

PROMISING PROSPECTS:

Defining a Direction for a Colorado Mountain Resort

By Kirsten H. Michel

Tipple (noun): The word 'tipple' is derived from the technique of miners who would push carts full of minerals and tip them over into a central facility to be sorted, sized, weighed, and loaded into trucks or railroad cars for transport.

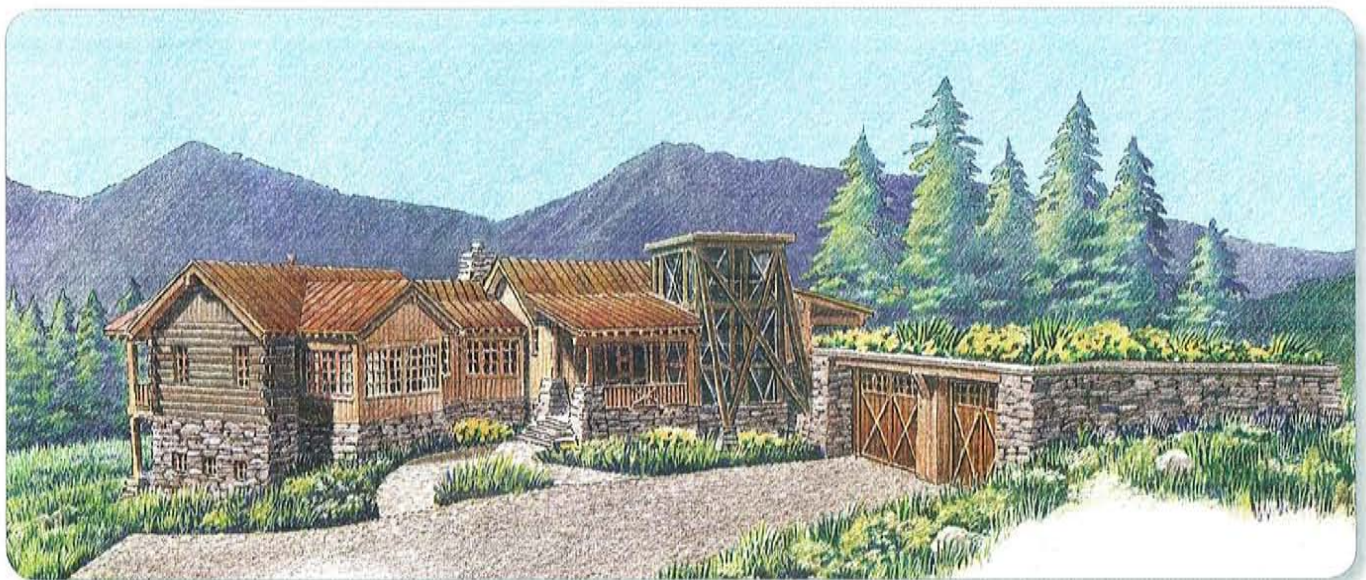
FROM THE ONSET, it was apparent that the design for the Tipple House would embody the essence of the past, present, and future of this community. This is no surprise when taking into consideration that its visionaries include the successful owners of the Crested Butte Mountain Resort, where the home is being constructed. Tim and Diane Mueller, noted leaders within the US ski resort industry, worked closely with contractor, Corbin Marr, and architect, Jennifer Hartman, to shape a vision for this mountainside home which parallels their own ongoing vision for the resort itself; to assemble a one-of-a-kind, handcrafted structure that will embrace the history, exemplify the current lifestyle, and generate a new era for the whole of Crested Butte.

First Tracks

Named for the 12,162-foot peak that juts from the valley floor and dominates the skyline with its geologic plume, Crested Butte was officially incorporated in 1880. Initially, Crested Butte served

as a supply town that formed around temporary mining camps during the gold and silver booms that began in the 1870's. When the silver act was repealed in 1893, ranching, cattle and coal mining became the primary existence here for the next 60 years.

Later on, as recreational downhill skiing grew in popularity throughout the United States, winter tourism presented a new opportunity for this sleepy town. Open in 1961, Crested Butte Mountain Resort (CBMR) paired a local ski area with a warm and friendly historic mining town and landed Crested Butte on the map again. For years, CBMR reaped a gratifying level of success amid other bolstering Colorado ski resorts. However, while destinations like Aspen, Vail and Breckenridge were practically bursting at the seams with gondolas, glitz and gas fumes, CBMR managed to subtly establish itself as a quintessential mountain community—contently laid back. Its self hewn motto boasts of being "Colorado's last great ski town."



