

# The Vanderbilts Would've Been *Proud* Of This *Flooring Art* and Craftsmanship

*Photography By* JASON HOUSTON

Lenox, nestled in the Berkshire Mountains of Massachusetts, once was the summer playground of America's wealthy, those who populated the Vanderbilt class. Now, a century after their heyday, many of those family summer homes are getting a new lease on life, and that includes their floors.

John Mullen is rare in that he is a true crafter in the art of wood floors. At the age of 34, he's at the top of that craft, an instructor no less, and he will receive "craftsman" status from the National Wood Flooring Association in the Spring.

The floor you see here is part of a restoration project by Dan Sartori Builders who called John in for his expertise in design and fabrication. John knew a basketweave design would be perfect, "jump out," in his words, in the main entry hallway of this "cottage." Using three strips of oak, 2 1/4 inch by 11 1/4 inches each, and 2 1/4-inch square of walnut, he fabricated this classic design. Because radiant heat is used throughout, he went with a "rift and quartered" oak, a method of cutting lumber to present the figure of the grain differently which also makes it stable with the heat beneath.

Off the main hall is a first floor room of what would be called the "turret" in a Victorian home design. There, John installed oak in a herringbone and hand-fabricated 17-layers of walnut into a laminated band which follows the arc of the rounded walls of the room.

The inset illustrates John's craftsmanship and how he made the transition to and from the hall, clearly marking the bounds but letting you know all the floors work together. John says all the wood was sourced from Hoboken Floors. They were first finished in a modified oil, and two months after all construction was completed, two coats of a water-based commercial grade finish, Traffic by BonaKemi, was applied. 🐾

