



LIVING BENEATH THE COLORADO PEAKS

THE STORY OF KNAPP RANCH
A Vision of Architectural Design and Land Stewardship



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and Land Stewardship



Betsy and Bud Knapp

With Sarah Chase Shaw
Featuring the photography of Todd Winslow Pierce
Foreword by Kim Langmaid

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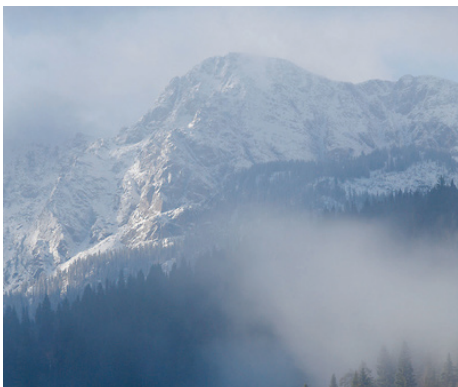
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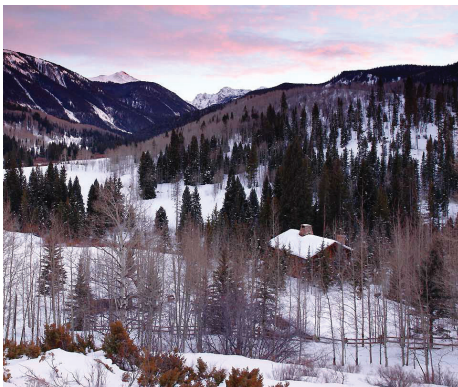
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Craftsmanship, authenticity and tradition took center stage as the building compound began to take shape. In his essay, Austrian master wood craftsman Rudi Neumayr praises the art of woodworking, suggesting that craftsmanship can help encourage and establish sustainability for the future.



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Tucked in the shadow of ancient mountains, Colorado’s Knapp Ranch is nestled amid a dramatic Western landscape. Both solitude and adventure can be found in this Rocky Mountain valley, occasionally heightened by the hint of danger that comes with the prospect of a genuine encounter with the wild. It is a place that encourages both visitors and longtime residents to respond with awareness and respect.



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A gallery of images and accompanying text reveal the influence of the surrounding natural environment, the region’s unique history and the National Park Service’s development of “Parkitecture” on the interior finishes and unique details found in the architecture, interior design and landscaping.



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DISCOVERY

Imagination Becomes Reality

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69

Early settlement patterns in the Vail Valley influenced the site planning and design of the Knapps’ home. An essay by landscape architect Rick Lamb presents some valuable insights on letting the land itself guide home-site selection.



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Sustainable land-management practices, organic food production, and collaborative botanic experimentation have made Knapp Ranch much more than simply a residential compound. Educator Jaymee Squires discusses the importance of the ranch in sharing ideas for sustainable living, now and into the future.



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The concept of authentic “place-making” emerged as the design team developed a context for the design of the home. Architect Gordon Pierce and Interior Designer Kari Foster describe what it’s like to create structures and spaces that are timeless and completely natural.

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*A*rticulating our conceptual ideas was the easy part; learning how to live in a rural mountain valley was more difficult. Our role was to imbue this place with heart and soul, and to reinforce the concepts of quality, simplicity, and responsible use. We let the land, its history, and the experts advise us on how best to accomplish this. —Betsy and Bud Knapp