ABOVE: Spectacular views, of the Elk Mountain range, from the Master Bath window of the Tipple House (under construction until fall 2009). Note the insulated headers and LVL framing.



Prospect is a 400 acre enclave development located upon the flanks of Mount Crested Butte that offers a collection of ski in/ski out homesites and provides sweeping views, sunshine and serenity.

Making the Turn

The following decades earned “The Butte,” as it is nicknamed, recognition as the birthplace for extreme skiing. Colorado’s first X Games were hosted here as well as the annual U.S. Extreme Freeskiing Competitions—17 years and counting. Their trail map even lays claim to “the most lift-serviced extreme terrain on the continent.” Images of jagged outcroppings and gravity defying cliff jumps beckoned hard-core ski junkies to these steeply pitched slopes that might intimidate the average intermediate—sometimes vertically challenged—skier yearning for a long, easy shush down the mountainside. The combination of this edgy reputation along with several low snowfall years created harsh conditions felt hard in the pocketbooks of CBMR’s previous owners. They eventually put the resort up for sale, where it remained—in limbo—for several years.

Enter Tim and Diane Mueller. With the turnaround success of two northeastern ski areas under their belts—Okemo, in Vermont, and Mount Sunapee, in New Hampshire—their hard learned expertise would be just what was needed for CBMR’s revival. Their formula is to administer much-needed TLC to strengthen the existing facilities while exploring new avenues for conscientious development

and growth. As luck would have it, the Muellers had great interest in obtaining a western resort. “We wanted east to meet west and Crested Butte [Mountain Resort] was a good fit with a real community,” explains Diane of the decision to make their offer. In 2004, the accomplished duo once again rolled up their sleeves and added CBMR to their ongoing projects.

The town of Crested Butte has been on the National Registry of Historic Places, designated a historic district, since 1974. Reminiscent of the past, faux front structures still line the main thoroughway of town, the valley offers unspoiled views, and locals extend a pleasant hello with welcoming smiles. Tim and Diane are well aware of the fragility of this community—they have seen it before. “Crested Butte may be the end of the road but it is the beginning of paradise,” says Diane, regarding the impending changes, “it is important that we maintain what we cherish.”

Locals here are getting used to seeing Tim and Diane—along with son, Ethan, currently serving as Director of Operations for CBMR—applying their personalized hands-on approach to lift the resort to the next level. The same core values that have proven successful in past undertakings, at Okemo and Sunapee, will determine each turn



they take to redefine CBMR. So far their methods are working. Initial reconstruction plans include tackling various on-mountain improvements; implementing an environmentally conscious stewardship throughout the resort; securing opportunities to open up more family friendly terrain; and performing a major facelift for the base village.

In addition, development of precious ski in/ski out properties amid the resort was initiated. Wanting to remain in keeping with the small town feel, careful consideration was given to manage protection of local heritage while pursuing a healthy level of growth. Amid the beauty of one new residential development, the Muellers recognized the opportunity to set the precedent for another new direction—this time through architecture.

Picking the Line

Prospect is a 400 acre enclave development located upon the flanks of Mount Crested Butte that offers a collection of ski in/ski out homesites and provides sweeping views, sunshine and serenity. Features include direct access to the ski mountain with four lift options; 276 acres of open space; borders shared with the Gunnison National Forest; miles of trails for winter and summer exploration; the most direct slope side access available in the West; and, most notably, a comprehensive design guideline to ensure the aesthetic integrity of the community.

The Muellers began their relationship with both Corbin Marr and Jennifer Hartman while refurbishing the barn they now call home in Crested Butte. Marr owns Marr Corp. Construction, a local building and contracting company that incorporates historic elements within each unique project and, through its property management division, forms a deep commitment to their homes and clients. Jennifer Hartman, AIA, is an owner and principal at Sunlit Architecture, which specializes in sustainability and environmental consciousness through architecture. Marr admits, "We lamented over completing [the barn] because it was such a wonderful experience and we managed to have such a great connection." Hartman agrees, "We all knew we needed to work on another project together." Their initial successful collaboration prompted the search for the next joint venture.

"We wanted to do something to define the direction we see Crested Butte going with



TOP: Gold Links Mine near Crested Butte, circa 1910.



LEFT & BELOW: THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE MINER'S BUNKHOUSE.

Marr repurposed materials from the Gold Links gold mine into the construction of the Tipple House.

The time-worn wood from the outside of the bunkhouse provides some of the interior finishes. Marr notes, "We will not stain or treat the timbers, we will leave them as they are—deeply weathered."



The actual materials used in The Tipple House (mined rock to the bunkhouse wood and nails to the Vokna window) were fashioned into a mock-up wall on display in the CBMR Real Estate Sales Center.



