



rustic

refinement

BY JULIA E. LEWIS PHOTOGRAPHED BY PIETER ESTERSOHN



Charleston designer Kathleen H. Rivers creates a comfortable, elegant interior for a log cabin in Cashiers, North Carolina



LEFT: A monumental fireplace anchors the cabin's main room, which serves as a family-living-dining space. BELOW: Designer Kathleen H. Rivers assembled a worldly mix of furnishings, including a Portuguese screen, a Belgian sewing table, and Turkish rugs. PREVIOUS PAGES: (clockwise from bottom left) Respectful of the cabin's vernacular architecture and mountain setting, Rivers created a sophisticated yet informal scheme. The cabin is sited in a forest of hardwood and evergreen trees. A pair of custom wing chairs in maize-colored linen and Chippendale-style side chairs surround the dining table.



Nestled in a verdant valley and enveloped by a forest of native oak, hickory, and maple trees, Kreis and Sandy Beall's log cabin looks as though it has always been here, in Cashiers, North Carolina. Inside, the same is true, says designer Kathleen H. Rivers, who created a refined and relaxed seasonal retreat. Antique furniture, patterned fabrics, and an earthy palette resonate with the house's rough-hewn timbers and the

surrounding mountain landscape. The house has all the elements of a property that's been passed down through generations, but there's something about the layout of the rooms and the treatments of the textiles and collections that makes it feel current. In fact, the 4,500-square-foot house is newly constructed but was built with logs from several old houses and barns that were moved from Tennessee and Kentucky. The Bealls brought together Atlanta architect Jack Davis and Cashiers



The hardworking kitchen, crafted by the Atlanta design firm Bradley Hughes, radiates warmth and hospitality. Inspired by an antique chest, the perimeter cabinets are painted a distressed reddish brown and topped with sheet metal. The hickory breakfast stools are among the custom pieces made by a local woodworker.

builder Dearl Stewart to erect the rustic, two-story structure, which is sited for magnificent views of Rock and Chimney Top mountains, thanks to the input of landscape architect Mary Palmer Dargan. The Bealls, who also own Blackberry Farm, the celebrated resort in Walland, Tennessee, “turned their ‘dream team’ loose and made quick decisions,” recalls Rivers. “We all loved the project, and it was completed in a whirlwind nine months.”

During that time, Kreis nicknamed the house “The Abe,” referring to Abraham Lincoln’s storied

log cabin, and the name stuck. “The Abe took on its own personality,” says Rivers. “It demanded simplicity and a reverence for a certain early American aesthetic.” Decorating the house, with its walls of silvery logs and flat, tabby-colored chinking, posed numerous challenges, she admits. “For one, we couldn’t paint the walls,” she says. “We had to work with the powerful, horizontal striped effect of the wood.” For color, the designer selected mossy greens and russet reds to enhance the cabin’s natural materials and complement the outdoor vistas.



With its quirky juxtaposition of Southern furniture, wicker armchairs, antique hickory rockers, a Moroccan rug, and a pair of bright green lamps made from vintage tin containers, the porch suggests an earthy informality. Rivers found the French wrought-iron chandelier at a Charleston antiques shop.

Another conundrum was the cabin's main volume, the living-dining-family room, which is roughly 35 feet square with a pitched ceiling that soars nearly 30 feet. "It is a huge room that serves many functions," says Rivers, "but we didn't want to fill it up." When it came to furnishing the house, she says, "comfort was the primary goal." Inspired by the mellowed, layered look of English country houses, the designer created a seemingly offhand mix of the things she likes best, including Southern antiques, tribal rugs, and regional

pottery—and yet these disparate elements coalesce in a gracious and coherent way. "Things came from all over," says Rivers, citing a 19th-century screen from Portugal hanging above a 12-foot-long antique Belgian sewing table, and a pair of French carved armchairs. Much of the custom lighting was cleverly fashioned from found objects. Upholstered pieces, covered with an appealing variety of fabrics, from cut velvet to cotton ticking, are ample and inviting. "Whether we are entertaining or home alone, there are so



LEFT: Red and cream crewel floral fabric and a companion plaid cozy up the master bedroom, which opens to a porch. The textiles have a graphic presence that “stands up against the heavily textured walls,” says Rivers. ABOVE: In the master bath, a pair of custom cast-concrete sinks with hammered iron bases and coordinating mirrors and lighting are in keeping with the rustic architecture of the house.

many comfortable places in the living room to sit and relax,” says Kreis.

In contrast, The Abe’s other rooms are smaller in scale, underscoring the cabin’s harmonious interplay of rugged and refined elements. The kitchen is in no way slick, with its distressed, furniturelike cabinetry and bright, floral draperies. Bedrooms are “cozy, intimate, and pretty in an old-timey way,” says Rivers. Fabrics, including the master bedroom’s combination of crewel and plaid, are simple and charming, while crisp white bed linens provide a delicate counterpoint to the rough textured walls.

“I like to think The Abe has an undecorated look.” says Kreis. “It’s homey and beautiful.” ♦