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Connecticut Cottages and Gardens

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HOME + ART

EXCLUSIVE LOOK:
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THE FALL
ART DIRECTORY

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Back Inn Style Once a jet-set refuge, the Silvermine Tavern fell on hard times until Glazer Group redeveloped the enclave with a stunning new inn (OPPOSITE PAGE) at its heart. A courtyard (THIS PAGE), with tables and chairs from Terrain, is one of the inn's many sybaritic spots for R&R. See *Resources*.

AS SEEN IN
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Andy Glazer and family usher in a new era at the GrayBarns on the Silvermine River



RENAISSANCE MAN

BY DIANE DI COSTANZO | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ELLEN MCDERMOTT

FROM GRISTMILLS TO HAT MAKERS, many of Connecticut's early factory sites have struggled to find a modern purpose. Georgetown's 19th-century wire mill, for instance, remains a compound of handsome but crumbling redbrick buildings; Bridgeport's Remington Arms factory was demolished. Happily, Silvermine, an enclave with sections that include Norwalk, New Canaan and Wilton, is adding an exciting new chapter to its story, thanks to the reimagining of what was once the Silvermine Tavern. And thanks, more specifically, to Glazer Group, the genius partnership behind the new GrayBarns on the Silvermine River, which includes a village comprised of four homes

(all sold) with an adjacent events barn, the GrayBarns Inn and Tavern, the soon-to-open Mercantile, a store and coffee bar and a spa. While expansive in its scope, the GrayBarns motto is a simple one: It looks to provide "a haven of refuge" for both busy New Yorkers seeking a relaxing weekend in the country, as well as an enriching environment for the local population.

To back up a few centuries, Silvermine actually started as humble stage-coach stop. Then came a series of mills, including a textile factory that was refashioned into the Silvermine Tavern. In the early 1900s, an artist's community added to the village's vitality—a legacy that lives on, thanks to the Silvermine Arts Center just down the road. During Prohibition, the property housed a speakeasy, evolving into a lively hot spot for the literati and film



THE LOBBY

(ABOVE) The main building was once a textile factory—and the lobby's wide-plank floors and rustic beams reflect that heritage. Today, designer Marsha Glazer's modern aesthetic prevails, conferred by furnishings she had custom-made such as the sconce by Pergola home, mixed with a pair of Dozy sofas from Soho Home, Tucker Robbins pedestal side table and basket pendant, and an RH rug made of braided jute. See *Resources*.

stars who would motor up from New York City on the weekends. As proof, the new GrayBarns Inn keeps under glass thank-you cards from the likes of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Miller and Lauren Bacall. Elizabeth Taylor and Eddie Fisher are said to have honeymooned at the inn; and the Kirk Douglas family was said to spend Christmases there. For generations, the Whitman family ran the place, hosting countless weddings and wakes, as well as lively jazz evenings and delicious brunches.

"Nearly everyone in the area has a story about the old Silvermine Tavern," notes Andy Glazer, principal of Glazer Group.

Then, during our most recent recession, came a fallow period for the entire complex. In 2015, Glazer Group purchased the property. And, in truth, it needed someone like the Glazers—including Andy's wife, designer Marsha Glazer—with their deep and varied experience reinvigorating historic commercial buildings, as well as building new homes, designing and operating restaurants, and more. Rowayton's circa-1846 Winthrop House—a once-shabby hotel, now a grand building housing several luxury residences—is one such Glazer Group project.

The motivation behind the GrayBarns project is more sweeping than just Silvermine. Because the classic American inn is "a dying breed," the Glazers

look forward to taking on additional inns in the Northeast that are in dire need of the same reinvigoration.

"If there's a theme to our work, it's saving what we can save, improving what we can improve," notes Andy. The family team—including daughter Nikki Glazer—also has the requisite patience and passion for revitalizing historic properties, with prep work that can be likened to an archeological dig. You use a spoon, not dynamite, to clear a site. And you'll never know what you'll find. So committed was the Glazer family to a sensitive approach in Silvermine, they bought, converted and moved into an antique mill building just a stone's throw from the inn. "We needed to live on site," says Andy, adding that they make dozens of decisions per day on what to do about an



Star Power Eddie Fisher and Elizabeth Taylor (ABOVE) are said to have honeymooned at the inn. Many celebrities have visited Silvermine for weekends in the country.

THE KITCHEN GARDEN

Marsha Glazer designed the kitchen garden, sited just steps from the new tavern, giving Executive Chef Ben Freemole easy access to fresh herbs and greens. The Townsend suite has French doors that open over the garden, infusing the rooms with fragrant (and sleep-inducing) lavender.



