



White pine beams and timbers with lofty vaulted ceilings in the great room complement arched Marvin windows, a rock fireplace and stunning views.

A custom credenza that shelves electronics and dramatic oversized timbers divide the open kitchen and great room spaces.



## Scenic River Retreat

*Riverside home boasts optimal views, tranquility and dramatic design.*

BY **WANDA PERKINS** | PHOTOGRAPHY BY **HENRY HEMPEL**

“Resting on the banks of the Mississippi River, both the site and architecture celebrate notions of social and private. This allows intimate, quiet places, as well as more extroverted spaces where Amy, Rod and their family and guests can engage with each other.”

~ Bonnie Hansen, Hansen Tomlinson Fine Homes

What began with Rod and Amy VanSurksum’s wish list of ideas, magazine photos and Rod’s pencil drawings evolved into a stunning 9,221-square-foot architectural beauty. The tranquil lot on the Mississippi River boasts prime views, calm shores and a wonderful place for the family’s favorite water activities.

With this serene rural location, the homeowners wanted to maximize river views while incorporating their preferred French country-cottage style. The home evokes a cozy retreat feel with five bedrooms, seven baths, inviting roadside and riverside landscapes and captivating architectural design.



↑ A favorite family spot, the porch features a rustic stone fireplace, comfortable seating and incredible 180° views of the Mississippi River.

↓ Angular exterior roadside views showcase architectural stone columns, maintenance-free cement board siding and an inviting design.



“We chose a private location on a calm section of the river,” recalls Amy. “It’s a great place for our active family and cherished canines to enjoy boating, fishing and jet skiing.”

The couple initially met with Hansen Tomlinson Fine Homes in Sartell, Minnesota, and next with architect Anthony Stoll of bhh Partners, Planners / Architects in Perham, Minnesota, and Breckenridge, Colorado. This dynamic team worked diligently, from the demolishing of their existing home until all exterior and interior details were completed to perfection.

“Resting on the banks of the Mississippi River, both the site and architecture celebrate notions of social and private. This allows intimate, quiet places, as well as more extroverted spaces where Amy, Rod and their family and guests can engage with each other,” explains Bonnie Hansen, founding partner and design director of Hansen Tomlinson Fine Homes. “We



sincerely enjoyed the opportunity this home presented to creatively fuse both the setting and design.”

Bitterroot stone columns, chimneys topped with custom copper tops, and maintenance-free cement-board siding enhance the home’s welcoming appearance. Rod’s expansive six-car garage gives ample storage for vehicles and water equipment.

“Offsetting the garage spaces gained extensive river views,” notes Stoll. “Their location offered us an opportunity to utilize both the roadside and riverside for focal points and outdoor activities. We created a horizontal floorplan with upper and lower access by utilizing two stairways that frame the main living space. Additionally, the home’s exterior architecture blends beautifully with the wooded setting.”

Just inside the entry, a formal dining room features a custom table created from antique pine timbers. A nearby den and library space has a sliding glass door and

↑ The backyard pool and entertaining area provides an exceptional area to relax during the best days of summer.

↓ From the riverside, the French country-cottage style of the home enhances their peaceful river setting.





↑ Spacious and elegant, the formal dining room has a custom antique pine timber dining table and grass cloth wall paper.



↑ Adjacent to the kitchen, an organized pantry and work alcove provides extra storage and preparation space for the homeowners.

gas fireplace, making it a perfect reading spot.

“As the social heart of their home, the great room’s materiality complements architectural elements by providing a sense of warmth,” Hansen describes. “Even within the room’s generous open space, the use of Bitterroot stone and white pine timbers make it architecturally coherent, comfortable and welcoming.”

Efficient and functional, Amy’s dream kitchen showcases Jenn-Air, Wolf and Sub-Zero high-end appliances. A handy custom credenza divides the kitchen and great room and houses electronics and a pop-up flat screen with 360-degree rotating tilt. Their 5-foot-by-9-foot island with Howling Moon granite, leather finishes and painted glazed cabinetry is an ideal gathering spot. Amber pendant lighting, a tumbled stone backsplash behind kitchen cabinetry and a marble mosaic backsplash under a custom wood stove hood add attractive finishing touches. A pantry and work alcove gives additional storage and preparation space.

A riverside screened porch with a wood-





↑ A grand knotty alder arched entry door with cast bronze Rocky Mountain hardware provides a grand and appealing welcome for guests.



↑ The towering Bitterroot Montana stone chimney is topped with custom copper tops.

burning fireplace is a favorite place to enjoy a good book and steamy cup of coffee. Even the canines love this relaxing room, where conversations are always good.

The luxurious master suite features a private patio with peaceful river views and a bath that enjoys wooded views from a ceramic tile steam shower and soaking tub. The home also includes an exercise room, pool bath, sauna and a spacious media and

family room downstairs.

When not enjoying the outdoors near their river home, Rod works as an oral surgeon. His favorite activities include golfing and fishing. Amy is a bookkeeper and a franchise owner who enjoys cooking and time with family. They both love traveling abroad but agree that it is always a joy to return home to their private, peaceful shores. ✨



↑ A cheery, colorful flower planter accents the home's exterior, along with a neatly stacked pile of firewood.



↑ Flowers planted in a bird bath add a beautiful finishing touch to exterior spaces.

## DESIGN THOUGHTS...

Early on in the design process, the VanSurksms noted the importance of maintaining a connection to the exterior. They came to the design table with a wealth of information and ideas. Unique features of their home include the balcony, kitchen workspaces and upper-level ceilings and loft area. The open balcony to the living room ties in with the sitting and kitchen areas. An interesting design of the small office and pantry between the kitchen and riverside mudroom provides for everyday access to a screen porch adjacent to the pool. The upper level incorporates vaulted and unique ceiling spaces in the bedrooms and kids' loft area.



Anthony J. Stoll, AIA  
Principal Architect  
bhh Partners, Planners / Architects  
Perham, Minnesota, and Breckenridge, Colorado