2

DISCOVERY
IMAGINATION
BECOMES REALITY

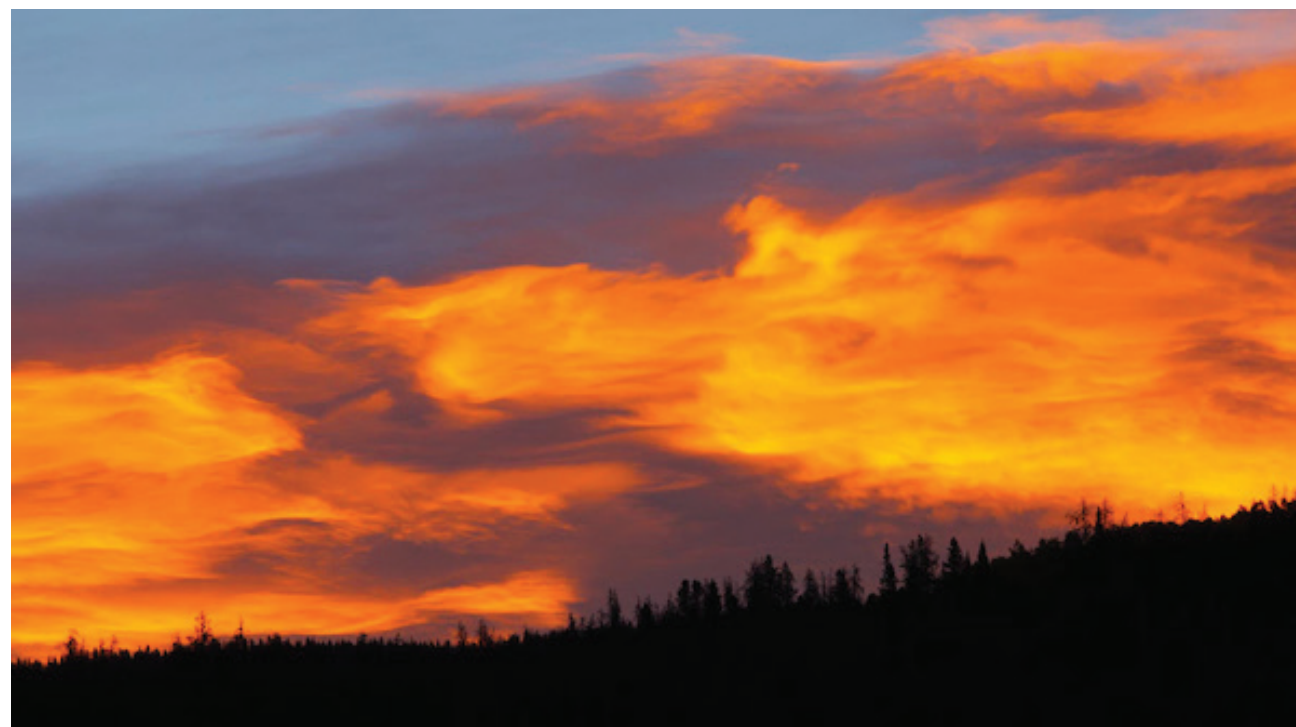
Discovering the Dream

In 1990, the upper West Lake Creek Valley was picturesque, rugged, and uninhabited. From the top of the hill on the northern boundary, the land dropped away in distinct sections. Directional changes revealed new vistas and changes in vegetation patterns. Along the western edge of the property, views to the north offered glimpses of the Gore Range in the distance. Just under the ridge lay an amphitheater-shaped meadow, dotted with boulders and sagebrush. In the center of this naturally carved glacial bowl, a seasonal wetland—also known as a vernal pool—appeared every year, collecting runoff, wildflowers, frogs, and salamanders in the spring, only to evaporate into a cracked and barren surface of hard clay come midsummer. Farther to the east and hidden in the dense aspen forest, the overgrown Hawley-Reese irrigation ditch carried water from a point upstream to surrounding properties. Flanked by heavily treed slopes to either side, the valley's bottom was alive with the sounds of water and birds. Stately evergreens announced the presence of the creek as it meandered through a warren of beaver ponds, disappearing into dense and overgrown willow stands. At the valley's south end, snow-capped peaks stood sentinel over the land, claiming their stake in the eternal march of history.

For many years, Betsy and Bud had dreamed of finding a place in the country where they could build a home and grow their own food. The chance to fulfill their longtime dream to re-create some of their favorite childhood experiences—Betsy had roamed the woods and lakes of northern Wisconsin, and Bud has always loved the desert Southwest—was exciting. Bud attributes his love of the wide-open spaces of Colorado and Arizona to two men: his grandfather, Cleon T. Knapp, and the American writer and naturalist, Joseph Wood Krutch. An influential statesman in Arizona, Cleon Knapp was an attorney for Phelps Dodge Corporation who helped Arizona gain statehood in the early part of the twentieth century. He was also deeply involved in the development of the Colorado River Compact of 1922. “He had a great pride of place,” says Bud Knapp. “I got a bellyful of history, geology, and appreciation for water and the open landscape around me from him, and I became enamored. Even though I wasn’t old enough to understand it, I knew it was good and it was beautiful. And that’s why, from Los Angeles, I looked out as far as I could for something to replicate that experience.” Joseph Wood Krutch’s *Desert Year*, published in 1952, also had a profound influence on Bud. Writing evocatively about the natural world, describing the life forms that somehow prosper despite the harsh desert environment, Krutch highlighted the courage and ingenuity needed to make the best of the world as you find it.

