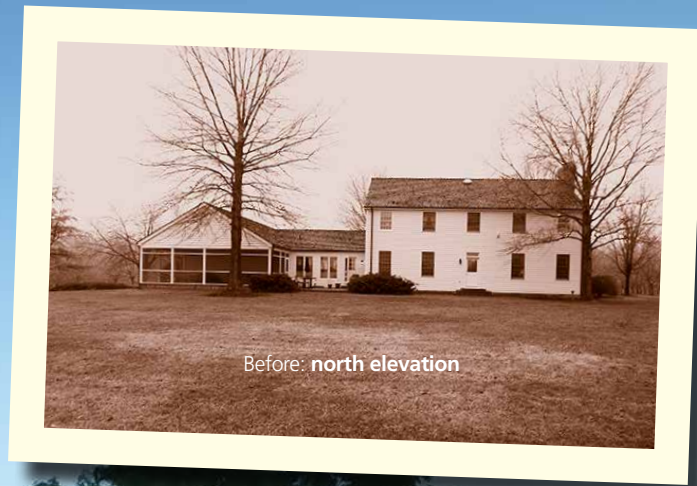


Before: west elevation



Before: north elevation



Before: kitchen elevation

BY SARAH CRAIN • PHOTOS BY JIM ROUNSEVELL

A Farm with a View

A RESTORATION AT CHESTNUT RIDGE FARM TAKES ADVANTAGE OF ITS SURROUNDINGS

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Anyone lucky enough to live in the Blue Ridge Mountain area undoubtedly understands the desire to take advantage of the landscape, never to miss a fresh snowfall, the spectacular fall foliage, or the newest blossoms of spring.

Bill and Monique Pritchard, the owners of Chestnut Ridge Farm, wanted to do just that—appreciate the scenery around them as much as possible. Chestnut Ridge Farm is a magnificent country property on 40 acres in Western Albemarle. The land rolls beautifully along the knoll from where the house sits and has wonderful views of the mountains to the northwest.

The previous owner, a retired doctor, had planted a large Chinese chestnut orchard, for which the property was appropriately named. Tending and harvesting the trees was a hobby that he enjoyed for many years. Eventually, he was ready to move on, and that was when the Pritchards discovered Chestnut Ridge Farm.

Bill and Monique Pritchard fell in love with the property's potential and purchased the farm in 2006 with plans to renovate. The original house was built in 1986. They kept most of the chestnut trees, clearing only those closest to the house that blocked the scenery.

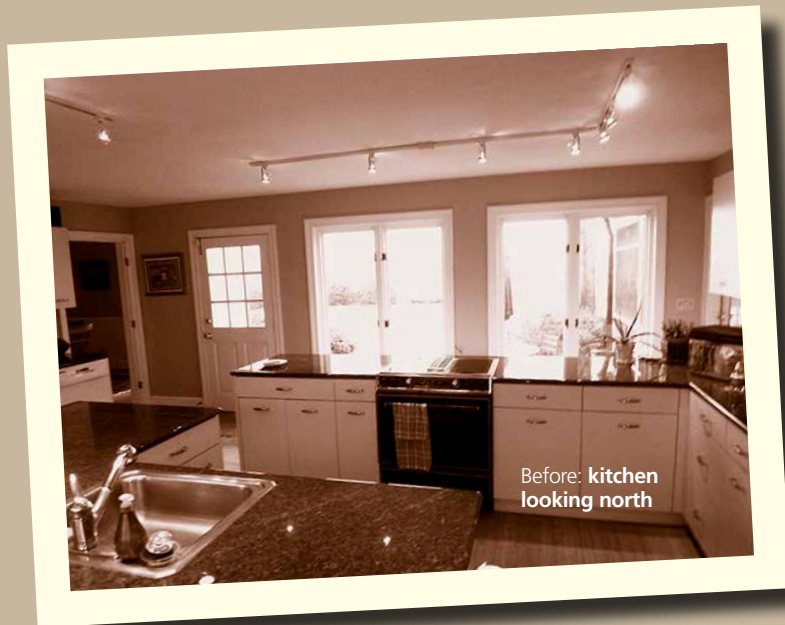


In the renovated kitchen, exterior walls of glass, a vaulted ceiling, and dormers fill the room with spaciousness and light.

KITCHEN RESTORATION



The chestnut orchard, for which the farm is named, is echoed in the form of an island top made from the trees themselves.



Before: kitchen looking north

The original house “really didn’t take advantage of the views. It didn’t take advantage of the outside space at all,” said Bill Pritchard. They needed to open up their house to the surrounding landscape as well as add a master suite and update the kitchen.

