

Timber Home Living

15 SECRETS

OF GREAT DESIGN

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A Stroke of Luck

A Georgia couple builds their dream home
a few years earlier than expected.

BY STACY DURR ALBERT
PHOTOS COURTESY OF MODERN RUSTIC HOMES

A rustic Craftsman look that incorporates a mix of materials defines the exterior of the Smiths' home, helping to create the Belgian farmhouse style that the owner craved. The home's square footage totals around 3,000 square feet — it didn't start out that way, but was expanded to accommodate a home office area.







SOMETIMES THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE happen when you least expect them — just ask Chris and Scott Smith of Marietta, Georgia, who never imagined that a big life change would arrive in the form of a simple advertising postcard.

“We were thinking about eventually planning a retirement home, but we hadn’t even starting looking at land yet when we got a postcard announcing a foreclosure sale,” shares Chris. “We instantly fell for our valley lot with a stream in the backyard and a 360-degree view of the beautiful surrounding mountains.”

Nestled in the foothills of the North Georgia Mountains, the two-acre lot offers unparalleled views of nature and a

sense of absolute tranquility. The couple decided to purchase the site right away, plus two more acres across the street so they could enjoy an open view of the mountains, which are part of the famous Blue Ridge.

After buying the property, the Smiths decided to forge ahead early with plans for a dream home. “I pored over magazines and websites to refine the look I wanted, and found that I was drawn to the Belgian Farmhouse style,” shares Chris. “A timber-frame structure would be the perfect backdrop for combining the rustic, traditional and sometimes modern elements that I loved.”

A few months later, the couple attended a log home show and found their architect: Michael Grant, from

OPPOSITE & ABOVE: The arched collar ties in the living room mimic the radius in the windows. “The soaring ceiling, as well as the dry-stacked stone fireplace give the room an expansive presence, but it is so well-proportioned that it feels ‘right’ whether there are 30 people over for a party, or just the two of us,” says Chris.

Modern Rustic Homes, a design/build firm in nearby Ellijay. “Remarkably, Michael translated our first conversation into a drawing we worked with for the rest of the design process,” says Chris.

Though the Smiths originally set out to build a weekend retreat since they still had ties to Atlanta, the criteria soon shifted. “As ideas grew and inspiration kicked in, they wanted a retreat



that would also be suitable as a retirement home when the timing was right,” explains Grant. “I developed a floor plan to provide for one-level living with a guest suite upstairs, and planned the design around their requests for an open plan that would allow for entertaining and casual living.”

The resulting 3,000-square-foot design incorporates varying ceiling heights and beam configurations to help define rooms (in lieu of walls), as well as sight lines that pull your eye toward different focal points all around the property. “Visual access from inside to outside was carefully planned by having windows and doors aligned with interior door openings and hallways,” says Grant. “This arrangement captures the view of the trout stream, mountains and meadows surrounding the house.”

The stunning white pine timber frame was also planned carefully. “The client wanted ‘Timber-Frame Lite,’ the look and feel of a timber-frame home, but not a true timber-frame structure,”

explains Grant. “Our solution was a hybrid of conventional construction methods combined with timber-frame elements to create the look.”

The construction process, led by general contractor Joe Dixon, was incredibly smooth, thanks in part to the site itself. “As build sites go, this was a dream lot, with no steep grades, oversized trees or difficulty getting to the property,” shares Grant. “The property is nestled in a valley — I jokingly told the owners they had the only flat lot in North Georgia. We didn’t have the challenges of building on the side of a mountain.”

Once guests walk through the front door, they are instantly wowed. “Having lived with a small dark entrance foyer in our Cape Cod-style home, I wanted to let light flood in this home and really set the stage for a ‘you’ve arrived’ experience,” explains Chris. “When you step in, the foyer area soars two stories, and you see straight through to the fireplace porch and beyond.”

The lines between indoors and out are easily blurred, especially in one of the owners’ favorite areas, the living porch. “It’s one room I can’t imagine living without,” reveals Chris. “We open the sliders for large parties, and with a roaring fire in the fireplace, it’s comfortable all year long.”

In fact, the porch — and the rest of the home — is so comfortable, that it seems to attract more than just human visitors; dragonflies showed up regularly during construction, leading the homeowners to dub their home “Dragonfly Lodge.” Michael saved one of the dragonflies he found, framed it, and presented it to the Smiths when their house was complete.

“Dragonflies symbolize good luck, happiness and also change that leads to a deeper understanding of the meaning of life,” shares Chris. “It turned out to be the perfect name for our home.”

Just like that unexpected postcard, the dragonflies seem to be a sure sign of good fortune and blessings to come. ■



OPPOSITE: Since the homeowner is a huge fan of clean and simple finishes, she opted for crisp white cabinets in the kitchen. The espresso-hued wood on the island provides a great contrast. Quartz countertops sound a note of luxury.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: The focal point of the master bath is the pedestal tub set into a bump-out with a frosted glass pattern. ■ Like all of the first-floor bedrooms, the master opens up onto a covered porch that looks over the bend in the trout stream as well as the mountains in the distance. ■ Built-in bookshelves and personal touches for guests transform the upstairs loft hallway area into an inviting retreat. ■ A flat, lower ceiling in the dining area helps define the space and keep it separate from the open living room beside it. ■ “We wanted to position the house to provide a gracious entrance, minimum steps into the house and to take advantage of the mountain and trout stream view,” says Grant.

At a quick glance, the outdoor "living porch" looks like an indoor living room, thanks to its fine appointment of furnishings and textures, plus a traditional stacked-stone fireplace. Designed to have access from the entry hall and the great room, the porch easily becomes an extension of the living room when entertaining. "It's the one room I can't live without," confesses Chris.

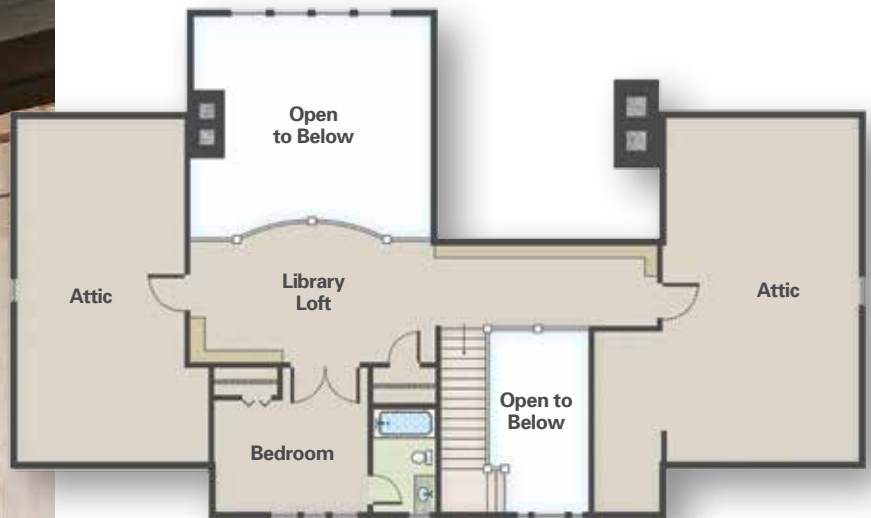




home details

SQUARE FOOTAGE : 3,000

DESIGNER; TIMBER PROVIDER: Modern Rustic Homes,
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UPPER LEVEL



MAIN LEVEL