

"Two months into this thing," says Arthur. "I thought, 'Man, this was a mistake!'"

Bailey had to re-create some of the molding in the interior of the house to replace pieces that were missing. "You can't just go buy this stuff at Lowe's," Arthur laughs.

The Campbells also replaced the

tin roof with pressure-treated pine shakes, the same kind of shakes the National Park Services uses in restoration of Appalachian homes. Arthur then recycled the tin shingles, using them to cover the roof of his gazebo which overlooks the pond in front of his house. The Campbells installed plumbing and electricity in the house

a business on the Ledbetter Farm and started constructing guest cottages out of local timber, much of it from trees downed in the construction of roads into the property. Bailey built custom beds for the cottages out of salvaged period wood left over from the house restoration.

The Campbells opened the first cottage in the summer of 2000. Today they have five cottages, all of them utterly secluded among the lush rhododendron, hickories, and poplars on the Campbells' farm. The property has become known as The Cottages at Spring House Farm, North Carolina's first eco-retreat.

Through their efforts to preserve western North Carolina's wildlife, flora, and fauna, as well as their conservation of land once cut over by logging, the Campbells automatically qualified for membership both in the International Ecotourism Society and EcoClub International.

Despite their tremendous efforts at preserving the history and environment of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Arthur and Zee don't really think it's the preservation efforts that attract their numerous guests from the metropolitan centers of the southeast.

"It's the quiet," says Zee, smiling gently as she sits beside the blazing fire in the historic Ledbetter House, a house she, Arthur, and Cailein now call nothing other than "home." 🌿



Simple elegance. The Ledbetter House is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. "The original builder was obviously a very educated craftsman," says Max Bailey, who was largely responsible for the home's restoration process.

as well.

The restoration was complete in six months. A year and a half later, the home was listed on the National Register.

But even once the house was restored, the Campbells weren't finished. They still had plans for running

Faux Woodwork You Can Try at Home

The most unique feature of the Ledbetter House is its delicate hand-painted molded paneling in bright hues of red, cornflower blue, white, and faded gold. Gracing the wainscoting on the front porch, the doors, and stairway, this decorative art would have been an immediate signal to nineteenth-century visitors that the Ledbetters were a prosperous family.

This was also the feature that led Kathy McCullough and her husband, artist William McCullough, to urge the Campbells to purchase the home. A native of Charleston, South Carolina, Kathy says, "Charleston architecture and faux painting is well known, but we'd never seen anything like that outside of Charleston."

Kathy had owned a business as a faux painter while living in

Charleston, so when the Campbells decided to restore some of the Ledbetter House's hand-painted paneling, they turned to Kathy. Kathy, in turn, called on Mark Bennett, who had completed faux painting at the Grove Park Inn in Asheville. It was Bennett who analyzed the handiwork on the Ledbetter House and determined the technique used by the home's original artist, Charles Dunkin, was very similar to that of *faux bois* or "fake wood."

So Kathy, with some help from Zee, began working to restore the wainscoting on the front of the house. They first used reversible clear polyurethane coating on the original wood to preserve it. Then they covered the wood with flat latex and used a tinted oil glaze over it. Kathy

says she and Zee pulled a brush through the glaze to create a wood grain look. To create the faux marking around the panels, Kathy dragged a pencil eraser through the glaze.

Kathy admits she could not have done the restorative work without the advice from Bennett. "It was a wonderful experience," she exclaims, "to work on that house. I felt like I was walking in the footsteps of the itinerate painters who originally worked on it."

The restoration of the hand-painted paneling and doors took about six to eight weeks. The Campbells decided not to restore the interior handiwork, only to preserve it. "A lot of new homes have marbling and faux grain," explains Kathy. "It's returned in popularity." —DH