

Custom Craftsman meets community development in Black Mountain

By Jessica Beil Hindman, Correspondent

In the Village of Cheshire in Black Mountain, Chips Cottage has a delightful, unassuming presence on a south-facing slope overlooking the Blue Ridge Mountains. Few would utter the phrase “spec house” – one constructed without a buyer – in reference to a house as charming as this.

But architect Thomas Lawton and developer Charles Sparks of the Black Mountain Bungalow Co. aim to recapture the charm and warmth of the American Craftsman while satisfying the needs of modern life – and it appears to be a resounding success. One Home of the Month selection panelist commented, “You can smell the apple pie.”

A Traditional Neighborhood Development designed by Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co., the Cheshire neighborhood is both fresh and nostalgic, with shops, restaurants, offices, townhomes, custom homes and “tree houses,” all walkable and seamlessly connected by parks, streams, walking trails and tree-lined streets. The Chips Cottage is perfectly suited, with welcoming porches framing stunning mountain views and generous interior spaces with an abundance of natural light.

Sparks was intrigued by the American Arts and Crafts movement, and both men respected the enduring principles of the Craftsman bungalow and wondered how they might be best applied to new development. In the 1901 magazine *The Craftsman* architect Gustav Stickley promoted the principals that a home must be designed and constructed in harmony with the landscape and use local materials; interiors must be open for family interaction, of pleasing form, functional with built-in bookcases, benches, etc. And with a coherence of design elements from space planning to details; and there should be an abundance of natural light.

Sparks noted that this language of design is “homey with a family warmth.” Both Sparks and Lawton enjoyed an article from *The Craftsman* titled “Chips From the Workshop.” And thus the Chips Cottage was born.

Lawton Does not subscribe to a specific style of architecture; rather, he believes in “sensible design,” noting that simplicity and pleasing aesthetic quality are accomplished only through a very complicated design process.

Sparks recognized that thoughtful design separates an average spec house from a signature home but that the developer must be cost-conscious.

Rather than provide a little bit of everything on a budget for a generic user, Lawton and Sparks imagine a real client, making value-oriented design decisions to create a sense of home.

The mountain setting generated the story of the Chips Cottage client. The ground slopes a full story from front to back, offering accessibility on two levels, perfect for a multigenerational family. The ground level has a generous in-law suite that fosters a sense of freedom and mobility. Upstairs, children's bedrooms are built into the roof eaves and future the "cave," a nook set up as a stage to foster creativity.



Thomas Lawton Architect

Awarded 2008 Home of the Month

By NC State University's College of Design

Partnered with *The News and Observer*

SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 2008

Try This: Organic concentrate
helps clean without residues
Summers, Page 3E
Comics 8E
Movie listings 7E
Puzzles 7E
Television 4E
www.newsobserver.com/home

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ E

Home&Garden

Dollar store gourmets: Submit
your dollar-stretching recipes to
sue.stock@newsobserver.com.
For more details, go to
newsobserver.com/lifestyles.

home of
the month

April's profile of a well-designed living space

Take a look at a photo gallery at www.newsobserver.com, search **home&garden**.

The main level is a prototype: Its thoughtful design provides all living spaces and a master suite, and it is adaptable to suit another client or another site.

Its relationship to the outdoors embodies both Craftsman and traditional Southern principals. A generous front porch – the “other family room” – faces the street, and a rear screened porch and patio embrace a cozy back courtyard. Carefully planned and beautifully executed, the site design roots the house to the mountain with stacked stone retaining walls, natural stone stairs and subtle landscaping, while mediating the dramatic slope and front porch height to invite visitors.

Spaces in the home are generous yet intimate, with an abundance of natural light from multiple directions in every room. They graciously open up to and interact with one another. Proportions are repeated for coherence and a sense of rhythm throughout the house in room sizes, windows, façade elements and details. Gently tapered exposed rafter tails peek out under roof overhangs. On the porch, custom cutouts transform standard 2 by 4s to a delightful border.

Transoms over interior doorways mirror transom windows. Well-proportioned board-and-batten wainscoting creates a sense of movement up the stairs. Built-in bookcases, benches and window seats enhance both intimacy and function. Lighting and hardware are carefully integrated into each space. Lawton describes the critical detailing as “touches that are thoughtful but not mass-produced.” All of this comes together to create a home with a decidedly custom feel.