"This home isn't just different in look but also in finished products, all the way to the guts," Marr explains, "It is cutting edge; premium; remarkable..."

architecture," Diane states of the common goal that propelled them into their next mission. It was only a matter of time that Diane Mueller, Corbin Marr and Jennifer Hartman loaded into a snowcat and headed up to preview their prospects.

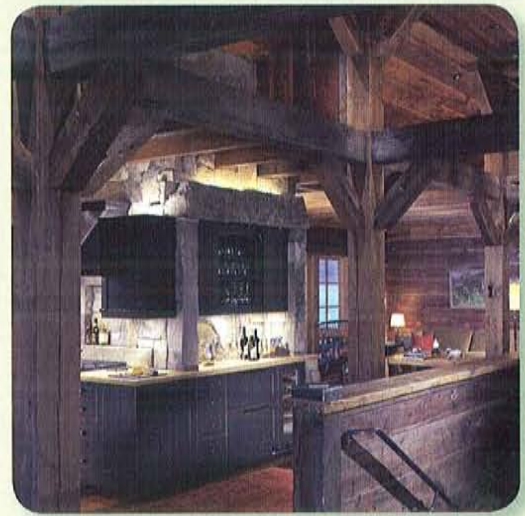
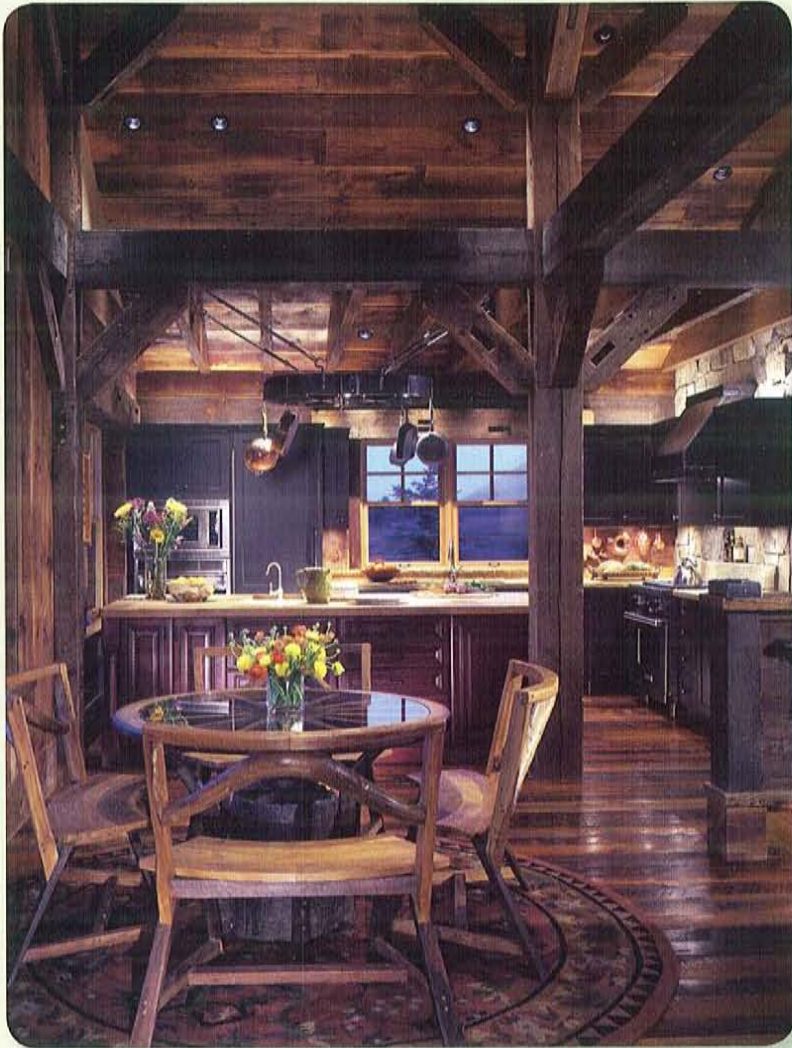
The Sweet Spot

The Tipple House is strategically positioned at 23 Grey Fox in Prospect. The turn into the entrance is evidence that something special is just ahead. This purposely-designed thoroughfare is an elevated, timber-framed driveway that highlights undisturbed natural scenery and depicts a dedication to preservation—elements that directly parallel the Muellers' vision for all of CBMR. "The house will represent what we want Crested Butte [Mountain Resort] to become," explains Diane of its significance, "it honors the heritage, talks to being aware of environmental impacts, fits in with the landscape—speaks as a great model for what we hope for the future." That is just what they have created. With a closer look, purposefully crafted correlations become visible—their vision was becoming a reality.