The solitude of this place appealed to me a great deal. The simplicity of life and the values held by the people in the rural territory of Colorado were refreshing. You can accomplish a heck of a lot here with a simple handshake. That means a lot to me at this point in my life. —Bud Knapp

High-altitude altocumulus clouds, their swirling bands uplit by the reflective orange and red hues of a setting sun, foretell a change in the weather.





The special light that follows an afternoon rain shower reveals a fresh landscape of green, yellow, and red, the distinctive colors of late August in the mountains. This was the view of the valley that first captured the Knapps' imagination.

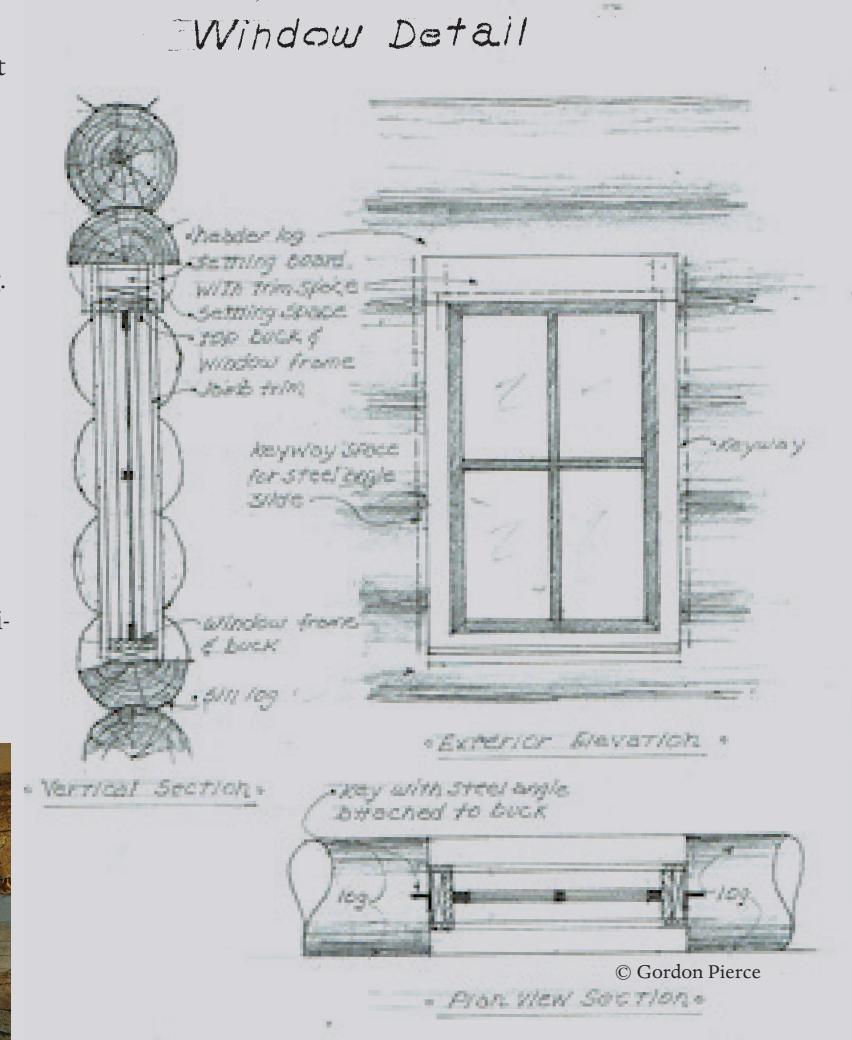
Shrinkage and Settlement

“Being versed in proper log techniques and settling issues is so important in log home construction,” says Roger Sherman, a Carbondale, Colorado-based builder. “Wood is a natural product, and it changes over time. If you don’t accommodate for these changes, your building will slowly fail.”

Typically, logs are dried to 19 percent and de-barked before using. Leaving bark on a log can encourage insect attack, and it makes scribe-fitting (laying one log seamlessly atop another) more difficult, or even impossible. Using dry timber reduces the amount of settling and shrinkage in a building. Spruce is the predominant species used at Knapp Ranch because, at the time of construction, stands of dead spruce were easy to locate nearby. An added bonus was the fact that these trees, having stood dead for twenty years, were completely dry, bark-free, and had gained a very desirable gray and brown patina.

