

# ALL THE PHOTOGRAPHY SANDY MACKAY right MOVES



**TOP:** Custom Builder Derek Watson, son Scott, wife Zoe and their Wheaten Terrier Marty gather around a handmade bench in the vast entrance of their Aspen-style home in Horseshoe Valley. **RIGHT:** Furnishings, many from nearby Dwellings Rustic and Refined Living, fit the valley vibe in the spacious home. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** A 21-foot mantel in the great room is made of Cor-Ten and Indiana slate, which is carried throughout the room and into the front entrance, where a custom orb fixture lights the space.



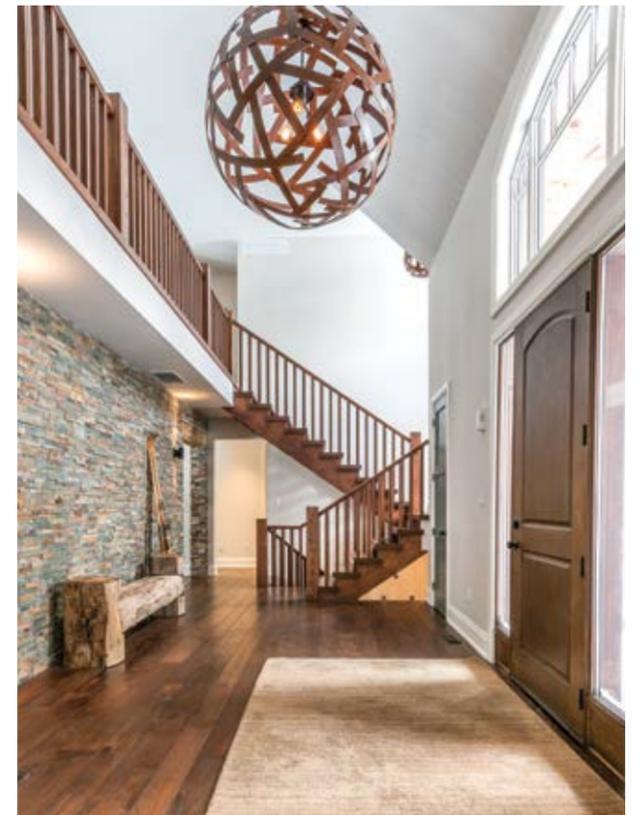
**D**erek Watson has been building custom homes for discerning clients since starting his own design/build company in 2001.

“I have always had a mind for business and grew up with hard-working parents who were self-employed,” explains Derek. “Starting my own business, **Watson Group Custom Homes**, was the next logical step.”

Derek started modestly, building three to five houses a year. “I have a passion for building homes and a vision for how the elements of a house come together,” he says. “We have been fortunate and the business continues to grow, and we now build 10- to-15 custom homes a year.”

Derek lives in an Aspen-style custom home near Horseshoe Valley’s Highlands golf course with his wife Zoe, sons William, 18, and six-year-old Scott, along with a very friendly Wheaten Terrier named Marty.

“We built the home with family and friends in mind,” says Zoe. The kitchen, featuring beautiful quartz countertops, opens to the great room and sunken dining room, creating a great space for entertaining and family feasts. *Continued on page 32*





Three polished-nickel nautical pendants hang over the large quartz-topped island in the predominantly white kitchen. A pantry tucked off to the right stores all the extras on open shelving. A step down to the airy dining area at the back of the home offers a bright space for family meals.

Derek spends a lot of time with his clients, helping them through the often intimidating world of custom home building. Choosing everything from flooring and exterior finishes to kitchen counters and paint colours can be daunting.

“He has an amazing eye,” says Zoe, who works as a financial advisor. “He guides new homeowners in every aspect of the building process. He’s fabulous at keeping everything in proportion.”

“He makes sure everything flows from one room to another and he understands how to make the most of the space.”

Derek is unique because he offers clients fixed pricing, which means there are no surprises at the end of the process with an unforeseen bill.

“I have a lot of second-time clients and often get referrals,” explains Derek, who employs seven people, including his building crew and administration staff.

Derek encourages open communication with his clients. “There are so many things people can do,” he says. “We encourage homeowners to be very involved in the process.”

The Watson family home also serves as a model home, and features Derek’s eye for detail, along with his immense knowledge of what works best in any given room.

“One of the reasons we wanted a big house was because of the age difference of our children,” Zoe says. “We wanted a home that was very modern, but also had a rustic feel to it. With two children and a love of our neighbourhood, we wanted this to be our forever home”.

The great room features a 21-foot mantel constructed out of Cor-Ten (Martin House Art Works) and Indiana slate. “Instead of a standard hearth, we wanted something unique and different,” Derek says. “This breaks up the room and we really like the natural elements.”

