

Building Stone

MAGAZINE

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**RESTORING A HISTORIC
MONTREAL LANDMARK**

**SETTING A NEW STANDARD
FOR NATURAL STONE**

**2014-2015 MEMBER DIRECTORY
& BUYERS' GUIDE**

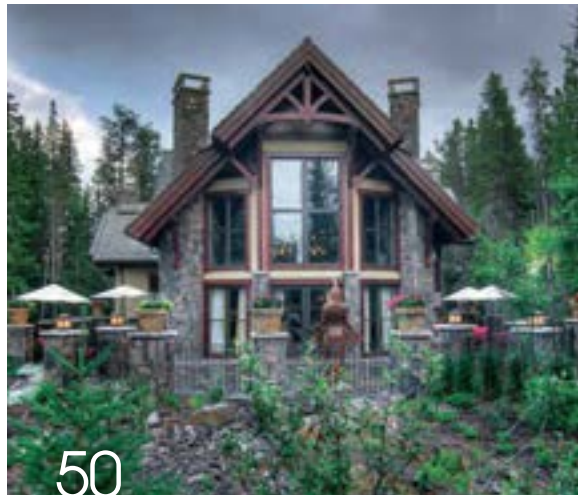


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IN THIS ISSUE



20



50



72

10 RELYING ON BUILDING INFORMATION MODELING FOR A SUCCESSFUL DESIGN For the design and construction of the Ralph L. Carr Colorado Judicial Center in Denver, CO, 3-D technology played an essential role in maintaining communication between all parties involved and keeping the project on deadline

20 SALVAGED STONE INSPIRES CULTURAL DESIGN Georgia marble and Winnsboro Blue granite contributed to the fresh aesthetics and sustainable design of the Francis Marion University Performing Arts Center in Florence, SC

30 A LABOR OF LOVE Restoring the stonework on the Kansas Statehouse in Topeka, KS, was a massive undertaking — requiring a tremendous amount of time, skill and coordination between all those involved

COVER STORY

42 RESTORING MORE THAN 100 YEARS OF HISTORY Peribonka Black granite from Granicor Inc. was a key component to the restoration of Dorchester Square — a social gathering area in downtown Montreal, Quebec, Canada

50 RARE CANADIAN STONE SHAPES SECLUDED MOUNTAIN HOME Rundle Rock, a fine grained sandstone/siltstone indigenous to the front ranges of Alberta's Rocky Mountains, was chosen to create a one-of-a-kind mountain estate with custom features

62 SETTING A NEW STANDARD FOR NATURAL STONE As new materials enter the marketplace and higher levels of performance are demanded of buildings, the green building rating systems have to adapt, grow and evolve along with them

72 CELEBRATING NATURE THROUGH DESIGN Mid-20th Century industrial designer Russel Wright methodically incorporated the surrounding landscape when building "Dragon Rock," his home and studio at Manitoga in Garrison, NY, which stands as a testament to stone reclamation

2014-2015 BSI MEMBER DIRECTORY & BUYERS' GUIDE

83 SPONSOR SPOTS

84 MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

IN EVERY ISSUE

08 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

97 CALENDAR OF EVENTS/ADVERTISERS INDEX

98 CHRONICLES IN STONE

ON THE COVER

Dorchester Square, a social gathering area in downtown Montreal, Quebec, Canada, recently received a makeover, which included the restoration of four monuments from the City of Montreal's art collection. Moved in 1953, the Jubilee Fountain, also known as the Lion of Belfort, has been placed in its original location in the center of a pedestrian avenue. All four monuments, and the plinth in the center of the square, were restored, refurbished and cleaned. Photo by Marc Cramer. Story begins on page 42.



Celebrating nature through design

Mid-20th Century industrial designer Russel Wright methodically incorporated the surrounding landscape when building “Dragon Rock,” his home and studio at Manifoga in Garrison, NY, which stands as a testament to stone reclamation

BY JENNIFER ADAMS



In 1942, industrial designer Russel Wright acquired an abandoned quarry and surrounding hillside in the Lower Hudson Valley of Garrison, NY. After studying the land for over a decade, he built Manitoga. Photos by Jennifer Adams, except where noted.

Tucked away in a wooded area of Garrison, NY, is Manitoga/The Russel Wright Design Center, which is where mid-20th Century industrial designer Russel Wright resided with his family. With its rock formations, trees and plant life, the property presented the ideal location to build a home and studio that is a reflection of indoor/outdoor living. Today, Manitoga — a National Historic Landmark — is open to the public, and it stands as a prime example of sustainability and use of regional resources.

Best known for his colorful American Modern ceramic dinnerware, which was manufactured between 1939 and 1959 by Steubenville Pottery in Steubenville, OH, Wright was an innovative craftsman and designer. Walking through his dwelling at Manitoga, which means “place of great spirit” in the Algonquin language, it is evident that he thought “outside the box” and often turned to nature as his inspiration for design.

