

# A Celebration of Wood (Part 2)



LANCASTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

CASE STUDY: October 2012

## A Warm Welcome Back

A gorgeous, sunny day greeted CSSB representatives as they toured this near completed residential project in Lancaster, PA. Reed Axelrod, AIA, whose firm, **Reed Axelrod Architects**, located in Philadelphia, PA, was present for this interview, led the way up the tree-lined drive to the site originally visited by the CSSB in April 2011. This “Celebration of Wood” continues its promise to showcase forest products at their finest. It is unique in that the entire project design, inside & out, was intended to highlight the beauty of wood; this was the owner’s directive from the start. The result is an impressive set of structures with a main house, guest cottages, a hobby shop plus a large pool house with outdoor lap pool. As the case study interview team



*Lap pool.*

walked the property, the one thing that really stood out was how the original concept and vision were realized so accurately. Instead of test designs, drawings and mock-ups, one now sees completed structures with highly detailed exteriors and fully embellished interiors. Landscaping is underway and the buildings have been transformed into an intimate family village that says ‘welcome home’.



*The newly finished home.*

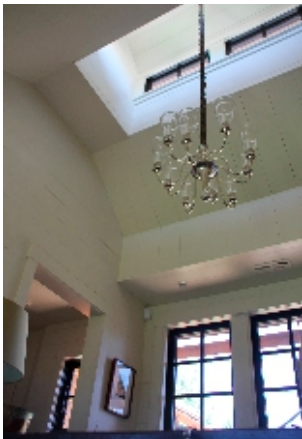


## One Year Later: Project Reflections

This has been an intensive project with a large team of craftsmen and skilled tradespersons, all organized to complete the work on a “fast-track” schedule. Even with such a demanding work pace, dedication to exhibiting the beauty of wood provided a common bond that brought out the best in each of the crew members. Top quality **Certi-label™** roofing products were used. Premium Grade **Certi-Sawn®** Yellow Cedar, 18” x 5/8” tapersawn shakes were manufactured by **Waldun Forest Products Partnership**. **Certi-Ridge®** hip and ridge units were manufactured by **G & R Cedar Ltd**. **Certi-Last®** preservative treatment was provided by **Western Wood Preservers, Ltd.**

A core group of talented Amish carpenters were key to the project's success. Logs used for the white oak siding were harvested locally and custom milled at a nearby Amish shop. Certain decorative carpentry details were refined as the work progressed and actually became creative surprises that were worked out spontaneously between carpenter and architect on site.

Creativity was supplemented with smart building choices; extra framing was added to walls to bear the weight of the wood siding. Even with the rough carpentry, installers were careful in arranging and placing each fastener with great precision. Axelrod recalls a self-posed question about the span of patience the building team would need to sustain in order to complete a project of such intensity. He and the homeowners were amazed at the crew's reservoir of enthusiasm and experience; these attributes were key in achieving the considerable degree of detail expected.



*Unique light fixtures.*



*Campaign furniture desk.*

## Designed for Function and Style

Many areas within the main house and guest quarters were carefully planned to provide exacting display spaces for the homeowner's collection of distinctive European and North American artwork and antiques. Remarkable sculptures, paintings and oriental rugs all tell a fascinating story. The homeowners each possess a keen eye, and from day one, great emphasis was placed on ensuring that display spaces tailored to various groupings of their collection would be creatively incorporated into the project design. Blended tones of white for ceiling and wall paint provide a perfect field to allow the artwork and book collection to take prominence. Carefully designed lighting layouts, controlled digitally, further complement the displays. Certain antiques have been repurposed; an early 19th century carpenter's bench has been placed in the kitchen as a food preparation and baking island. A



*Custom windows were installed throughout the home.*

large wooden table with an inlaid coin slot and secret compartment, formerly used as an honor bar in a French Canadian tavern, serves as a unique dining table for 12. In a guest cabin, one can sit at a portable, British army campaign desk nestled into a bay window that offers sweeping views to the rolling landscape and stream beyond. Custom ledges, niches and shelves all are closely integrated with the architecture, and have their purpose to provide an array of display options.



