

Restoring Appalachia

An 1826 home that had “basically sunk to its center” has risen again to become both a home and North Carolina’s first eco-retreat.

BY DEBORAH R. HUSO • PHOTOS BY TIM BARNWELL

When third-generation Appalachian chair maker Max Bailey first met Arthur and Zee Campbell and learned of their plan to restore the Albertus Ledbetter House near Marion, N.C., he wasn’t convinced it could be done.

“I wasn’t really positive about it,” says Bailey, hands folded as he stares thoughtfully into the massive stone and brick fireplace warming the Campbells’ recently restored living area.

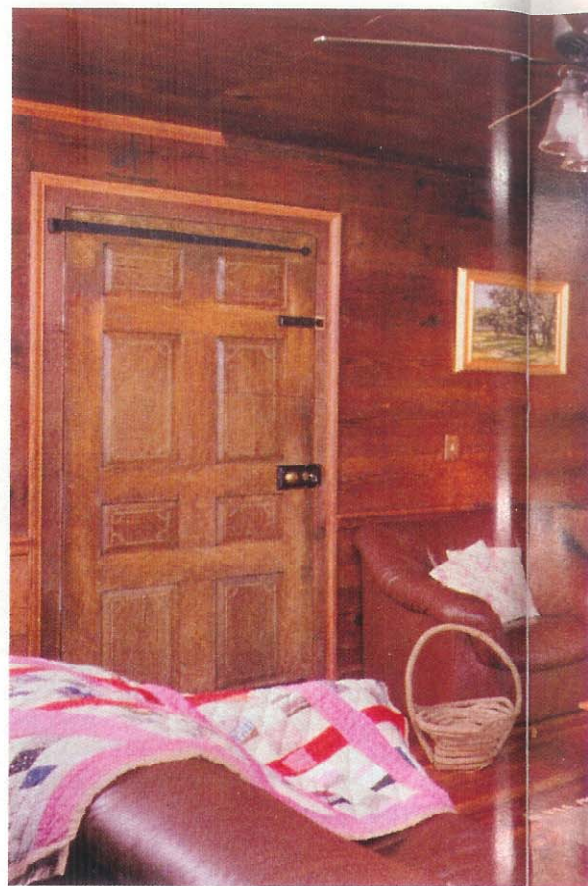
The house, which had been unoccupied for at least 15 years when the Campbells purchased it in 1998, was filled to the ceiling with junk, and severely dilapidated.

“I took tractor load after tractor load of junk out,” says Arthur, a former airline pilot and newly inspired preservationist.

Arthur and Zee had seen something in the house their neighbors hadn’t, and as restoration began in Jan-



Back to life. When Arthur and Zee Campbell purchased the c. 1826 Albertus Ledbetter House near Marion, N.C., the structure’s foundation had sunk and the house appeared beyond repair. Now this rare surviving example of transitional Federal/Greek Revival architecture and post-and-beam construction looks just as it did more than 150 years ago.



uary 1999, the architectural jewel under the grime of years of neglect began to gradually reappear.

Built in 1826 as a log house and then significantly expanded in 1836, the Ledbetter House is a rare surviving example of transitional Federal/Greek Revival architecture of post-and-beam construction. The house was built by Jonathan Ledbetter, a prosperous farmer whose father had fought in the Revolutionary War. Eventually, he passed it on to his son Albertus, after whom the home is named.

The Campbells came to western North Carolina from Florida at the encouragement of Arthur’s sister, Kathy McCullough, who lived in a log cabin near the Ledbetter House. Arthur and Zee, both anxious to leave the airline industry, wanted to get into the bed and breakfast business, and McCullough’s description of the Ledbetter farm inspired them to visit the rolling countryside north of Lake Lure.

“I was raised in the country,” explains Arthur, a native of South Carolina, “and I felt my son Caillein needed to be in the same kind of environment I was raised in.”

So the Campbells purchased the Ledbetter House in 1998 along with