

H E N D E R S O N V I L L E , N C



A SIMPLE, ELEGANT HOME

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Architect

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Contractor

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Interior Designer

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Text

The owners of this simple, elegant home in the mountains of North Carolina are “enthusiastic” golfers. Five years ago they moved into their new home, having lived in the Washington, D.C. area for several years. Their D.C. home was modern, “with lots of glass, white, and cathedral ceilings,” they said. But this home is not at all like that. “We wanted a smaller, intimate, cozy home with a casual elegance to it,” the wife said. “We preferred to build in a small, private golfing community in the mountains. After looking at locations that fit that description, we ended up with our comfortable new home overlooking the 14th fairway and green on a Tom Fazio-designed course in Hendersonville, N.C. We couldn’t be happier.”

With three levels of covered, heated living

area totaling 4,035 square feet, the owners feel that each floor is, indeed, cozy and elegantly designed and furnished. To enhance the French-inspired architecture, a 529-square-foot covered porch/outdoor living area that views the 14th green, a 627-square-foot garage and storage area, and a small 189-square-foot covered deck were included. Additionally, an upper-level open deck outside the husband’s office is 185 square feet, and a generous slate terrace (458 square feet) allows unhindered views from the main level. Tucked on the lower level is a 196-square-foot storage area.

“When we visited this golf course community,” the wife described, “we were given a complimentary round on the outstanding course. At the third hole, I saw a house that I loved. I now know the owners, but at the



Appropriate materials and color selections contributed to the mood of a country French residence. Designer and architect worked together with the client on all aspects of materials selections.



Elegant, inviting, with interior and exterior connected, the porch and terrace serve as additional living and dining space.

time, we inquired about the architect of that house. Even though we interviewed five architects before building, we knew that the one who designed that house would be our chosen one. Architect Al Platt has done an outstanding job designing the house that we asked for and described. He heard our ideas and made them even better.”

Even the builder complimented the architect’s drawings: “I was handed one of the best architectural drawings that I’ve

ever worked with,” said contractor Ken Wilkie. “That was a pleasure. Al included lots of special touches. Luckily I had good people to do those things.”

Wilkie has had his business in Hendersonville for 35 years. Some of his business associates had worked with Platt and they had said good things, Wilkie added. “I wanted to work for him, too, so when I became the builder of the project, I was pleased.”

The project took about 12 months, Wilkie

reported. The most challenging aspect was the round turret and the stairway inside it. The roof, too, demanded expertise . . . slate tiles had to incorporate both the round turret and the pitched roof. Copper gutters were installed throughout.

“I stay on the site pretty much all the time during a project,” Wilkie said. “I focused on this job for 12 months.”

Both the contractor and the architect



The flow of space results in a dining room and kitchen utilized to the fullest. The open plan with only one dining space presented certain challenges, but appropriate materials and finish selections maintain continuity from room to room. The rug from Gabriel-Menefee coordinates with others in the home.

mentioned that the site itself presented challenges, but the architect arranged it “just right,” Wilkie said. “It sure made my job easier. This was a perfect site plan.”

The house sits on a knoll surrounded by trees. The street is at roof level. Therefore, the approach to the house is down a driveway that curls and ends at the flat area where the house sits. By the time one gets out of the car, you’re already embraced by the house and front entry.

“The character of a house comes from the directions of the owner. In this case, for example, the tower element came from them,” the architect explained. “I take the parts that are handed to me – their ideas, the site, location of access, sun orientation, lay of the land – and I put them together.”

This particular house organizes itself around the knoll on which it sits. The crooks and twists of the house are designed to keep it on buildable land, according to Platt.

The angular sections weren’t requested by the owners, but were incorporated to accommodate the site.

One important element, however, involved the golf course. “There was a clear effort to view the golf course,” Platt said. “The living room and dining room face that way.” The large covered porch/living space does, too, as it is accessed through French doors from the dining room.

