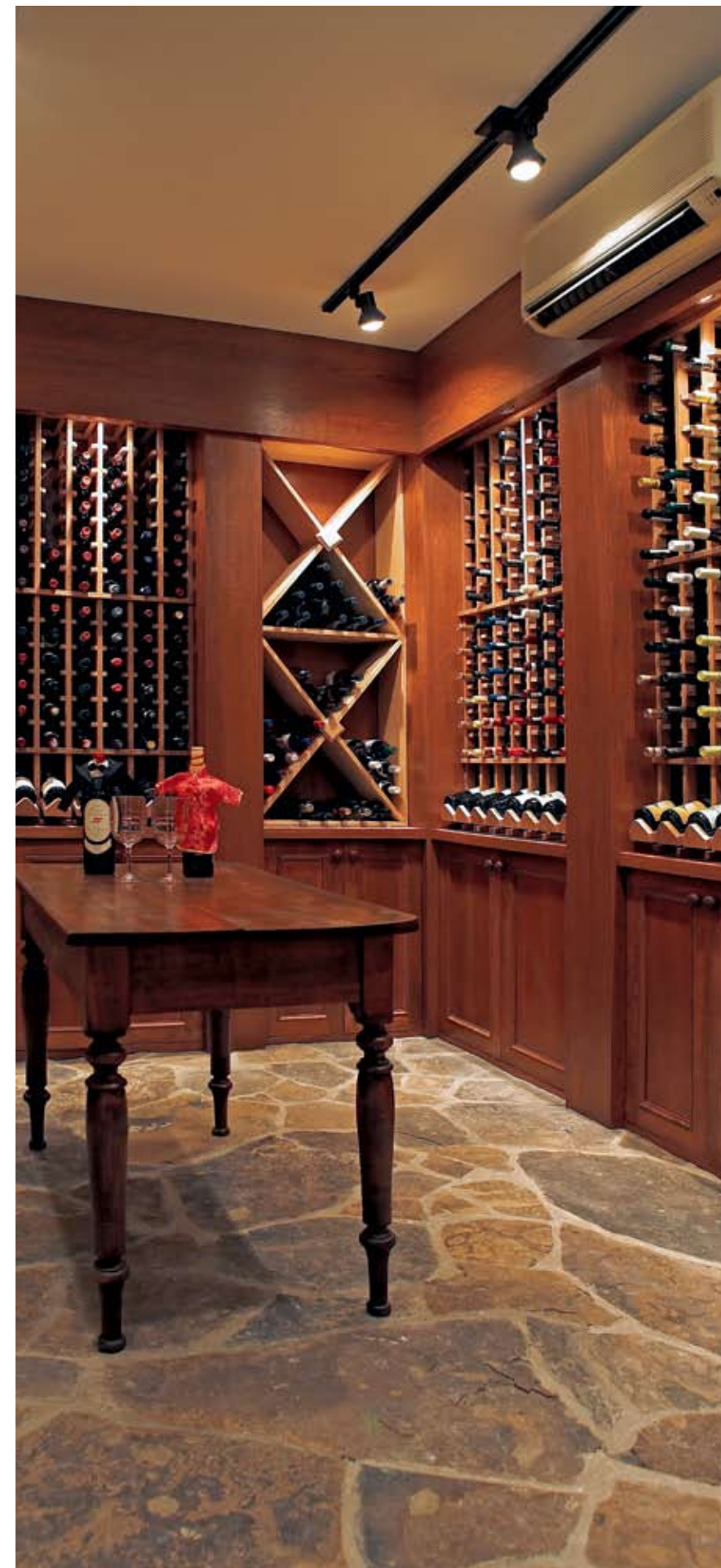




VIEW FROM THE TOP

AN OLD ONTARIO
ESCARPMENT BEAUTY





Design/Built by Don Doucette
Text by Kristine Kiss
Photography by Mike Dunphy

West of Lake Simcoe and south of Georgian Bay sits a farmhouse tucked along the rugged, grand edges of the Niagara Escarpment. At first glance it seems this stone masterpiece may demand a more grandeur name, yet the classic design provides the feeling of simplicity.