To do this, they contacted their old friend Roger Birle, an architect and partner at Dalgliesh Gilpin Paxton Architects in Charlottesville. Birle studied at Rhode Island School of Design and the University of Illinois at Chicago before earning a Master of Architecture from the University of Virginia. He specializes in residential and estate projects, historic preservation, and adaptive reuse. Because of his background, Birle was the perfect architect for such a project, one that focused on preserving the original structure and creating a functional space for a large, active family.

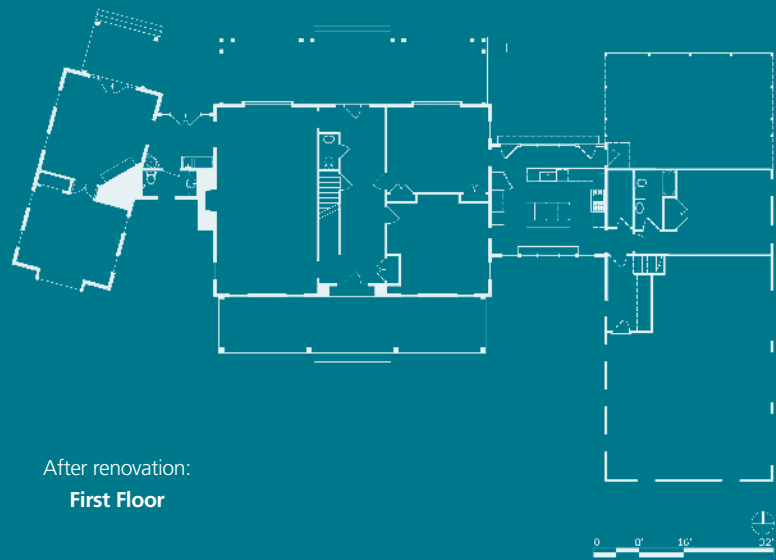
The renovation took about eighteen months of construction. It was completed in two phases; Shelter Associates did the main house renovation and addition, and Gibson-Magerfield transformed the kitchen.

The actual footprint of the kitchen remained the same, and yet the space is completely different. “What was once a low-ceilinged, unexciting space is now the light-filled heart of the house,” said Birle. The original 8’ ceilings were vaulted,

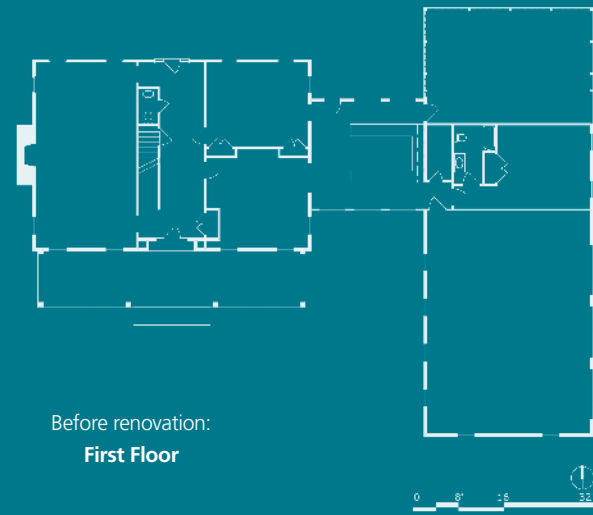


Before: kitchen looking southwest

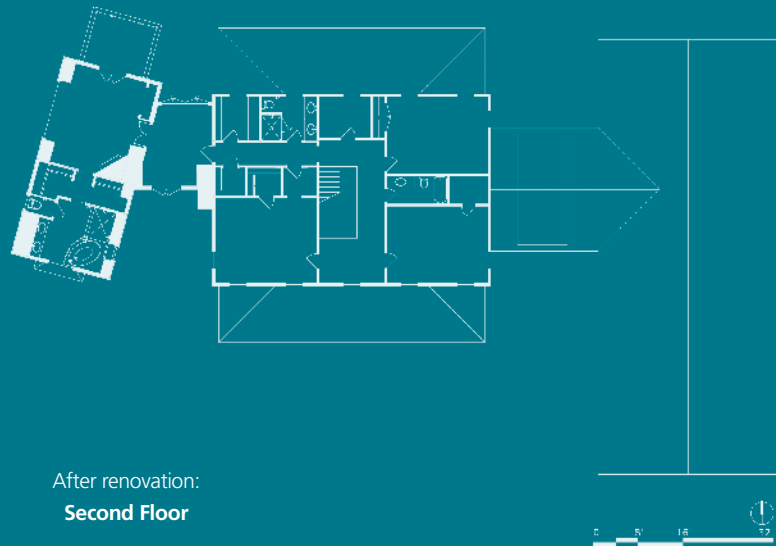
The revamped kitchen went from a dark, utilitarian room, which was strictly functional, to a space that celebrates the beautiful Virginia countryside and is now the center of the household.



