



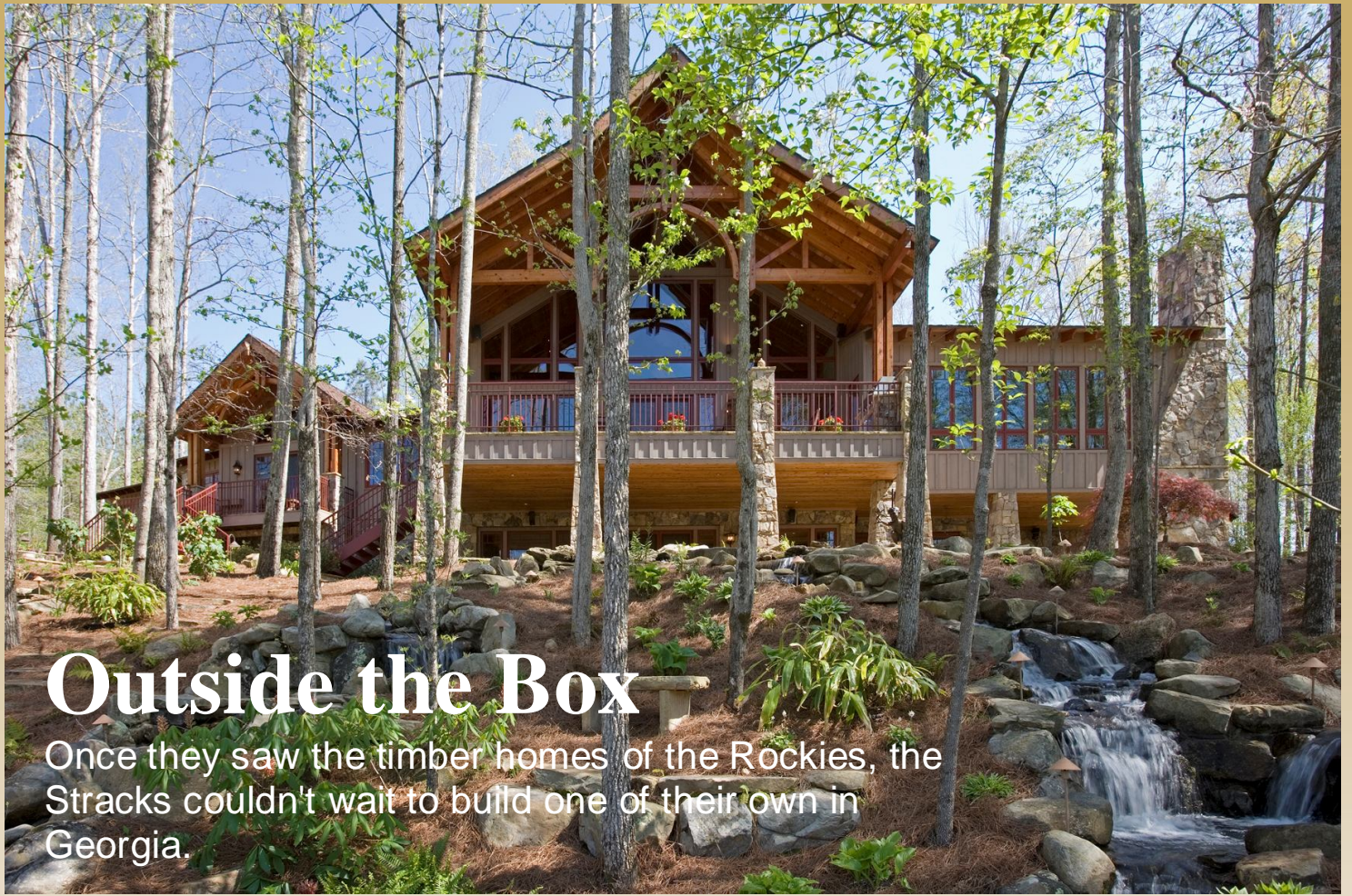
TIMBER HOMES

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Outside the Box

Once they saw the timber homes of the Rockies, the Stracks couldn't wait to build one of their own in Georgia.

Joe and Carolyn Strack's home is a bit of an anomaly for their Atlanta, Georgia, suburb: a striking stone and timber home that virtually shouts "Rocky Mountains," where its design was conceived. As Carolyn puts it, "In our area, this house is outside the box."

Carolyn, a native Georgian, should know. For 15 years, she and Joe, owner of an Atlanta-area site development company, lived in more Southern-style accommodations, a Victorian-style home they had built and once assumed they would live in forever. Then they bought a vacation home in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, where timber homes are wide spread, and fell in love with the timber frame look.



Making the Move

The couple began their move toward timber home living with the purchase of 34 acres on a five-acre, man made lake in Newnan, Georgia. Since their Victorian home was near a dam and waterfall, Joe and Carolyn had become used to water sounds, and wanted to re-create them at their new place. Before constructing their home, they installed a major water feature on their sloping site, a system that pumps lake water to the hilltop (where their house would sit) then directs the water to cascade back downhill in five streams. Adding boulder, bark and native plantings -perennials and shrubs but no grass- they created a yard with the unstructured, natural look they desired.