Seasoned builder Don Doucette says the challenge with building such a home lied in creating a framework and composition to suit the natural aspects of the property, while also meeting the desires and needs of the owner.

Doucette worked with the homeowners, just over a decade ago to produce an archetype akin to the home's impressive view and location, while also integrating certain luxuries on a subtle and pleasing level. The home's overall feel is of a rustic sophistication, melding opulent designs with a natural, uninhibited comfort.

"Especially with the location being on the escarpment, we wanted to have a view from every room," said Doucette. This created a challenge in maintaining the Ontario vernacular architecture, yet the outcome suggests a definite success. Natural stone with a delicate contrast of board-on-board cedar wood siding dominates the exterior. From the entrance, window shutters and a classic farm veranda keep Old Ontario front and center, while at the rear, a myriad of windows portrays an added modern look. However, the more contemporary elements on the escarpment edge are offset by the natural environment, a collection of stonewalls, native plants, grasses, flowers and shrubs.



Owner of Garden Holistics Inc., Teresa Matamoros, worked in conjunction with Doucette to create the gardens that so fittingly compliment the property's natural landscape. Predominately made up of hot palette colours, including an array of indigenous plants, the gardens meander through stonewalls and strategically placed beds.

A large island at the entrance helps to obstruct the view of the home from the driveway, creating privacy and depth, while Matamoros' favorite addition is the grass bed accenting the BonaVista Infinity pool near the 5000 square-foot stone patio in the backyard.

As this home is somewhat seasonal for the owners Matamoros says the plants had to be specifically chosen to be tough and drought resistant, yet still maintain a vibrant landscape. In spring and summer, the beds are alive with a legion of colours, and in winter and fall months showcase grasses and flowering shrubs.

In the interior, the same contrast between rustic, and contemporary undertones continues. The two-story great room allows Ontario's majestic landscape and the property's beautiful gardens to peer through a flood of modern windows, while a more classic trim, softens their robust appearance. Four, natural stone, wood burning fireplaces, bring a earthen warmth throughout the abode, sitting amongst clearly plush, yet country accents and beneath the suave, subtle convenience of track lighting.

Naturally distressed pine flooring, cut at different widths, an effect which demonstrates an organic proclivity are seen throughout. Custom stone flooring and countertops are also present, complimenting other pine counterparts, such as cupboards, accents and ceiling beams. A natural fallen tree log acts as a support beam and organic ascetic component in the kitchen, alongside a hand made pot hanger purchased from a local artisan. All of these details add to the country ambience, yet the kitchen is complete with the modern, sleek conveniences of stainless steel appliances, including dual stoves and dishwashers.



Other unique attributes include an impressive dining room; it's design inspired by a French country villa in Provence. The powder room vaunts hand-painted walls surrounding the inlaying with picturesque views of natural forests. The wine cellar also includes an artist's touch with a painted mural view of a French vineyard fittingly accented by the natural beauty of the owners' collection. The children's playroom on the lower level contains a wall entirely made up as a blackboard for drawing, and bright contrasting tiles are armed to withstand a child's

creativity. The farmhouse is also Smarthome equipped, boasting integrated audio visual, lighting and alarm systems accessible to the owner on-line from anywhere in the world. The structure's layout itself is a pleasing contrast between its functionality and its interior atmosphere. An observable space is apparent for those looking to seek refuge, while the design maintains a coziness reminiscent of a century farmhouse or Muskoka escape. The centralized great room acts as a meeting point where the dining room and kitchen wing is separated from the bedrooms. Privacy is also offered to the

family boudoirs, as the guest rooms and children's playroom are located on the lower level.

The home's designer Alex Durrant applied inspiration he gained while working with Napier Simpson; a prominent Ontario architect. Durrant offers advice to clients looking to build a custom home. "Get a good builder through word of mouth. Take the time to ask people who have dealt with builders, how their experience was." Durrant stresses the importance of finding a builder that is well respected when working to make your dreams a reality. ❧