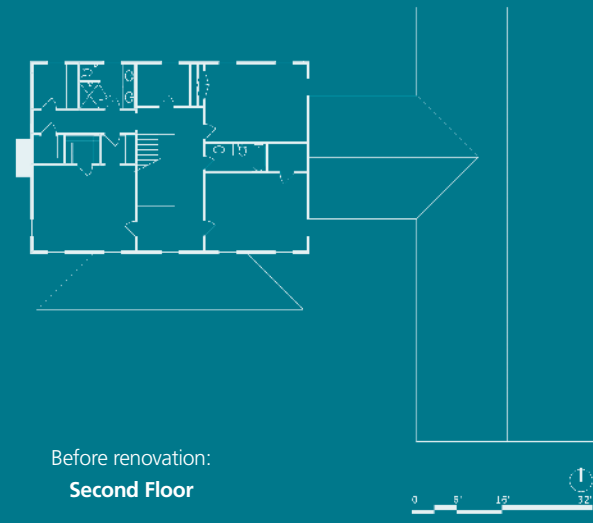
After renovation:
First Floor



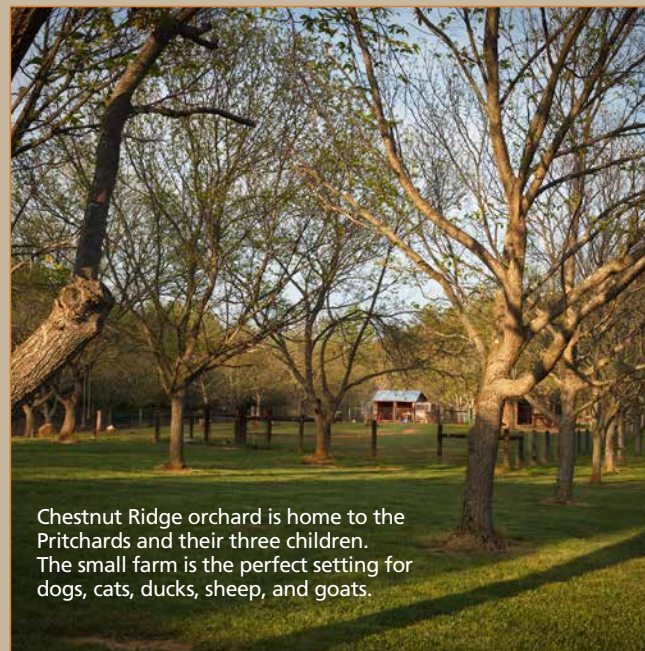
Before renovation:
First Floor



After renovation:
Second Floor



Before renovation:
Second Floor



Chestnut Ridge orchard is home to the Pritchards and their three children. The small farm is the perfect setting for dogs, cats, ducks, sheep, and goats.

and dormer windows were added to the roof to provide additional light and natural ventilation. Floor-to-ceiling windows allow the family to truly appreciate the surroundings, while bringing in even more natural light. The most unique part of the new kitchen, however, is the chestnut island countertop. It was designed and custom made from the property's own chestnut trees.

Before the renovation, the only upstairs views were from the laundry room and the master bathroom. The two-level addition to the home contains an office and family room below with a master suite above, all of which now take advantage of the spectacular views. Birle calls this architectural design "subtle," and yet it made a world of difference. "By turning the new family room/master suite wing slightly, the views to the mountains are maximized from the master bedroom, and the slight turn gives the backyard a greater sense of its own space and a sense of enclosure," says Birle.

To complete the project, the family added a long porch with a pergola along the house in order to create a better outdoor space; a change Birle calls, "a no-brainer." The smaller, traditional windows along the living and dining rooms were replaced by bay windows, opening those spaces as well.

Overall, the renovation created the home the Pritchards had always wanted: a space where they could enjoy the countryside that they loved. And anyone who is lucky enough to live in Central Virginia knows just how important that is. *a.*



UNDER THE CHESTNUT TREE

Chinese Chestnut—*Castanea mollissima*

Naturally an understory tree, the Chinese Chestnut has been cultivated in East Asia for millennia. Chestnuts are a very profitable crop. They bear in three to five years, and produce 2,000-4,000 lbs/acre each year at maturity (15-20 years). The nuts are sweet and considered by some to have the best taste of any chestnut. Nutritionally, chestnuts are like a grain similar to wheat and brown rice. They contain high-quality protein and have no cholesterol.