

# Mountain Lake Dream Home

**L**ocated on Lake Keowee's northern end nestled in the wooded terrain hillside sits a remarkable house, the result of an exceptional collaboration between homebuilder, homeowners, and architect and design team. The spectacular setting served in part as inspiration for the home as its site placement, large open rooms, and use of window placement invite the outdoors in and offer exposure to views of the Blue Ridge Mountains and the pristine waters of Lakes Keowee and Jocassee.

Built by The Berry Group located in Six Mile, South Carolina, the home is owned by Jim and Mary Rubright, and designed by Keith Summerour of Summerour and Associates, Architects, based in Atlanta. Winner of the prestigious Pinnacle Award from the Home Builders Association of South Carolina, the home is one of very few recognized for its outstanding craftsmanship and design and is a source of pride for each of the collaborators.

In addition to its natural setting, additional inspiration included a blend of styles from old southern rural farm homes with elements of New England lake front homes. "The house is very symmetrical and traditional in its styling," says Ken Berry, owner of The Berry Group. "We are definitely traditionalists in that we prefer using authentic, traditional materials." Materials used in The Berry Group's residences include cedar, real stone, and timber framing, to name a few. "We think you can get better performance out of real materials," Ken says. "There is a difference in look in real cedar, for example, versus an imitation product. We strive to be as authentic as possible."

The antique heart pine timbers, floors, ceiling and doors and 150-year old beams used in the Rubright home provide a sense of age and maturity and are a standout feature of the home. The heart pine columns and beams support the screen porch and dining room at the rear of the home, designed to have the appearance of formerly being

one room, adding to the aged feel of the home. "The dining room blends into the screened porch, given the use of the same type of columns in both rooms," Ken explains, "and offers a feeling that space has been recaptured from the porch and converted into the dining room."

The moderate to steep terrain from the house to the lake created both a challenge and an opportunity for The Berry Group. The crew installed boulder steps one-by-one from the lake up a curving path of 175 feet of elevation to the home. The result is a natural looking path of continuous stone slabs complete with a mid-way terrace with fireplace, allowing the homeowners and their guests to pause for breath-taking views of the lake and mountains each time they make their way to the lake or to enjoy quiet moments in a peaceful outdoor setting.

"The most unique feature is probably the sleeping porch upstairs," say owners Jim and Mary Rubright, who enjoy weekends and vacations with their two boys at the home. Windows that push



**Timber beams and plenty of windows brighten both the dining room and the kitchen, which features Sub-Zero and Wolf appliances from Wilson Gas Service.**





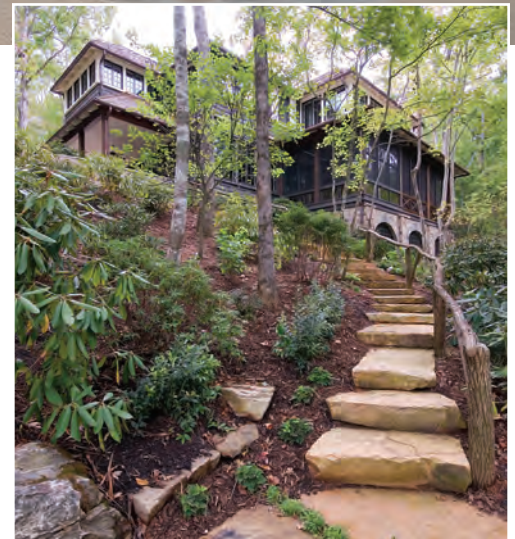


open complemented by a very high pine ceiling with exposed rafters surround the room. “We sleep on that porch every time we use the house,” Mary adds. “We use the ceiling fans to keep us cool at night.” Apparently very effectively. The family reports that they did not have to turn on the house air-condition until late July of last year.

The Berry Group’s primary location for residential building is at the north end of Lake Keowee, working in both Oconee and Pickens counties. Ken, who holds a civil engineering degree from Clemson University, has found the area to be a great place to live and raise his family. “The communities on the north side of Lake Keowee really give us the opportunity to work on the types of projects that allow us to showcase our craftsmanship and use materials that we may not have been able to use in other areas, such as the timber frames, real stone, and antique materials,” Ken says. “Our focus has always been on developing a relationship with our clients and the collaborative effort that requires.”

Each of The Berry Group homes is custom designed and is truly collaboration between homeowner, builder, architect, and interior designer. “Our skills and abilities working with the talent

and skills of our designers enables us to be involved as a much stronger participant in the team effort,” Ken adds, “and that has been a strength in working with our clients.” The process of blending different desires and opinions of the homeowners and architects and designers is rewarding to Ken, known for his adeptness at doing so. “I can’t say enough about Ken Berry and the Berry Group,” says Mary Rubright. “Ken is honest and patient, and had our best interest at heart. He was always available to talk and he would meet with me anytime I asked. His employees went above and beyond the call of duty to get our house completed and were just great to work with. They paid attention to detail and were so nice.” Ken often retains relationships with his clients long after their homes have been completed, occasionally blending family and personal time with those of his clients who he now calls friends. “We continue to work with many of our clients long after the building process has been completed,” Ken says. Owner Jim Rubright’s is equally enthusiastic about the group collaboration: “Keith Sumerour captured perfectly our concept of a four season open air retreat that’s like sleeping in a tree house. Ken Berry saved us a fortune with one critical structural suggestion,



▲ Continuous stone slabs complete with a mid-way terrace with fireplace allow the homeowners and their guests to pause for breath-taking views of the lake and mountains.



that didn't noticeably change the aesthetics, but greatly simplified the construction demands."

The Berry Group employs eight to ten carpenters focusing on timberwork, framing, and exterior siding and uses top quality sub contractors for mechanical work, roofing and other projects. "Our craftsmen are a very important part of our team," says Ken. Because of the complexity of the homes, Ken often looks across the country to find specialty suppliers and contractors to fill his clients' unique needs: he tells of the story of an Amish door maker he uses on a regular basis whose work is so spectacular that he finds the necessary means of placing orders, despite the challenge of communicating without use of phone or computers.

Ken's flexible approach to the home building process is part of the winning formula for the home builder: "if our homes are truly custom, the home may evolve during the construction process as other ideas and other thoughts come to the table. This means that there may be some changes. While it is helpful to have as many decisions made prior to construction, we also realize the project is going to be tweaked and modified throughout the process." The average construction time for The Berry Group is twelve to eighteen months depending on the complexity of the job and site work. "We've shown on multiple lots that we are

skilled working with challenging terrain," Ken says, his civil engineering background no doubt contributing to the success of meeting those challenges. He also has the rare distinction of having both a mother and father who were each homebuilders in the Columbia area where he grew up. "I've been around construction all my life," Ken says, "and I've enjoyed returning to residential building. I enjoy the aspect of the completed project and take pride in showing our craftsmanship and recognition of that skill." And rightly so. "I say it to any one who asks," claims Jim Rubright. "I'd pick Ken ten times out of ten."

*For more information, visit [www.TheBerryGroupllc.com](http://www.TheBerryGroupllc.com)*



▲ **The Berry Group employs approximately 10 carpenters to customize special touches throughout the custom built homes.**