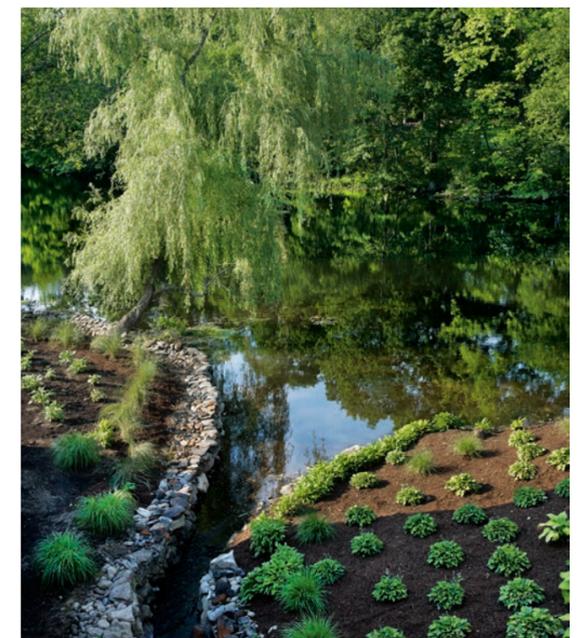
THE COURTYARD

Espaliered apple trees from Hardscrabble Farms soften the stone foundation in the courtyard. Oversized paving stones invite guests to wander from the inn's wide and welcoming front porch to the pond and riverbank behind the inn. Indeed the entire Silvermine experience is walkable—from the inn to the restaurant and even down the road to the Silvermine Arts Center. See *Resources*.



THE TERRACE & RIVERBANK

Adirondack chairs from Design Within Reach are a modern take on the American classic. Marsha Glazer designed the landscaping around the pond and riverbank to create a green and serene setting. See *Resources*.



First Impressions (THIS PAGE)
 The lobby welcomes guests with an eclectic tableau. The antique typewriter and luggage are from the Brimfield Antique Flea Markets; the table is from Lillian August; the stack of sea-grass brushes is from HomeStories; the hat is from Bloom in Sag Harbor. See Resources.



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**THE
 HUTCHENS
 ROOM**

This second-floor suite opens onto a private porch (RIGHT) with a table and chairs from Terrain and views across the river. The custom, king-sized bed (ABOVE) features a gray-board knee wall and an Italian nubuck leather headboard, plus Frette bed linens and a throw from Soho Home. The round, bedside pedestal table is through Tucker Robbins. See Resources.





THE ADDISON ROOM

This suite opens onto a sunken living room (OPPOSITE PAGE) lit by a Bleu Nature Triton chandelier. A Tucker Robbins side table is set between two Cisco Home swivel chairs. The antique tools were found on the property. Ashley Norton door hardware (FAR LEFT) is through Klaffs. In the bathroom (NEAR LEFT), the pendants are from Tucker Robbins; the towel bar is Soho Home; Rohl faucet is through Klaffs. The walnut four-poster bed (ABOVE) and side tables are custom. See Resources.



THE WEBSTER ROOM

This expansive, first-floor suite offers guests a custom king-size four-poster bed (OPPOSITE PAGE) that is as comfortable as it is stylish—the Hudson Swing Arm sconces are through Klaffs; the bedside tables are custom. The Cobble Hill Hampton sofa (ABOVE LEFT) is through ABC Carpet & Home; the braided-wool rug is from RH; the burlap and steel Ozark sconce is through Pergola Home. A rotary phone (ABOVE RIGHT) sits atop a custom side table. A Peter Margonelli landscape photograph (BELOW LEFT) is complemented by a table crafted from antique pedestals through R.T. Facts. A Victoria + Albert York soaking tub is fitted with Rohl bath fixtures from Klaffs; handmade tile is through D&D Homes. See Resources.



oddly placed supporting beam here and bowed-but-charming wall there.

Today, the newly opened GrayBarns Inn and Tavern stand as testimony to the Glazers' labor of love. The inn now has six soothing and spacious king-sized suites—down from the original 14 guest rooms—each one featuring luxe lounge spaces and a curated collection of furnishings and fixtures in high-end and high-touch materials, from the velver-upholstered sofas to the salvaged barnwood cabinetry, much of which was designed and built by the Glazers and their team. Similarly, the tavern's dining room once sat 250. It now seats 100. Together with architect Ed Clemente, the Glazers adapted the layout to “serve today's needs as opposed those of the past,” Andy says, even if that means serving fewer diners—or constructing custom furniture to fulfill their vision.

“Our punchline is, ‘oh, we’ll just make it ourselves,’” says Andy of their tendency to dream up the perfect piece, find it doesn't actually exist, and

end up fabricating it on site. Local artisans were tapped for other amenities, including lighting designer Patty Moore, who created many of the custom fixtures throughout.

Marsha also had a hand in designing the gardens, including a kitchen garden, and the interiors of the tavern, which harvests the garden's bounty. James Gersten of Silver Street Hospitality and Executive Chef Ben Fremole helped create the tavern concept and have crafted a seasonal menu of elegant comfort food featuring locally sourced ingredients. The inn had a soft opening over the summer, with a full opening slated for early September.

As they put the finishing touches on the property, the Glazers are sanguine about the time and resources they've lavished on every square inch of the GrayBarns compound—the painstaking planning, the restoration of floorboards and ceiling beams, the hunt for artisan-made amenities. “In truth,” says Andy, “we don't know how to do it any other way.” 🌟