



Opposite top: The great room's fireplace was built of stone from a local quarry and fitted with a rough-hewn mantel. Opposite bottom: Bullion fringe reflects the home's "mountain Victorian" theme. This page: Decorative painter Lyna Farkas gave the walls an aged finish.

A *Sylvan* SANCTUARY

Amid the heart of North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains lie picturesque Lake Toxaway and its close-knit community of homeowners. One family relied on a prominent Asheville designer to help them create a stunning second residence.

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Although Kathryn Long, of Ambiance Interiors, has been designing exquisite spaces for more than three decades, her initial, natural affinity for the profession revealed itself at a very young age. When she was 4, a Christmas Day fire destroyed her home, and the only thing the firemen were able to salvage was her bag of building blocks. After the family moved to her grandfather's rambling farmhouse, she continually refigured those blocks into dwellings for her china dolls.

Kathryn's mother soon noticed her daughter was also drawing house plans on the backs of church bulletins and promptly bought the budding artist a ream of paper so she could scribble to her heart's content. Throughout her childhood, the young girl accompanied her mother





to estate auctions all over Asheville, North Carolina. “We would roam through beautiful old houses filled with beautiful old things,” Kathryn recalls. “I was able to hone my interior-design skills before I even knew it was a profession.”

After college, she traveled in Europe for a year and later lived in France, feeding her appetite for art history and witnessing firsthand the marvels she had seen only in textbooks. As a self-professed Francophile, the interior designer naturally gravitates toward the charming, eclectic mix that infuses character into French abodes. Her ability to effortlessly blend styles and incorporate both high-end furnishings and found treasures has earned her a loyal clientele and much respect within the industry.

When a Texas-based couple decided to build a vacation retreat at Lake Toxaway, Kathryn helped them

Opposite: Red-plaid fabric lends a casual touch to formal window treatments, while chair ties add Victorian detail. The circa-1910 art nouveau light fixture features a painted landscape. Above: A conversation area in the great room affords magnificent views of Lake Toxaway.





every step of the way. The partnership was so successful that when they opted to downsize, she steered the team to design their *second* second home. Working with the preeminent firm Platt Architecture, in nearby Brevard, they made a number of custom alterations to the original plan to create a rustic yet refined residence. Many of the Victorian furnishings selected for the couple's previous house were reused here for a style that Kathryn dubbed "mountain Victorian."

"I remembered that George Vanderbilt had a hunting lodge [on Mount Pisgah, near Asheville], called Buck Spring Lodge," says Kathryn, "so I contacted the Biltmore House

Top left: The master suite's bed was made from an old French gate and a custom-constructed corolla. An Italian Savonarola chair sits at the foot. Below right: In one corner of the room, a chaise longue anchors a cozy reading nook. Opposite: The airy, sun-washed master bath boasts a custom-painted tub.





Opposite top, left and right: Tucked beneath the eaves, an upstairs bedroom and an adjoining bath offer a quiet retreat. Opposite, bottom left, and this page: The porch furniture has been exposed to the elements, giving it a weathered appearance.



"There are times when we stop, we sit still. We listen and breezes from a whole other world begin to whisper."

—JAMES CARROLL

historical department, and they sent over photographs for us to use as inspiration." The dark English woods and abundance of trims that are synonymous with Victorian-era décor work just as perfectly in this modern-day sanctuary.

"My ultimate goal is for the clients to be extremely happy and almost forget about my involvement," says Kathryn. "I want them to feel like it is totally their home and to not recall whether their favorite ideas were mine or their own."