



Absolutely Priceless!
Winter/Holidays

CAROLINA MOUNTAIN LIFE

The Heart & Soul of the High Country

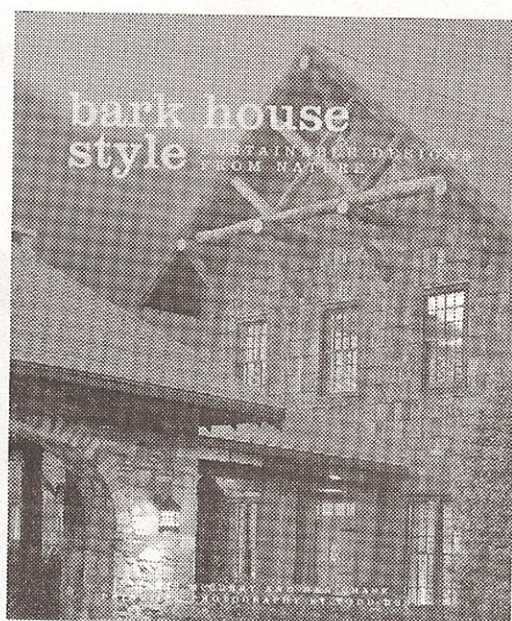
Home for the Holidays
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& Much More!

The grand old homes of Linville and Blowing Rock recall a time of Gilded Age summers with proper southern ladies enjoying the healthy mountain air on the front porch. During this period, the renowned architect Henry Bacon – famous for designing the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC – came to Linville and developed a chestnut single bark house style that would come to be inexorably linked with the mountains of North Carolina. Like the Eseeola Lodge in Linville or the now gone Mayview Manor in Blowing Rock, homes and hotels clad in bark shingle were uniquely American buildings. While they may have displayed some influence of classical design, they stood in sharp contrast to the Classical Revival styles of nearby estates such as Flat Top Manor or Westglow. The hall-mark bark shingles and clean angles of what is now called “Old Linville Style” are currently experiencing a revival themselves. Thanks to the research and dedication of Christie and Marty McCurry, natural bark siding is once again popular not only in the High Country, but all over America.

Co-founder and owner of Highland Craftsmen, Inc. in Spruce Pine, Christie McCurry thought she would never make a living working in design, “I became a nurse,” she says with a shrug. However, she and husband Marty, were always interested in architecture. “When we first moved back to the mountains, we noticed that a lot of the homes being built had started to look suburban, they could have been anywhere,” says Christie. She and Marty became intrigued by the bark shingled structures that still stood in Linville, including the Eseeola Lodge. The McCurry’s felt that these were a unique mountain style of home, and sought to learn more about how the shingling had been done.

It was a tough road, the skill of making bark siding had been lost. Tools once used to strip bark from logs had to be remade, and the knowledge of how to make them had passed a generation before. Using photographic evidence, trial and error, advice, and creative thinking,



HIGHLAND CRAFTSMEN:

Barking Up the Right Tree

... By Stephanie Keener

the McCurrys finally developed a suitable method. They also faced another challenge, the loss of the American Chestnut to blight. “Most of the bark that had been used in Western North Carolina was American Chestnut, we had to find a suitable replacement for Chestnut bark.” That’s where it’s handy to have a partner with a degree in chemical engineering. The McCurry’s had seen a few examples where poplar shingles had been used and Marty went to work, having poplar bark tested and analyzed for the correct chemical structure to withstand the elements and the drying process.

Highland Craftsmen has now been in business eighteen years; providing not only bark siding but also poles and twigs for rails, molding and anything else you can imagine. “It’s a very ecologically friendly business. We don’t use chemicals to treat the wood, and we are using what was once waste product,” says Christie. Highland Craftsmen is committed, “to produce a product line that is harmonious with nature (green) and minimizes the impact of construction.” And the best part: Christie is able to make a living in design.



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Romans 5:1-5

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