The architect agrees with the owners that



Glazed walls further soften the glowing country French mood. With much consultation from the designer, the custom chandelier was made by a local craftsman. The small buffet is a custom piece from Guy Chaddock.

this isn't a very big house compared to many in the Champion Hills golf community where the owners live. However, the owners followed through on their priorities: they wanted a compact, cozy, elegant home with very little extra space. While there were European elements included in the owners' ideas, Platt said he takes European style for inspiration, but then "I try to make it fit the mountains." He let the house echo how things were built elsewhere, but made it simpler for this location.

There is a European-inspired turret, though it is understated, Platt described. The roof pitch, too, is understated. Those elements are seen immediately upon approaching the house, but they are deliberately low-key.

Because the house sits below the roadway, the roof is a major element one sees upon approaching. It had to be done creatively, beautifully, and with skill. The Vermont slate roof, with its natural hues and earth tones, enhances the quality and details

of the house, and that's exactly what the owners, Platt, and the roofer, Lee Forbes, wanted.

"The Vermont quarried slate we chose will modify over time to a nice blend of earth tones in shades of gray and brown," Forbes described. "I spent time talking to the owners . . . they preferred slate as the medium. Once we knew the material we were working with, I laid out a pattern for the roof and my crew proceeded with



A comfortable conversation area has the limestone fireplace as the focal point. Natural light is reflected in an oversized antique French mirror the designer found at a local antique shop.

the job. We installed a roof system, which included copper gutters and flashing, and we constructed the copper finial cap on the turret as well. For the turret, every piece of slate had to be custom cut. We cut the slate the same way they did 200 years ago." In fact, H.L. Forbes and Co. is perhaps known for its restoration work as much as for its new homes. Forbes refurbished the roof at the Biltmore House in nearby Asheville, as well as the expansive tile domes

of two historic churches -- First Baptist Church and the Basilica of St. Lawrence -- both in downtown Asheville. The WNC Department of Archives and History has the company on a short list of recommended historic restoration specialists. In addition to installing or restoring tile, slate, and some steel roofs, they do terne coating and copper roofs, caps, guttering, and custom items in copper.

"I've worked with Al for nearly 20 years," Forbes said. "Nevertheless, incorporating

a turret such as the one at this house is still a challenge. Our work, as always, was to design and install a roof system that works for the lifetime of the house."

Platt involved interior designer Kathryn Long early on. "We worked together to display the owners' lifestyle, favorite furnishings, and such," he said. "I pay attention to how architecture supports the goal of the interiors and help the exteriors also complement that.

"It's all about life and living," Platt continued, "and the building should do what it needs to do and then get out of the way. I hope my design helps the folks who live in this house feel comfortable when they walk in the front door or to get pleasure when they walk into the dining room."

Designer Long and the owners learned quickly that they had something in common: a love of France. The owners had spent their honeymoon in Provence, and their fond memories of that experience influenced the choices they made for this new home. Luckily, Long enjoys "anything French." The ultimate goal of their collaboration was to create simplicity and openness in the floor plan -- with no unused spaces. The owners wanted a mood of liveable elegance, according to Long. For example, breakfast is taken in the dining room, so that room was furnished to be comfortable for both small and large dining. Also, the owners wanted one paint color throughout the house. Using furnishings, rugs, and fabrics created the patterns, textures, and colors.

"To set the foundation of those things, I suggested that the choice of the living room rug provide that underpinning," Long said. "That choice would firmly establish the color scheme and mood for the entire house. Then, the dining room rug, the second largest and most visually significant item, was chosen to relate to the living room rug."

A magnificent 11'X15' Mahindra rug in a Herat design was chosen for the living room, and a 9'3"x12'4" Mahindra rug in a ushak/borlu design was chosen for the dining room. Both are products of Black Mountain Looms in India, hand-woven of native hand-spun wool using local, natural dyes created in the historic technique. Natural dyestuffs indigenous to India were used: ground madder and indigo plants for reds and blues, with other colors coming from

pomegranate rind, milobelar fruits, henna, and kutta nuts.