“Settling” is the term used to describe the loss of wall height over time due to log shrinkage, compression, and slumping. Most builders figure on a 6 percent “settling allowance,” particularly for green logs. Dry logs, or buildings with only dovetail notches, may use a settling allowance of less than 6 percent, which is equivalent to three-quarter-inches per foot. The time needed to reach equilibrium moisture content (or complete settlement), depends on a number of technical variables, including wood species, log diameter, initial moisture content, interior temperature, relative humidity, exterior temperature, exposure to sunlight (a factor that is influenced both by depth of roof overhang and exposure), and local climate. Log fibers are cylindrical in shape, with their long axis along the log, and since fibers shrink only in a circular direction, logs generally do not shrink appreciably in length. Logs with a diameter larger than twenty inches can require a longer settling time. Walls in a log home can decrease in height over time as the wood fibers shrink; a nine-foot wall can settle anywhere from one and a half to four inches over time, depending on local conditions.

To allow for such shrinkage and settlement issues, openings called “bucks” are made in log walls. The height of a buck is less than the height of the proposed opening, and the difference in these heights is equal to, or greater than, the settling allowance for the opening. The buck is usually attached to a key—a steel angle iron—that is installed in a vertical slot cut in the log ends of the opening. This key holds the buck in place, effectively restricting horizontal movement of wall logs but allowing for potential vertical settlement. Vertical posts used to support a floor, or roof structure, also require a system that can accommodate settling. At Knapp Ranch, the posts at Marmot Lodge and Anglers Cabin are attached to screw jacks, located at the base of the log. During the first few years after construction, these jacks were adjusted periodically. Now, they are checked annually.



Above: Log cabin construction is characterized by wood shrinkage, settlement, and movement. A window buck effectively restricts horizontal movement of wall logs, but allows for vertical settlement if necessary. Properly installed, a window buck ensures that the logs above the window do not settle on the frame and distort the opening.

Left: Most of the logs used in the construction of the cabins at Knapp Ranch had been standing dead for almost two decades. As a result, the amount of settling and shrinkage that occurred in the buildings was minimal. Here, a tenon joint of a character post fits seamlessly into a horizontal support beam, allowing for flexibility in the settling of the log wall above the doorway in the Main Lodge.



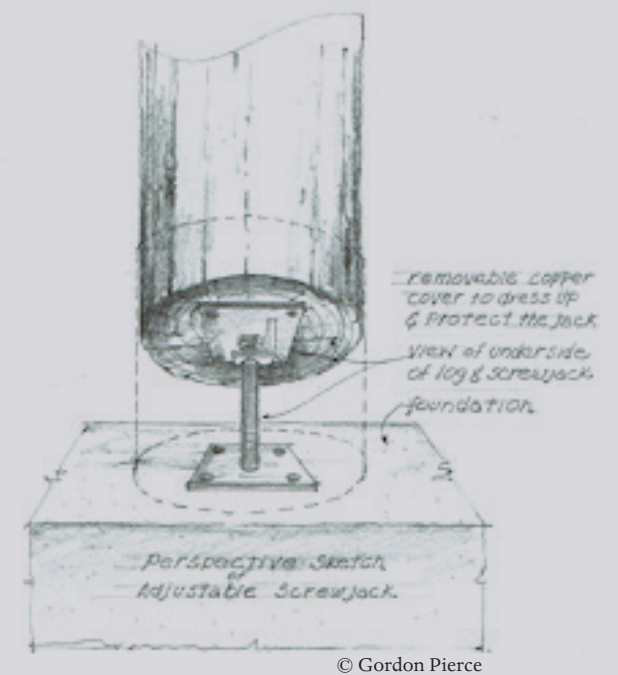
Windows were installed in a frame, or buck. The bottom buck is fastened to the wall sill log while a settling space is accommodated above the top buck. Rather than attaching the logs to the side sill, the logs are connected to the side bucks by a steel angle which fits snugly into a vertical slot cut into the ends of the wall logs. The wall logs can then move vertically without affecting the window buck.



Betsy Knapp

Wherever wood posts support an upper floor structure or roof, they also must be attached using a system that can accommodate settling. Typically, this is accomplished with screw jacks, which must be adjusted periodically—usually every few months during the first year, and once a year for the next couple of years. This photo, taken during the construction of Marmot Lodge, shows a screw jack installed at the base of a log post in the dining room. The drawing to the right illustrates a screw jack detail.

Screw Jack Detail





A modest mining cabin, Silver Sal was built by hand, its notches carved with an ax, its logs hoisted atop one another to form the walls of a utilitarian structure.



