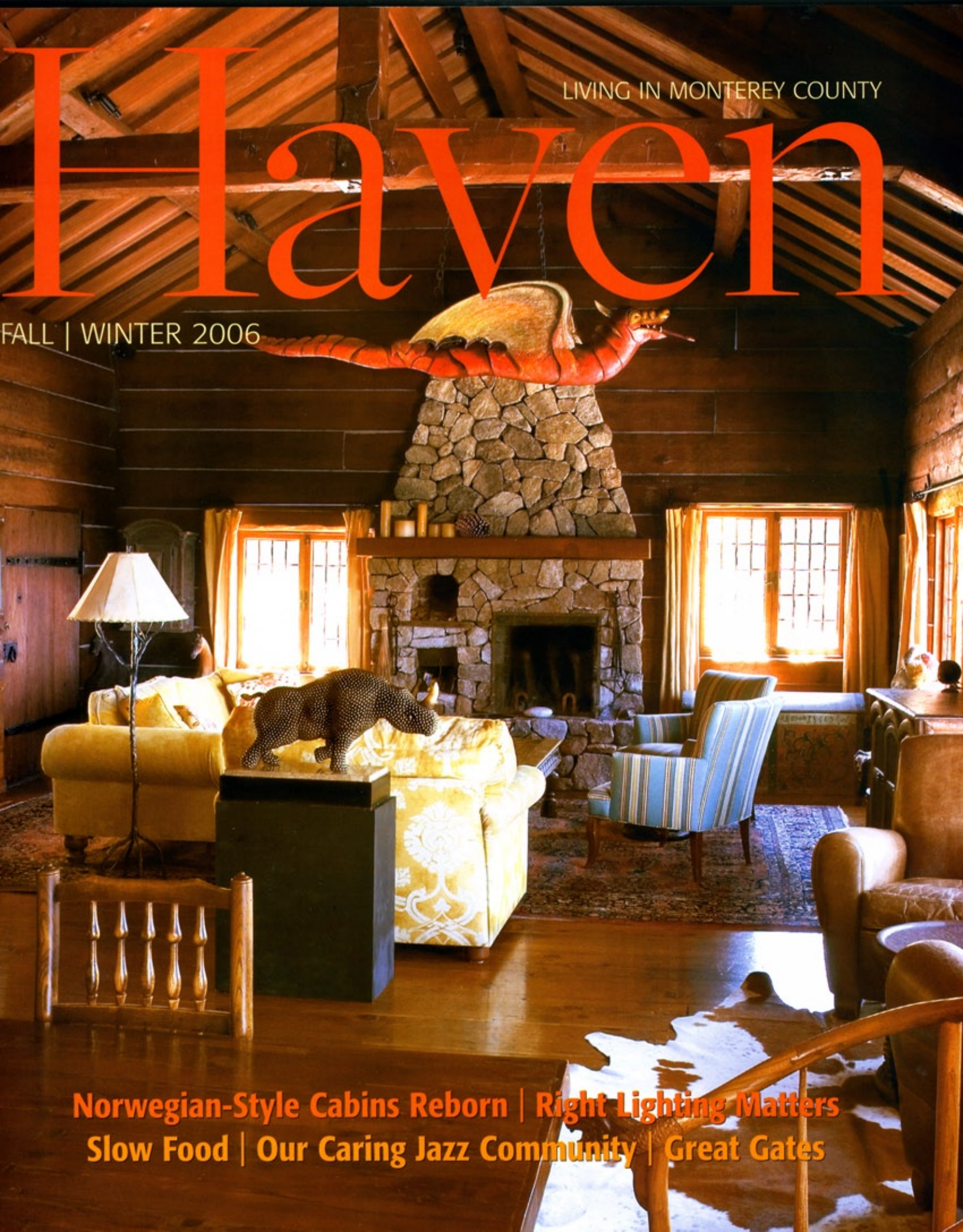


LIVING IN MONTEREY COUNTY

Haven

FALL | WINTER 2006



Norwegian-Style Cabins Reborn | Right Lighting Matters
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A rustic living room with a stone fireplace, a mounted lobster, and wooden walls. The room features a large stone fireplace with a mantel. A large, mounted lobster is displayed on the wall above the fireplace. The room is furnished with a yellow sofa, a wooden coffee table, and a striped armchair. A white bust is on a wooden table in the foreground. The ceiling is made of dark wood beams.

Norwegian Rustic REBORN

A carved wooden dragon suspended from the ceiling is a dramatic focal point in the Osborne living room; a contemporary addition unites the two Norwegian-style cabins (below right)



An earthy & elegant home

By Joan Chatfield-Taylor

Photography: Jack Wasserbach



Carmel Highlands sits at the edge of two disparate worlds: at one extreme, the high-end elegance of Pebble Beach, and on the other, the unfettered natural magnificence of Big Sur

It was in this transition zone between two vastly different aesthetic and cultural sensibilities that Charles and Karen Osborne four years ago found a neglected, hodgepodge house based on two Norwegian-style cabins on a panoramic piece of property high in the hills overlooking Point Lobos and the Pacific. The couple recognized the potential in the rustic cabins and decided they were worth saving.