“In 1942, Russel Wright acquired an abandoned quarry and surrounding hillside in the Lower Hudson Valley and began slowly transforming this land to a



A goal of Wright was to celebrate the landscape. As a result, every interior room is paired with an exterior space.

place of extraordinary beauty,” said Allison Cross, executive director of Manitoga/The Russel Wright Design Center. Cross explained that at one time the granite quarry supplied stone for buildings in New York City and neighboring Tarrytown, NY, as well as for buildings on the campus of West

Point U.S. Military Academy. It is believed that operation of the quarry ceased in the early 1900s.

When designing his new home and studio, which he collectively named “Dragon Rock” from his daughter Annie’s childhood description of the quarry wall dip-

ping into the pool like a dragon sipping water, Wright devoted a great deal of time to exploring the relationship between everyday life and nature. For over a decade, he studied the land at Manitoga — becoming intimate with every inch of rock, soil and vegetation — before actually



With its rock formations, trees and plant life, the property presented the ideal location to build a home and studio that is a reflection of indoor/outdoor living. Photo by Tara Wing


beginning construction. The result of his meticulous research is a home and studio that takes full advantage of its serene environment and natural setting. Manitoga is

truly an example of reclamation at its best.


“From the integration of his home into the landscape and use of green roofs, to the passive solar orientation of his home

and the use of insulated glass, Manitoga’s built structures and native plantings remain visionary examples of sustainable practices,” said Cross, who added that


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For over a decade, Wright studied the land at Manitoga — becoming intimate with every inch of rock, soil and vegetation — before actually beginning construction. Photo courtesy of Manitoga/The Russel Wright Design Center

Wright positioned his house to capture the best views of the landscape. It is stationed at the intersection of the north side of the quarry and a hillside.

The design of Dragon Rock is unique, with interior rock walls and flagstone flooring flowing seamlessly from the inside living space to the outdoor patio areas —

making the house literally part of the land. Cross explained that every interior room is paired with an exterior space.

“What we see inside is a wonderful jux-

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taposition of material," she said. "Formica-fronted cabinets and plaster walls with hemlock embedded in them. He was experimenting with nature. There is excep-

tional attention to detail. He wanted to honor and celebrate the landscape.

"The most articulated part of the site is the former abandoned quarry, which

Wright transformed into a natural swimming pool around which he built Dragon Rock," Cross went on to say. "The structures have green roofs, built-in elements and ex-

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Interior rock walls bring a unique interior design element to the home.



Wright devoted a great deal of time to exploring the relationship between everyday life and nature, which is evident in his design of Dragon Rock.

pansive walls of glass — offering dramatic views of a 30-foot waterfall — all part of Wright's overall design. Manitoga has 4.5 miles of woodland paths carefully orchestrated by Wright into varied sequences to be experienced at different times of the day and seasons. In addition to trees, streams, boulders, moss, native plants and a meadow, there are stone steps, terraces and bridges. Remnants of industrial hardware remain as reminders of the site's past



Outdoor “rooms” are positioned throughout Manitoga, including the “beach room” where residents and guests could sit, relax and enjoy the serene environment.

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as a stone quarry and logging site. Manitoga, designed over 35 years, uniquely conveys Wright’s enduring ideas on good design and harmony with nature in daily living.”

Preserving and sharing the spirit of Manitoga and Wright’s timeless design vision that sparked its creation are high priorities of Manitoga/The Russel Wright Design Center. It is the organization’s mission to:

- Preserve Manitoga as the embodiment of Russel Wright’s design philosophy and his life’s work.
- Demonstrate the power of land reclamation, respect for the environment and integration in design.
- Inspire creativity and enhance the lives of many.
- Celebrate good design for living in creative harmony with nature through tours, programs and events.

“House, Studio & Landscape tours for special groups and the public, a long-running children’s Summer Nature & Design



Remnants of industrial hardware remain as reminders of the site's past as a stone quarry and logging site.

Camp, and the Volunteer Landscape Day program engage diverse audiences in the organization's mission," explained Cross. Manitoga/The Russel Wright Design Center looks for annual support in the way of membership, which it states will help increase awareness, nationally and internationally, of Manitoga as a significant and unique modern and sustainable landmark.

Benefits of membership include unlimited free access to trails year-round, reduced admission to programs and seasonal tours, invitation to cocktail walks and other seasonal special events, including performances that use the Quarry pool as a natural





An old photo illustrates Dragon Rock under construction. Photo courtesy of Manitoga/The Russel Wright Design Center

amphitheater. “Member groups such as the Design Circle and Quarry Alliance help promote Manitoga’s legacy of reclamation, sustainability and integration of nature and the man-made to the design communities and within the stone industry,” said Cross.

“Among the few modern National Historic Landmark examples of domestic architecture and landscape open to the public, Manitoga today presents an opportunity to experience a site of the recent industrial past that uniquely conveys

a visionary approach to land stewardship through designing in harmony with nature,” Cross added. To learn more about Manitoga/The Russel Wright Design Center, visit www.russelwrightcenter.org or call 845-424-3812. ■