*Continued on page 34*





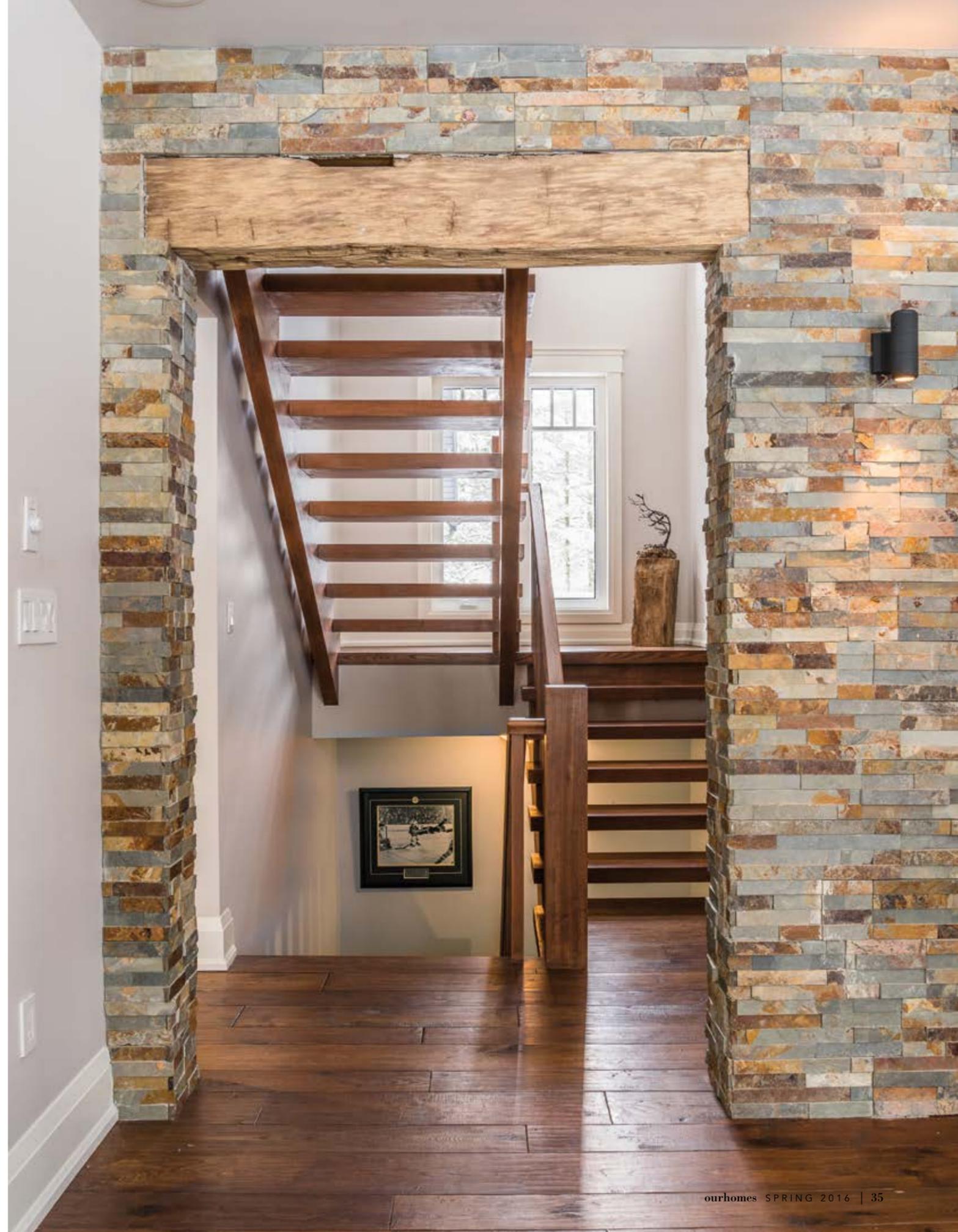
**ABOVE:** The family gathers for fun and games in the loft upstairs. **RIGHT:** Laundry rooms have evolved and the Watsons' well-appointed room makes the task easy and enjoyable. **OPPOSITE:** The open staircase to the upper level leads to a catwalk that separates the master suite from the boys' bedrooms.

The 5,100 sq. ft., two-level home features striking reclaimed hickory barn-board flooring (**Irvine Carpet One Floor & Home**) and tongue-and-groove poplar ceilings throughout. A butler's pantry off the kitchen features counter space to house a range of small appliances. The pantry shelving and two unique benches were built by **Cabinet Dreams**.

"We wanted to give the kitchen a clean look," Zoe says, adding a door off the kitchen provides easy access during the warmer months to a small balcony where she barbecues and grows herbs.