Long called in Michael Gabriel, with Gabriel Menefee & Associates in Charlotte, to help with the rugs.

"These types of rugs are more of an art form rather than 'manufactured,'" Gabriel reported. "There is a difference in every single rug, and because of the dyeing process there is much more variable color. 'Abrash' is the term used to describe the variations in color. That's what was prized in the old rugs made before chromium dyes made coloring more controlled and predictable. The natural dyes continue to change over time, often becoming softer and more beautiful."

A French influence is shown in the coffered ceilings of the living room, dining room, and master bedroom, as well as the use of toile de jouy fabric in the master bedroom for window coverings, padded headboard, and duvet.

French doors are used in surprising places, allowing the house to be filled with light through each room. Not only do French doors provide access to various porches and decks, but they're also placed between the hall and the husband's study, between the master dressing area and the master bath, and between the master bath and the toilet. Discreet semi-sheer linen fabric, gathered in the French manner, allows such uses.

Lighting design is another successful element that Long contributed to the home. Working with the architect on the entire lighting plan, Long focused on using wrought iron sconces in several locations. The chandelier over the dining room table (a "French Draw" reproduction by Milling Road) was handmade. A large French trumeau Louis XV mirror that Long found at a local antique store is leaned against the wall in



the living room to reflect light from the large windows. Even on a cloudy day there is a soft brilliance to the room.

While the wife said she loves every aspect of the home, she speaks affectionately of the kitchen. The butternut colored cabinets are glazed and finished to a soft, practical glow.



The designer suggested beginning the living room design with the hand-made "Mahindra" carpet from India. The patterns of fabric are subtly layered for interest. All furnishings were selected to relate to the architecture.

Manufactured by Cabinets by Nichols, the cabinets were installed by Will Dinkins, who said those are one of the finest suppliers of cabinets that Nova Kitchens carries. Dinkins

is a cabinetmaker with Nova Kitchens, which is in nearby Arden, N.C.

"This was the largest project we had done with Platt at the time," Dinkins reported.

"I appreciated the overall design that the architect did, even with the site placement. The decorator was excellent to work with, and the owners were also a joy. It was a



Deceiving in its simplicity, the three different types of window and door openings created challenges in designing window treatments. The custom designed upholstered headboard is slip covered: the toile unifies the space.

joint effort by all with good results.”

Sahara beige granite was used for the kitchen countertop. A lighted, custom, beveled-glass-front china cabinet fitted into a niche in the kitchen shows off beautifully anything inside. The Thermador ovens and the Viking range round out the practical-sized angular 230-square-foot kitchen. The 4-1/4' x 10' island shows off Dinkins's handiwork and provides a central workstation and bar. A laundry room and walk-in pantry

are nearby.

Dinkins's craftsmanship is shown in the cabinetry and marble work throughout the house, including the cabinets for the wife's study just off the kitchen, in the library at the top of the stairs, in the bathrooms and powder rooms, in the husband's office, in the kitchenette, and in the laundry room on the lower level. Cultured marble vanity tops with matte finish were used in the powder rooms.

Perched at the top of the stairs in the turret is a small well-designed library complete with narrow peek-a-boo windows that allow light in and also provide snippet views of the entryway, landscaping, and roadway from an exalted level. One feels like a child in a treetop looking down on the world below. The trompe l'oeil sky painted on the ceiling continues the romantic fantasy that this location creates.

Surprise encounters with hand-painted



The snug area in the turret at the top of the stairs has been turned into a small reading room with a lovely sky painted on the ceiling.

Clearfield, born in England, paints fine art in oils. Her pieces are exhibited at a local gallery as well as at the studio/gallery in her home outside Asheville. She describes

her style as "magical realism." She believes that's why Long brought her to this project. Long has known Clearfield as an artist for several years and knew her style. When the

idea of having wall paintings at this home was developed, she was brought in to help create the right mood. For example, after talking to the owners,