

Living Beneath the Colorado Peaks: The Story of Knapp Ranch: A Vision of Architectural Design and Land Stewardship

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Todd Winslow Pierce, Photographer

The Knapp Press (Sep 11, 2018)

Hardcover \$70.00 (288pp)

978-1-4236-5096-6

Explore a one-of-a-kind mountain retreat in the wilderness of the Vail Valley through the lush images and thoughtful, thorough writing of *Living beneath the Colorado Peaks*.

Betsy and Bud Knapp, the former publishers of *Architectural Digest*, fell in love with the Vail Valley in 1990. When building their home there, they focused on green construction and sustainable methods. A place for gatherings, conservation, ecological and botanical research, and organic farming, their ranch seeks to leave the land in better shape than they found it.

The book's photographs, taken by Todd Winslow Pierce, capture mountainous land and the creatures that live in it; they are exquisite, making it clear why the Knapps were determined to build a house that looked like it belonged amid wild grandeur.

The landscape and wildlife are the first focus; then the lodge and its cabins receive attention. Each building is stylistically unique; each has its own imagined backstory. Additional archival photos are a nod to the history of white settlers coming to Ute Indian territory in the late nineteenth century. Designs by the architect, interior designer, and landscape architect for Knapp Ranch, all considering the rustic style of national parks buildings, round out the book's imagery.

The text includes perspectives from those involved in the construction of the ranch and in its operations. It is interesting as it relates the particular challenges of building, from issues of water rights to the seasonal changes implicit in living at an altitude of nine thousand feet. The Knapps added a lake and restored a creek to support a fishery, seeking okays from the Army Corps of Engineers. Everything on the Knapp ranch was designed to honor or restore the site's wildness while creating the illusion that the homes had been there all along.

Living beneath the Colorado Peaks is an inspirational project focused on conservation and rustic architecture, well worth imitating or living vicariously through.

MEREDITH GRAHL COUNTS (September/October 2018)

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