David Marlow



David Marlow

Above: In the bunkroom, log bunks, appearing as an extension of the surrounding walls, grow organically toward the ceiling.

Left: The cabin's interiors appear almost rudimentary, and yet they are both elegant and comfortable. The simplicity of the time period is noted in the saddle-notch log construction, wide plank floors, and iron and wood furniture. Primary colors brighten the main room, which remains purposely dark due to the small windowpanes and corresponding window frames.

Betsy Wood Knapp was an entrepreneur, angel investor, and philanthropist. She grew up in Evanston, Illinois and, prior to moving to Colorado full-time in 2013, she lived in Boston, New York City and Los Angeles.

Betsy's early career began at MIT, which became the launching pad to her leadership in the computer industry. In the late 1960s, she became a founding member and then president of New York City-based Telmar Communications Corp., a company that pioneered online interactive computer access to consumer behavior databases, and decision support systems for the media and advertising industries. She was responsible for leading the creation of Telmar's operating system and extensive library of interactive software.

After marrying Bud Knapp and moving to Los Angeles in 1979, Betsy became the senior vice president and director of Knapp Communications, the Los Angeles-based owner and publisher of *Architectural Digest*, *Bon Appétit*, and other magazines and books by The Knapp Press, where she was responsible for the company's transition to interactive computer technology and the creation of electronic media products.

In 1986, she founded Wood Knapp & Co. to produce and distribute quality special-interest home video programming, and Wood Knapp Direct, a direct marketer with an annual circulation of five million catalogues. After 1995, following her passion for new business creation, Betsy became actively involved in investing in new technology startups.

Betsy was a founding member of the Committee of 200, a by-invitation association of women entrepreneurs and corporate executives and of the Wellesley College Business Leadership Council. She also was a member of Women Corporate Directors and the International Women's Forum. She was trustee emerita of Wellesley College, where she co-chaired a \$400 million comprehensive campaign.

In Los Angeles, Betsy's involvement with UCLA led to her appointment as the first woman to chair the UCLA Foundation, a \$1 billion-plus fund which manages private donations for the benefit of the public university. She served on the Board of the UCLA Technology Development Group, which oversees university intellectual property, licensing, and industry-sponsored research. She also served on the Board of Advisors of UCLA Anderson Graduate School of Management.

At Knapp Ranch, Betsy was deeply involved in the development of all aspects of ranch life. She was passionate about learning and practicing best agricultural practices to produce food of superior quality, taste, freshness, and nutrition. Betsy passed away on June 20, 2017.

Cleon T. ("Bud") Knapp, former chairman and chief executive officer of Knapp Communications Corporation, a company he founded in 1977, is recognized throughout the publishing and business worlds as an innovative, entrepreneurial, and dynamic leader. Knapp Communications Corporation formerly published *Architectural Digest* and *Bon Appetit*, both of which were sold in April 1993 to The Condé Nast Publications, Inc.

Bud entered the publishing industry in the 1950s, working for his grandfather, John C. Brasfield, the founder of *Architectural Digest*. He helped in the office while pursuing studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. Following his grandfather's death in 1965, Bud, at the age of twenty-seven, purchased the John C. Brasfield Publishing Corp. Under his leadership, *Architectural Digest's* mission became one of serving the high-income national consumer market with editorial work dedicated to the concept of the home as a work of art and personal expression.

The success of *Architectural Digest* reaffirmed Bud's contention that, as Americans began to spend more time at home, food and entertaining would become an increasingly important part of creating a fulfilling personal lifestyle. Accordingly, in 1975, Bud's company acquired *Bon Appetit* magazine. Immediately, he instituted major changes aimed at realizing the magazine's potential to meet the growing needs of "food enthusiasts."

In 1977, Bud founded The Knapp Press, a book-publishing subsidiary that has sold 11 million copies, including the bestselling *Italy: The Beautiful Cookbook*. He also established Wilshire Marketing Corporation, a subsidiary that marketed merchandise designed to appeal to the readers of *Architectural Digest* and *Bon Appetit*. That company was renamed "Knapp Communications Corporation" in order to reflect its ownership.

Following the sale of Knapp Communications in 1993, Bud served for ten years as chairman of the Board of Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, and he sat on the Board of Advisors at the UCLA Anderson Graduate School of Management. Currently, he is president of Talwood Corporation, which functions as a family office for administrative, investment and tax planning, and business management activity; and the Knapp Foundation. He has three children—Brian, Aaron, and Laura—and five grandchildren.