The driveway ultimately concludes in front of the distinct, stone-framed and sod-covered garage bay and reveals the down-to-earth 4,999 square foot Tipple House. Actual living space for the home adds up to a modest 4300 square feet. Marr states, "We wanted to bring in a more human scale to build an art grade home rather than just create massive space. We wanted to be detail oriented rather than size oriented." It is necessary to design a one-of-a-kind structure with an unpretentious approachable demeanor.

Since inception, using materials of superior quality, wherever possible, has remained a priority. "This home isn't just different in look but also in finished products, all the way to the guts," Marr explains, "It is cutting edge; premium; remarkable. The framing is all laminated veneer lumber (LVL). This is a super premium wood product—cut laser straight, very strong, very stable." LVL is manufactured using timbers from fast growing, managed forest, making it a better choice all around from an environmental perspective. To guarantee a sustainable, long-





ABOVE: The Mueller's refurbished Barn House. The successful collaboration on this project with contractor, Corbin Marr, and architect, Jennifer Hartman, ensured a reunion of the team for the Tipple House project.

as ceilings inside and as antiqued soffits outside, lending to the historical feel of the home. Mine rock, field stone, and crushed rock debris also gathered from Gold Links mine site were “used for stone veneer for the exterior and the interior—extensive rock work gives the home a sense of being deep down in the earth,” explains Marr. Preserving colorful and expressive elements results in a rich, more genuine character.

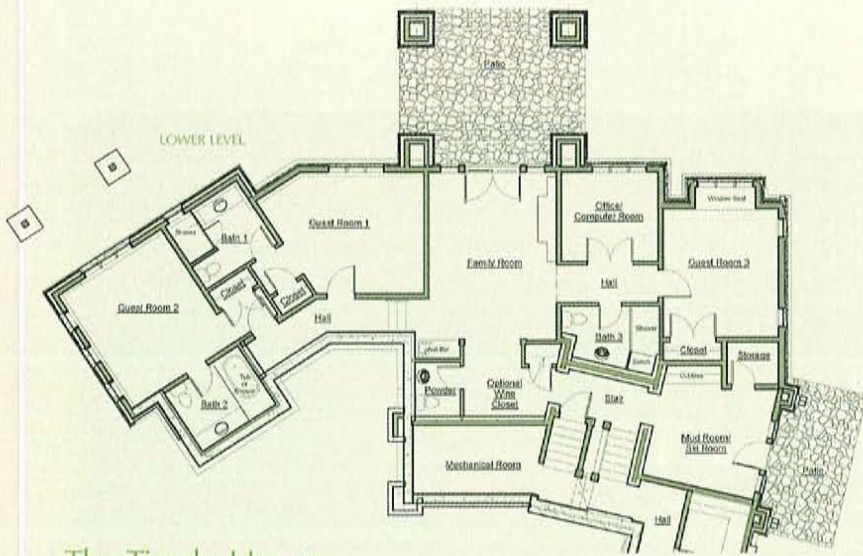
Finally, the grounds surrounding the home procure a truly natural, unhurried feel. The landscape remains simple and native while creating as little impact as possible. Marr explains, “Every bit of the house offers a real element of history and ties into the landscape.” Aged wood and stone features make up the hot tub area as well. “We are building a state of the art spa that resembles an old traditional hot springs,” notes Marr, foreseeing a genuine experience with stones and moss and

old wood beams. Developing a true natural getaway with scenic landscapes offers escape from modern day hustle and bustle, refreshes the weary and inspires the soulful—no doubt.