The cabins' history dates back to the beginning of the 20th century, when Carmel was still in its bohemian heyday and an untrained architect named Hugh Comstock began building fairy tale cottages in Carmel, referred to as Hansel and Gretel, to house his wife's doll collections.

A redwood slab contains the brass sink, and a carved wood dragon serves as the faucet in a downstairs bathroom (below); a copper tub and fixtures add a shimmering warm glow to the upstairs master bath (right); the contemporary kitchen features a gas stove top on one island and a practical cutting surface and sink on another (right).



Concomitantly, a more serious side to Carmel was evolving. Carmel developer James Franklin Devendorf put out an appeal to teachers to move to the new village, and a number of Stanford and UC Berkeley professors responded by building substantial summer homes along the coast. The resulting combination of intellect and eccentricity made Carmel an ideal laboratory for the Arts and Crafts movement, which offered simplicity, natural materials and handcrafts as alternatives to Victorian excess and industrial mass production.

A Carmel Highlands resident named Maude Reynolds got into the spirit through her fascination with all things Norwegian. Following her husband's death, Reynolds moved to a spectacular bit of land overlooking the ocean. There, she built a wooden cottage in Norwegian style. Subsequently she went on a trip to Norway and fell even more deeply in love with the rustic simplicity and charmingly naive decorative elements of the country's rural architecture.

She caught sight of a 15th-century hunting lodge on a fjord and liked it so much that she decided to recreate it, down to the last detail, next to her cottage in California. To ensure its authenticity, she shipped boatloads of materials, from wooden planks to dragon carvings, across the sea. Her imports also included nine

Norwegian carpenters and craftsmen, whom she brought to Carmel to build the structure out of redwood logs. They used traditional tenon and mortise construction for the building, in which wood elements are joined not with nails but with tongues of wood cut to fit tightly into mortises or slots. The result was a spacious room with a high, beamed ceiling, warmed by handcrafted details. Reynolds named it Hardanger Hall, after the fjord where she had seen the original.

"It was really well built," comments Carmel architect Rob Carver, who worked with the Osbornes on the reconstruction. "There was nothing dainty about these buildings. Everything was oversize." Eventually, however, the sturdy half-timber construction suffered from the harsh winds blowing in from the Pacific and from ordinary neglect.

Following Maude Reynolds' death, the property had several owners, including Stanford University and film star Jack Lambert (whose bad-guy roles included *The Claw* in "Dick Tracy's Dilemma"). When the property was put up for sale following Lambert's death in 2002, some interested buyers looked at the structures as obvious tear-downs. The site remained on the market for more than a year, until the Osbornes purchased it and set to restoring Reynolds' Norwegian fantasy.





Karen and Charles, the grandson of S.F. B. Morse, the founder of Pebble Beach, were sensitive to both the history and the area's tradition of environmental protection. Working with Carver, they not only restored the buildings but did so in the greenest way possible.

"Anything attractive, we saved," says Karen Osborne. To inform their wish for authenticity, she and her husband traveled to Oslo to visit the Norsk Folkemuseum, an open-air exhibition of traditional Norwegian architecture.

In addition to oiling, chinking and polishing the original structure, they re-installed as many original details as possible. A carved griffin and lion flank the door to the hunting lodge, which still is locked with a 10-inch iron key. Firewood rests in a bin between a lively pair of carved horses. A massive carved wooden dragon hangs suspended from the ceiling over the stone fireplace.

In 1978, the owners had built what Carver refers to as "a rather odd building — three bathrooms and one bedroom — to link the lodge and the cottage. The Osbornes replaced this with a new two-story structure that houses a new kitchen and a master suite. Massive glass doors slide back into pockets, so that the kitchen can be fully opened to the central patio. It's a perfect setup for entertaining. Moreover, the 180-degree ocean view from the stove is so spectacular that, Karen Osborne says, "My husband and I cook together now because the kitchen is the center of the house."

Although the addition to the Norwegian House is cleanly modern, in keeping with the Department of the Interior's standard that new structures should be clearly differentiated from the historic buildings around them, the Osbornes wanted to use as many recycled materials as possible. The wood floors are planks from fallen butternut trees, finished with tung oil rather than urethane, and the insulation is an all-cotton material that includes scraps of worn-out blue jeans. Upstairs, off the master bedroom, an antique chest encloses the sinks and the glass tile is made of recycled glass.

To anchor the buildings in their hillside setting, landscape architect Bernard Trainer used native plants ranging from poppies to native grasses to succulents. Stone tiers are upholstered for sitting in springy elfin thyme; a croquet lawn has been kept deliberately rough and uneven, and two sky chairs by artist Cedar Goebel, originally seen at the 2003 Burning Man festival, invite visitors to climb up and look out towards Wild Cat Cove while swaying gently in the air.

When Karen Osborne comments, "My husband thinks of this place as halfway between Pebble Beach and Big Sur," she is not referring to its location. In its imaginative mix of old and new, their compound occupies a space somewhere between the elegant formality of the Del Monte Forest and the free spirit and unadorned beauty of Big Sur. 🍷



Karen and Charles Osborne on the porch of their guest house; a carved griffin and lion flank the door of one of the original cabins (top left); the guest house (top right); the view from the kitchen out to the patio and the ocean beyond (below left).