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## Country Elegance

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AT HOME

# Country Elegance

BY  
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Set in an Albemarle County valley, the board siding and field stone chimneys of this home call to mind structures that have weathered the elements for generations, drawing on the architecture of the Virginia countryside, although its antecedents are working buildings rather than grand homes. Yet the rustic exterior only hints at the elegant and finely crafted forms into which wood and stone are transformed inside.

Taking full advantage of its setting, the house is open to the outside; visually, as the view to the lake through the arched windows of the great room suggests, but physically as well. Among the owners' requests during the design process was that as many rooms as possible have direct access to the outdoors. That desire encompassed the guest suite as well, which has its own front door. That's meant as a gesture of friendship; sometimes the best way to make visitors feel









The gallery functions as far more than a hallway; it becomes a place where guests gather and linger when the family entertains. The space was designed as a working gallery, its niches and surfaces created to make a home for the family's collections.



The family's feline companion makes itself at home. The great room is truly a room to live in, with multiple seating areas, a zone for dining, and a connection, through the breakfast area, to the kitchen.



Set in an Albemarle County valley, the board siding and fieldstone chimneys of this new home call to mind structures that have weathered the elements for generations. Yet the rustic exterior only hints at the elegant and finely crafted forms into which wood and stone are transformed inside.







Above, and right: "His and Hers" bathrooms. Like the rest of the home, the upstairs offers a further retreat, into an additional bed and bath, and then the master suite. The home's private spaces make their own connections to the outdoors, too. A porch opening from the master bedroom looks towards the lake. One of the bathrooms has a view to the garden. Large windows frame the scenery, and catch the prevailing breezes through the valley.





welcome is to make it easy for them to come and go on their own. The guest bath was designed as a second master bath, both for the comfort of visitors, and to leave open the option of one-level living some day.

Space flows within the house, too. The great room is truly a room to live in, with multiple seating areas, a zone for dining, and a connection, through a breakfast area, to the kitchen. The home's main entry, which opens into one end of the gallery, offers a path to the kitchen in one direction, and a route towards the great room in the other. But the owners note that the gallery functions as far more than a hallway; it becomes, for example, a place where guests gather and linger when the couple entertains. That space was also designed, of course, as a working gallery, its niches and surfaces created to make a home for their collections.

The open, more public spaces of the home, the gallery and the great room, are bracketed by more private ones; the guest suite and the wife's study to one side; to the other, the kitchen, laundry, and access to the building's second story. Upstairs offers a further retreat, into an additional bed and bath, and then the master suite. The home's private spaces make their own connections to the outdoors, too. A porch opening from the master bedroom looks towards the lake, and the master bathroom has a view to the garden. Large windows frame the scenery, and catch the prevailing breezes through the valley.

Wood and stone predominate inside as out, but the home's interior shows just how thoroughly the craftsman's hand can refine and transform those rough materials. Built by Shelter Associates and designed for the owners by Shelter architect Bruce Gordon, finely worked wood becomes wainscoting and frames an abundance of storage in the master and guest baths; it outfits a kitchen with cabinetry styled as furniture. And there's more treasure hidden in the intricate puzzle of the home's stone walls and chimneys. Among the wife's inheritance from her rock hound mother were hundreds of geodes, still in the round. Unopened, these nondescript spheres of stone give few clues to the crystal formations sheltered inside. As their home was being built, the owners passed the geodes on to the masons, for them to open and incorporate in the walls they made. Those sparkles in the stonework offer a perfect example of this home's elegant blend of personal treasures, natural materials and fine craftsmanship. *a*

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