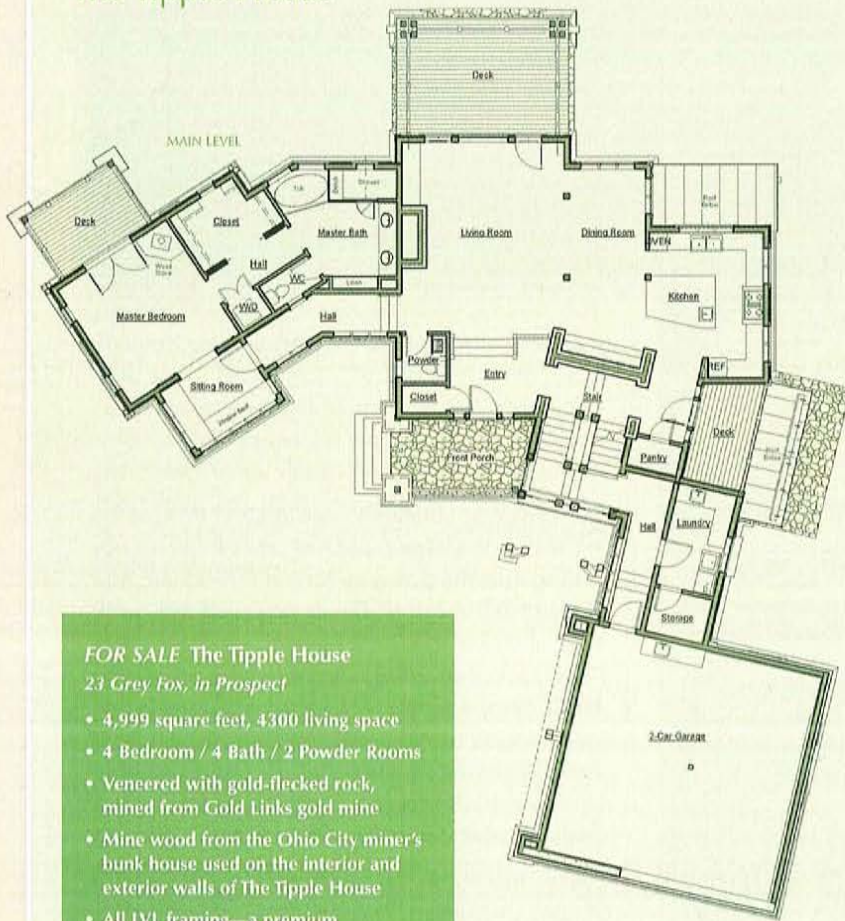
The Last Steep

The Muellers’ have discovered a method that works. Whether comprising a plan to revive their next ski resort or creating a blueprint for the house that will set a new precedent, their approach is reminiscent to that of their Crested Butte mining predecessors. They have filled their cart, come to the end of the tracks, and overturned their load into the tipple with anticipation that their efforts will extract the desired results. If history provides any clues, their future will, undoubtedly, be extraordinarily prosperous.

Kirsten H. Michel, contributing writer for DCD Home.



The Tipple House



FOR SALE The Tipple House 23 Grey Fox, in Prospect

- 4,999 square feet, 4300 living space
- 4 Bedroom / 4 Bath / 2 Powder Rooms
- Veneered with gold-flecked rock, mined from Gold Links gold mine
- Mine wood from the Ohio City miner's bunk house used on the interior and exterior walls of The Tipple House
- All LVL framing—a premium environmental product
- Vokna windows built in the Czech Republic with brushed wood for an antiqued finish
- Skier entry with Austrian 15-boot dryer
- Spa area has the look and feel of an old hot-spring surrounded by moss covered timbers
- The Tipple, or observatory area is all glass with a 360 degree view of the surrounding mountain ranges
- 100-foot long elevated wood bridge at the entry to welcome you home

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
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Developing a true natural getaway with scenic landscapes offers escape from modern day hustle and bustle, refreshes the weary and inspires the soulful—no doubt.

lasting end result, it is essential to handcraft a sturdy inner framework.

Causing very little environmental impact remained a constant throughout the design process. Understanding ways to conserve energy was key. Forward thinking presented opportunities to include enviro-enhanced alternatives for many everyday systems including solar energy, window selections and insulation options. Hartman explains, "Almost everything was thought about, studied and decided if it was a right fit. Many people say they strive for conscious development, but the Muellers' walk the walk." Understanding and incorporating eco-friendly solutions to daily needs demonstrates a strong commitment to the environment and sets the standard to be good stewards of the land far into the future.

A sense of the valley's past materializes from every aspect of the Tipple House. Local history is regenerated through the creative incorporation of various reclaimed materials from the Gold Links Gold Mine, originally located in nearby Ohio City. "We painstakingly categorized and deconstructed living history and relocated it to Prospect," explains Marr. Materials from the old gold miner's bunkhouse—down to reusing the original nails—have been given new purpose as they were integrated into the construction and creatively featured throughout the home. Maintaining strength of heritage through significant elements creates an opportunity to embrace local history.

These elements are reflected via the dominant, glass-enclosed tipple that serves as a stairway ascending to an observatory that offers magnificent views of the North Face and Teocalli Ridge. Additionally, the aged wood from the outside of the bunkhouse and barn provide some of the interior finishes—wainscot, ceiling, walls—while the interior remnants will be used to side exterior walls. Marr notes, "we will not stain or treat [the timbers], we will leave them as they are—deeply weathered." The weathered and rusty corrugated roofing materials from the bunkhouse are, also, innovatively included within design elements, as