Knapp Ranch Archives

Betsy and Bud Knapp



Sarah Chase Shaw



Todd Winslow Pierce



Lisa McGuire

The Book Team

Sarah Chase Shaw: Writer and Editor

Freelance writer and landscape architect Sarah Chase Shaw specializes in writing about design and lifestyle in the American West, including landscape architecture, architecture, community planning, environmental design, land use, gardens, people, families, and history. She has authored two books on residential gardens, including *Garden Legacy: the Residential Gardens of Design Workshop*, and *New Gardens of the American West*. A native of Flagstaff, Arizona, and now a resident of Colorado's Roaring Fork Valley, Sarah spends her free time exploring the American West with her husband and son—on foot, in a boat, on a bike, or atop a horse.

Todd Winslow Pierce: Photography

Todd Winslow Pierce is a professional landscape photographer based in Vail, Colorado. His images have appeared in numerous national and regional publications, advertisements, select marketing campaigns, and fine art installations. His commercial and fine art assignments have taken him to locations throughout the U.S., Canada, Europe, Costa Rica, and the Caribbean.

Todd is a lifelong resident of Vail, Colorado, where his father, Gordon, moved in 1962 as a member of the original resort development team. His deep connection to the land, especially to the mountains where he grew up, inspired the consistent focus on landscape and conservation photography that serves as the centerpiece of his work today.

Lisa McGuire: Book Design

Lisa is a graphic designer specializing in exhibit design and book design. She began her career at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science and spent seven years learning her craft while there. Since leaving the museum, she has worked independently designing and producing graphic programs for clients throughout the West.

Lisa's strength is in storytelling. She enjoys working with teams to create strategies that encourage curiosity, enjoyment and exploration, whether by turning pages, or walking through a gallery.

Lisa lives with her husband and various critters in a renovated 1860s cabin at nine thousand feet in the Colorado Rocky Mountains.

Living Beneath the Colorado Peaks tells the true story of one couple's pursuit of a dream to live in a remote valley in the Rocky Mountains. It's the story of discovery, observation, fulfillment and self-sufficiency, and the many lessons learned throughout the process.

In the 1990's, Betsy and Bud Knapp, the original owners of *Architectural Digest* and *Bon Appétit* magazines left the competitive, fast-paced world of publishing to pursue a lifelong dream.

Settling in a headwater valley near Vail, Colorado, the Knapps began the process of designing and crafting a compound of cabins to share with family, friends, and ultimately, to be used as a western retreat for small and select multi-disciplinary groups whose visions honor the Knapps' philanthropic spirit.

Within these pages are chronicled the extraordinary process the Knapps undertook to methodically study their land, and learn from local builders and craftsmen, landscape architects, ecologists and water managers about how to best live in this remote mountain valley at 9,000 feet.



When we first saw this valley, we were high atop a neighboring ridge....
The wildness and solitude of this seemingly uncharted area intrigued us
because, when you're down in a valley, you don't have the perspective of space. Once we
saw what was around us, our curiosity was piqued....for us, this was new territory.

—Betsy and Bud Knapp

Supported by an array of stunning photographs, informative text, illustrations, maps and drawings that describe both the experiences and the reasons behind the decisions made. *Living Beneath the Colorado Peaks* delves into the geologic and cultural history of the region and its influence on the architecture and interior design of the exquisite hand hewn log cabins and the handsome stone and timber main house in the magnificent compound of buildings.

Sprinkled throughout the book are indelible stories of the relationships forged with everyone dedicated to the commitment, and the challenge, of pursuing the historical building methods and artistry in every detail. In these pages, you will:

- See how land and early settlement patterns influenced site planning and design.
- Understand how the architect, landscape architect, and interior designer created structures, interior spaces and outdoor living areas that are authentic, timeless and respectful of the surrounding natural environment.
- Appreciate rural lifestyle experiences, open landscapes and water rights use and responsibilities.
- Learn how and when to grow a variety of plants for organic food production at 9,000 feet.
- Learn from experts about the importance of sustainable living, now and in the future.
- Discover the value of investing time into a thoughtful process that creates a vision for the future.

Living Beneath the Colorado Peaks is ultimately a love story about a partnership of mind, body and spirit and the desire to create a place of beauty, serenity and depth that will continue for many years as a place for those who respect and value education, culture, the arts, science and technology, the humanities, sustainable agriculture, and place-based learning.

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