

Twin Ponds Transformed

Project by Jack Rossi Landscape Architecture



A residence in Woodstock, Vt., underwent an exterior renovation to complement a new addition to the main house, including multiple hardscaped terraces, a new pool, pergola, stone walls, walkways and plantings. A sunken stone terrace overlooks the lower twin ponds to the west, allowing the homeowners and visitors to take in sunset views and a 180-degree panorama of the Vermont hillside.

Set comfortably among rolling agricultural fields and wooded hills, this residence in Woodstock, Vt., originally built in 1870, is elegantly sited along a quiet country road with spectacular views to the south and west.

The client requested several specific design elements for the renovation to complement a new addition to the residence: a renewed focus on the panoramic hillside views, which includes twin ponds on a lower section of the property; a small, intimate terrace for the homeowner's use, as well as a larger terrace for entertaining guests; a swimming pool; and the addition of native plantings.



About 1,500 square feet of native Vermont fieldstone was installed for the patios and walkways, including the main terrace at the rear of the property (foreground) and the sunken viewing terrace (background, left). The two spaces are separated by an amsonia hedge and small wall.

Jack Rossi Landscape Architecture (JRLA), a firm based in Woodstock, was enlisted to design the transformation and oversee construction. Rossi provided hand-drawn renderings of the project's redesign and Photoshopped images of the site to provide the homeowner with a vision of the finished project before installation began.

The construction phase was not without challenges. The exposed Vermont hillside is subject to potential winter wind chills of -30°F , leading to a shutdown of the building stage from late fall until early May. The project ended up taking 12 months from start to finish due to the extended break, and required a crew of about 15 workers throughout, including masonry, excavation, pool and landscaping subcontractors; carpenters, an arborist and electricians also plied their trades on site.



About 1,700 square feet of “Deep Quarry” cut bluestone was installed around the new pool. A cabana that serves as a dressing room and houses the pool’s mechanics was added, along with a blueberry hedge and vine-covered wooden pergola.

Features

JRLA’s use of local stone in the design simply and efficiently integrates the architecture into the rural landscape. Native Vermont fieldstone was the primary material for the hardscaped areas, including 1,500 square feet for the patios and walkways, 400 square feet for the stepping stone paths, and 450 square feet of fieldstone walls. Cut fieldstone walkways break the line of the architecture along the north and east side of the house, and extend visually to the distant horizon.

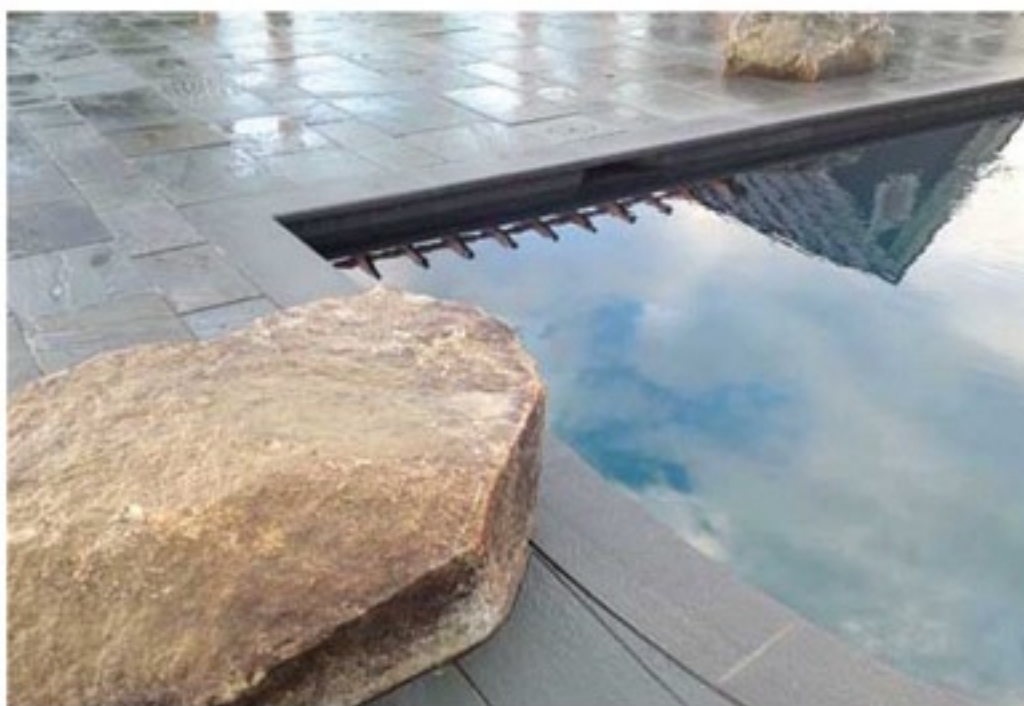
To make use of the site’s subtle grade changes and plantings, an intimate sunken stone terrace overlooks the lower twin ponds to the west, providing sunset views across the field. The swimming pool is nestled below a formed knoll at the southwest corner of the site, away from the primary view shed of the house and terraces. Surrounded by a



Cut fieldstone walkways break the line of the architecture along the north and east side of the house. The final design, crafted by Woodstock-based firm Jack Rossi Landscape Architecture, included a border of perovskia plantings along the house, and thyme and sedums between the walkway stones. Echinacea, dianthus, allium and Lamiaceae stachys were also planted along the residence’s outer wall.

The great room, kitchen and dining room access a large stone entertaining terrace in the courtyard along the rear of the property. Indigenous boulders were also included, and serve as rustic counterpoints to the refined cut bluestone paving. The largest serves as a diving rock into the pool, selected as a hardier, naturalistic alternative to a traditional diving board.

The front of the house is framed and separated from the road by four mature sugar maples, which were added to supplement existing mature maples along the front of property. A simple linear planting of lily-of-the-valley along the façade grounds the structure without obscuring the stone foundation or diminishing the stately elegance of the large maples. Additional plantings include lilacs, hydrangea, highbush blueberry hedge, amelanchiers, paper and river birch, white spruce and mixed perennials.



Indigenous boulders were incorporated for points of interest, and provide a visual relationship to the fieldstone installed throughout the site. A large boulder was installed adjacent to the pool to serve as a diving rock.

The finished project satisfied homeowner and designer alike, and provided a new means for enjoying the rustic views that have surrounded this Woodstock home for more than 140 years.