On one of their Colorado trips, Joe and Carolyn had picked up a magazine on local homes and became intrigued with an artist's rendering of a timber home designed by architect Bill Rangitsch of Steamboat Architectural Associates. They retained Bill to design their new home.

"We told him what we liked in a house; what rooms we wanted and that the predominant living areas should be on one level. But we didn't know exactly what the layout should be," Carolyn notes. "We turned that over to Bill."

They liked what Bill came up with, a Western-style home with Craftsman influences and an open floor plan. Although they had intended to downsize from their 4,700-square-foot Victorian, plans for the three-bedroom, five-bath timber home came in at a spacious 5,800 square feet.

Perfect for entertaining, the 30-by-30 foot great room offers a window wall with magnificent views of the lake. The ceiling soars to a 23-foot peak, supported by Douglas fir timbers. The framing uses both traditional joinery and joinery with steel reinforcement.





The kitchen island is topped with granite. When company comes, Carolyn covers it with a wooden plank to create a temporary buffet. Kitchen cabinets, as well as the built-in seating area by the window, are cherry.



Carolyn prefers casual dining to serving meals in a more formal dining room. The dining furniture, from Watuga Creek Home Furnishings in Franklin, North Carolina, is Rhodesian teak and ironwood reclaimed from South African railroad ties that date back to the 1800's



Beautiful pool area.

Construction Challenge

Based on strong recommendations, the Strack's hired Harry Rivers of Rivers Construction in Newnan as general contractor and builder for the project. But the couple found that Bill's vision for the great room—an unusual, four-post truss system with broad arches—stymied most of the timber framers they contacted. Eventually they found Sandy Bennett, owner of Blue Ridge Timberwrights in Christiansburg, Virginia, who was up for the challenge. "We look for unique projects," Sandy says. "And this home is definitely not in the everyday timber frame category."

"The relatively small size of the members is unusual," Sandy explains. "The smaller timber are bolted together in clusters of four, a Craftsman inspired design. And this much curve is out of the ordinary from what you typically see in a timber frame." Sandy notes, "The great room's system is basically a queen-post truss with an iron rod tie in the bottom cord that ties the wings together." The arches, which are "more accent than action," require very large pieces of wood, about 30 inches wide. "The architect's vision was somewhat unique but fun to create," Sandy says with a laugh. "We're very pleased with how it turned out."

All told, it took about two years to move plans for the timber hybrid home (parts of the home are conventionally framed) from conception to completion. While construction of the main house actually began in 2002, it was another two years before the project was completed.



To give the home a Western feel, the exterior was finished with Tennessee fieldstone and cypress board-and-batten. Ceilings under the porches are white cedar. The half-mile, curving driveway to the front entrance is paved with Tennessee fieldstone

Welcome Home

The distinctive, towering front entrance both mimics the arched great room truss system and provides a view of the room itself through glass paneled front doors and oversized windows. "We wanted an entry that was warm and comfortable, not too formal," says Carolyn, noting that they needed the great height of the entry to balance the home's length.

The foyer, which has a small loft above it, leads directly to a 30-by-30 foot great room, including an informal dining area. The room's reclaimed Douglas fir timbers peak at about 23 feet, and are topped with a white cedar plank ceiling. A fireplace of Tennessee fieldstone, the same stone used on the home's exterior, is flanked by cherry built-in display/bookcases. The couple included numerous built-ins to display their collections of pottery, art glass, fossils and minerals.

To the right of the great room are Joe's office and the master bedroom suite, which has a private porch that leads to a stone-lined, free-style shaped swimming pool. To the left of the great room are the kitchen, Carolyn's craft room/office, laundry area and garage.

The kitchen, 14-by-18 feet with eat-in space beside a front yard window, has openings to the dining area and great room to encourage mingling with the cooks. Near the kitchen is the sunroom with fireplace and access to a large covered deck with a hot tub overlooking the lake.

The home's lower level includes a family room with wet bar and wine cellar, a workout room, two bedrooms and two baths. A stone patio features an outside fireplace. Carolyn notes that deciding on the type of floors was a struggle. At Bill's suggestion, but with some trepidation, they chose random-width, rough-sawn reclaimed oak. It was the right decision; they like the rustic look and rich patina.

The couple intentionally mixed woods in their new house. Their Victorian's woods had been the same color, and they wanted a change. "We wanted a variety to achieve a warm contrast with colors that blend but have character," Carolyn says.

The master bedroom leads to a covered porch. Carolyn notes that they had a sitting area in the master bedroom of their former home but never used it; they chose not to include one in their new bedroom.



Perfect for Entertaining

The house has a four car detached garage (Joe collects cars) with guest-house, and tennis courts were installed near the garage to indulge Joe's passion for the game. That area is a focal point for the family in the summer months and when the couple entertains large groups, such as the 200 guests they had for Joe's company barbeque.

"This is a comfortable, warm, and useable house. It's fun to entertain in," says Carolyn, who repeatedly praises the work of Bill, Sandy and Harry and his crew. "I love being on the water and in the woods."