A covered porch in the back allows them to sit out and enjoy all the seasons and a small garage door provides easy in and out for their golf cart.

Even regular elements like staircases are brought to another level. Timber posts help guide the way to an accommodating seven-foot wide catwalk that separates the boys' rooms from the master. The master is very spacious with its 14-foot, tongue-and-groove vaulted ceiling, a walk-out deck and a walk-in steam shower in the marble en suite. Many of their furnishings were purchased in Craighurst at **Dwellings Rustic & Refined Living**. *Continued on page 38*



The master suite upstairs is spacious, serene and sophisticated.



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Derek suggests when planning a new build, to start from the centre of the home and work out. As an example, he notes people will occasionally focus on the master bedroom as the starting point rather than the kitchen or living room.

Derek's custom homes fall in the 2,000 to 3,500 sq. ft. range with prices ranging from \$450,000 to more than \$1 million.

"My clientele is a mix of people moving from the city along with local customers," Derek says, noting he's able to offer clients a wide range of building options, which include a traditional craftsman look to more modern styles. *Continued on page 40*

The master en suite combines neutral finishings with custom cabinetry.



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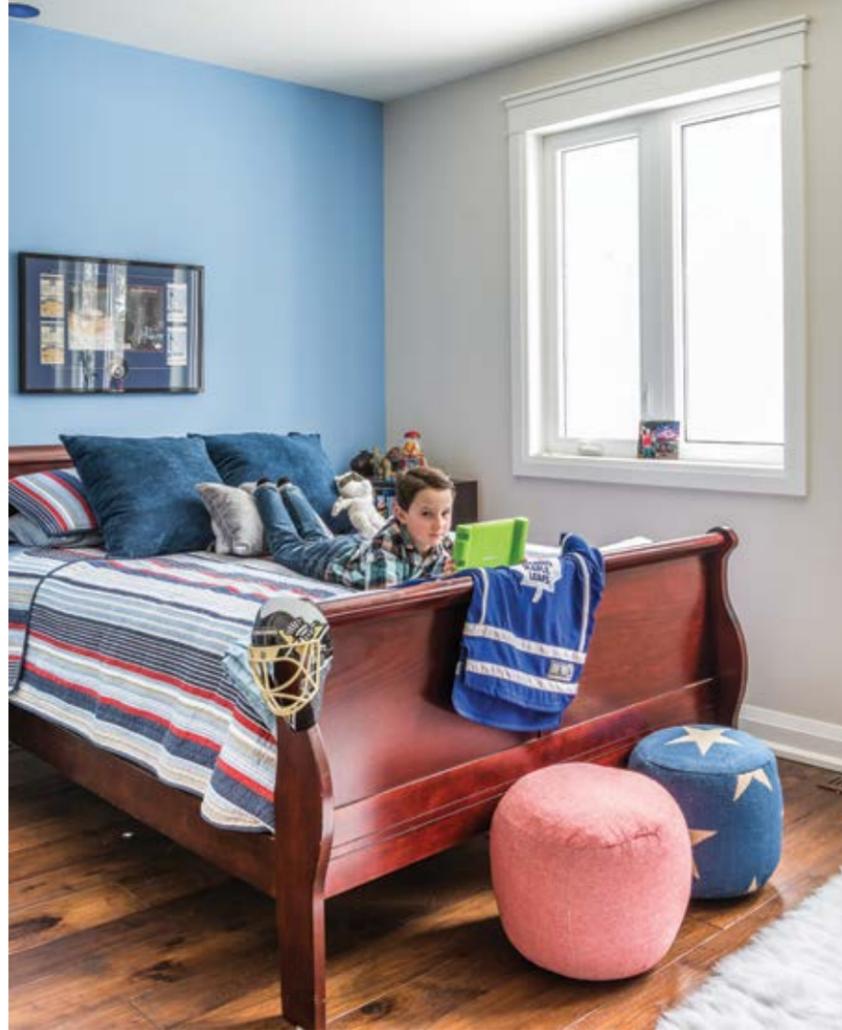
“I give them three or four options, then walk them through the different steps and break everything down for them.”

A basement showroom allows potential clients a chance to view and select the many finishes and decorative choices available to them.

“Our company builds a home that is representative of a customer’s dream. The goal is to make sure buyers get what they want.” **OH**

**LOCAL SOURCE GUIDE**

- Absolute Architecture & House Tech Design • Cabinet Dreams • Dwellings
- Rustic & Refined Living • Irvine Carpet One Floor & Home • Martin House Art Works • Raywal Cabinets
- Glass Lighting Gallery • Watson Group Custom Homes



The boys have their own space upstairs. Scott relaxes in his bedroom, surrounded by his favourite things.



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