



Below: The sunlit library, with its original stone fireplace and paneling, is Kathryn Greeley's retreat. "To be surrounded by my many books," she says, "is pure bliss." Left: Framed menus evoke reminiscences of world travels.

The Storybook Charm of CHESTNUT COTTAGE

Nestled in the Great Smoky Mountains, a modest cedar shake cabin blossoms in the hands of a gifted designer who looked past its unkempt condition to see the makings of a splendid English rose.

TEXT MELISSA LESTER PHOTOGRAPHY EMILY FOLLOWILL



On a west-facing, wooded slope in Waynesville, North Carolina, a pair of towering oaks guides visitors to the home of interior decorator and author Kathryn Greeley. Neatly manicured boxwood hedges, espaliered fruit trees, topiaries, and rose bushes give a formal look to the front lawn, while stone walkways meandering the back gardens invite relaxation among deep perennial borders brimming with late-blooming dahlias, a bounty of hydrangeas, and many other old-fashioned flowers. At the heart of this verdant oasis is Chestnut Cottage, an abode worthy of its idyllic setting.

Kathryn discovered the property while single, and it was love at first sight. “The little cottage seemed to have a soul; I felt it as soon as I crossed the threshold,” she says. “I instantly had a vision of a pretty English cottage surrounded by English cottage gardens.” With walls turned dark and dingy by years of neglect and alpine views obscured by heavy velvet drapes, the 945-square-foot dwelling had languished on the real estate market until the designer stepped inside. “I adored everything about it—the warmth of the wood, all the nooks and

In her book, The Collected Tabletop: Inspirations for Creative Entertaining, Kathryn writes that her greatest pleasure is hosting memorable occasions at Chestnut Cottage. Opposite: With a fire kindled in the hearth and plenty of fresh-cut bouquets, this welcoming space lives up to its calling as a gathering room.





"I often say that my retirement account is in blue and white," says Kathryn, who began collecting flow blue, transferware, and Chinese export porcelain during college. The decades since have deepened her affinity not only for delicate treasures, but also for the classic color pairing, which figures prominently in her home.



crannies," she adds, "but above all else, the sense of belonging that I felt in every room."

In the three decades since, the mountain hideaway has become a gleaming showplace. It was built in 1927 by a forester with access to an abundance of wormy chestnut, a moniker ascribed to American chestnut lumber harvested after a blight swept through the eastern United States in the early twentieth century. Restored to a brilliant sheen, the tawny hardwood, prized for its rarity and telltale marks of character, lends rustic charm to tongue-and-groove paneling, doors, and trim throughout the interiors.

When she married, Kathryn's husband offered to build a new house, but she was not tempted. Instead, the couple embarked on renovations, enlarging the kitchen and adding a master suite and terrace. Later, they enclosed that outdoor area to create a gathering room. "My main goal in each addition was to preserve the design integrity," she says—objectives attained by maintaining cozy proportions and using materials in keeping with the original style.

"I believe that great spaces are a reflection of our lives," the designer says. "They tell a story about the persons living there." The embodiment of her philosophy that homes should not be decorated but collected is her beloved Chestnut Cottage, a haven that speaks to the immeasurable value of cherished memories. *ℳ*

