

Alex Riley Associates has designed more than 250 residential and commercial projects on some of the most beautiful, diverse and challenging sites in America: the Napa Valley, Lopez Island, Sedona, Tucson, the Berkeley and Oakland Hills, and Stinson Beach, to name a few.

Born in rural Oregon, Alex Riley, principal, was educated at the University of Oregon during a period of American design characterized by maverick creativity and the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright's organic architecture movement. Riley's early career was inspired by Arts and Craft style, but by experimenting with new materials, harmonizing structures with natural light and their unique topographical sites, and incorporating a heightened sensuality into the architectural process Riley's design style became his own. After several years with Callister and Payne of Tiburon, he formed Alex Riley Associates of Inverness, California and eventually opened a second office in the Napa Valley. His associate, Onju Updegrave, has a Masters in Architecture from the University of California at Berkeley, has designed and built in Asia as well as the United States, and has extensive experience in both residential as well as commercial design and refurbishment. Alex Riley is also associated with Tonkin/Hoyne/Lokan, Architecture and Urban Design of Seattle.

Riley has left an indelible mark on the architectural landscape of West Marin in particular, characterized by stunning, holistic forms that echo the natural curves of rolling hills of Bay laurel, the cathedral-like verticality of the forest, and the soaring expanse of the Pacific coastline. His mastery of diverse materials—from old-growth redwood to abode to gunnite—and his genre versatility—from earth sheltered construction to steel and recycled heavy timber construction—enhances the visual and textual variety of his structures. His commitment to fine details, exposed structure and scrupulously appropriate scale, and to the priority of natural light, further distinguishes him in a field increasingly dominated by ostentatiousness and the whims of fashion.

To truly appreciate an Alex Riley house, you have to enter it. Surrounded by an inexpressible sense of harmony and well-being, bathed in warm, genial light, you inhabit a structure that provides profound physical comfort and spiritual inspiration at the same time. Most of his houses are inherently passive solar, designed in relation to southern exposure, and more often than not, comprising substantial interior mass encouraging energy conservation and pleasant ambient temperatures year round. As visually stunning as his designs may be—from wooded cliffs overlooking the sea, to the painted Arizona desert, to the undulating vineyards of the Napa Valley—Riley never forgets that the body, the environment and the human soul are his true clients.