*Repurposed antique carpenter's bench.*





*Creative carpentry details.*

The home is a bibliophile's dream; inside the house are over 600 running feet of bookshelves. Built-in bookcases, configured in a variety of ways, are located in practically every room, whether in shared or private spaces. The owner's vast collection of books is well organized and displayed creatively throughout to further enhance the interiors while providing blended accents of color and texture. Generous amounts of natural light were planned to spill into the house to provide comfortable levels of illumination, most of the day, for reading.

### **Intensive Product Research and Rigorous Design Detail**

The homeowners were very gracious throughout this process, and understood the need for intensive planning in order to deliver the exact result they sought. Axelrod and his longtime associate Diana Henze, have completed prior projects for these clients and the bonds established through



*Spacious decks invite wide country vistas.*

their earlier successes further enhanced the ability to have a multitude of free flowing idea sessions. Bricks were selected from an enormous array of potential color choices and every joint was planned carefully by the mason as he laid out the many intricate brick patterns. Building stones were selected from a nearby quarry and were also set with great care.

Custom designed windows and doors also received tremendous focus - to the extent that the design of these became a project within a project. The homeowners were very specific with the look they wanted and had Axelrod work with a preferred, 100-year old millwork shop to develop and design each unit. Both weight-and-chain double-hungs, as well as a variety of hinged windows, were handmade of sustainable mahogany and fitted with insulated glass. Intensive research was completed before specifying just the right weatherstripping, latches, screens and other hardware. Glazing types and patterns were closely considered to assure proper seals in the many true-divided units, each with custom sticking profiles.

The exterior unpainted siding, vast amounts of interior wood cladding and multitude of various exposed heavy timber applications all received as much study. To best accommodate the owner's request for a stable siding material that would offer a fairly predictable silver-grey appearance, many wood species were considered before white oak was chosen. Test panels were prepared to observe how the oak would behave when in contact with the elements. In the end, the client's desire to create a very rustic appearance was balanced with oak's expected weathering characteristics before finalizing the exterior details. Due to the extensive research and rigor of detail demanded by the project, Axelrod mentioned how the design and building team truly appreciated the many lessons learned about working with these materials on the way to realizing this remarkable project.



*Pool house in front of lap pool.*



*A beautiful, peaceful retreat.*

### Overall Perspective

Finishing touches are now being added. Dedicated to the homeowners' interest in cooking, a kitchen garden has taken shape just behind the pool house. Once the new plants root and fill out, this natural setting will blend right in with the existing greenery blanketing the scenic, surrounding hills. Most impressive is how the architectural and site design fit into the wider landscape. Terraces and gentle mounds sculpted from original contours further enhance what this new cluster of buildings adds to the site. As the oak and cedar weather to a silvery grey, their patina will elevate the character of this already wonderful escape from the busy city. With many porches and vantage points planned to optimize views and knit the buildings closely into the landscape, the owners eagerly await the opportunity to enjoy the brilliant fall foliage at their new residence.

Axelrod's firm, established in 1990, specializes in a wide range of custom residential architecture and campus-related projects for academic institutions.

**A Celebration of Wood** is a true testament to his firm's talent and successful designs. The **CSSB** congratulates everyone associated with this project, from architect, to work crew, to the owners... for a wonderful team effort and a truly amazing end result.



Written by:

Lynne Christensen is the CSSB's Director of Operations. She has worked for the CSSB since 1998 and is involved in a variety of departments with a focus on marketing. Christensen holds a Master of Business Administration degree as well as the Certified Association Executive credential. She resides in British Columbia.



Photos by:\*

Tony Bonura is the CSSB's District Manager, Northeast. He has over 40 years sales, marketing and technical experience in the forest products industry and shares his immense knowledge with a wide range of marketplace participants. Bonura is the Past Chairman of the Joint Forest Products/Coatings Committee, headquartered at the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, WI. He resides in New York State.

\*Photos also provided by Reed Axelrod, AIA

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