



*Refined* rustic retreat  
in the Beaver Valley

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Arch. Designer : Bill Brown Builder: Jeff Becker Interior Design: Tricia Jeffery



**R**efined rustic. Country elegance. Cottage chic. This custom home in Ontario's breathtaking Beaver Valley proves that these concepts can coexist in harmony under one roof. Mother nature provides the dynamic palette upon which a gifted team of professionals created this masterpiece of design, which is visually stunning and tangibly grounded in earthy materials.

Named for the deer run on which it sits, Whitetail encompasses an abundance of massive windows that maximize views of soul-soothing sights and invite natural light to infuse the rooms with energy. Throughout the year, the surroundings offer a panorama of sensuous stimuli, from spring buds popping through lush greenery, to the brilliant yellows and blues of winsome summer wildflowers, the fiery reds and glorious golds of autumn leaves, and the intriguing shapes of wind-carved winter snow sculptures. Eschewing man-made traffic noises, this nature retreat offers a cacophony of fluttering wings, gentle calls and subtle whoops as wild fowl, geese, ducks, gulls, loons and blue heron circle the valley that cradles it. The whooshing of the 40-foot waterfall this old mill site overlooks adds to the nurturing auditory ambience.

Inspired by this idyllic setting, Whitetail's outdoors-obsessed owners approached architectural designer Bill Brown about renovating the existing weekend retreat on their property, and the vision morphed into a substantial, six-bedroom, five-bathroom, year-round country home. Brown is president of the Thornhill, Ontario-based custom home design firm Black Tusk Development Group Ltd. "The owners were very involved in the design process from the start," he says. "They wanted a home that fit into the landscape and had a sense of history. We developed the idea of an English cottage to offer a sense of visual history, yet not overpower the landscape. This is a large home."

In fact, Whitetail measures in upwards of 6,500 square feet, including the finished lower level. "The overall square footage is a result of the clients' needs as opposed to a set target," Brown explains. "Form follows function." In this case, function was dictated by the owners' lifestyle, which involves farming and raising children. They wanted a seamless transition from the outdoors to inside, and an environment that would stand up to rubber boots and kids in wet bathing suits.

Brown and the owners worked within Escarpment zoning regulations to create the

**GREAT ROOM (PREVIOUS)** - The couches were custom made by Tricia Jeffery of Dovetail Interiors. The restored antique sleigh coffee table provides a functional focal point to the room. The fireplace and built in wood storage was designed by Bill Brown of Black Tusk Design who also designed the house. Painting over the fireplace is from The Loft Gallery in Clarksburg.

**KITCHEN** - The kitchen was meant to facilitate lots of entertaining. With it's Wolf 6 Burner propane range, double ovens, double dishwashers, and warming drawer being the key components. The cherry wood Island has 5 custom made bar stools; the exact number to hold the family's children and cousins during the holiday celebrations. The slate stone floor was custom cut on site and runs from the mudroom through the kitchen/pantry area along the hall and into the front entrance foyer.

**DINING ROOM** - The 100 yr old American pedestal table seats 12 comfortably and is often full with family and friends. The Brunswick & Fils fabric for the drapes - Spring - has a pattern of deer and flowers that capture the essence of this home that was built by a deer run. The family china and silver are used regularly and the wide table provides an excellent space for not just the place settings but floral designs and candles as well.





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English cottage-style residence. “The gable roof ends were clipped to give the look of a cottage and reduce the overall mass of a fairly large roof,” Brown says. “We used stone and stucco and timber details, and added gabled dormers to carry this theme. The house foundation was cut into the existing grade to create the lower level walkout. Decks, terraces and covered porches achieve the critical connection between the inside and outside spaces.”

Siting the building was key to maximizing spectacular views, particularly the waterfall. Every room in the home offers a vista of awe-inspiring nature, from rolling hills to Metcalf Rock, fields and a woodlot. The stucco was treated with a rough vertical finish to resemble the bark on a tree, and the cedar shingles and Cape Cod siding contribute to the rustic feel.

Brown designed the interior layout to maximize views and the sense of space. “We incorporated areas of sanctuary and inviting personal spaces. There is plenty of room for entertaining and for the kids as they grow older. The interior space had to match the scale of the exterior views, so the great room is significant, with a two-storey wood-burning fireplace finished in stone to the ceiling.”

The challenge to construct the vision for Whitetail was gladly accepted by builder Jeff Becker, owner of Redwood Homes in Collingwood. “The owners were as interested in long-term sustainability as in the visual aspects of the design,” he says. “They looked for a builder with experience in installing Insulated Concrete Forms (ICF), which is our specialty. This system involves shaping walls with Styrofoam blocks and pouring concrete in between. The walls are twice as wide as a typical house with 2x6 framing, and provide two-and-a-half times the insulating factor, which saves greatly on energy costs.”

Construction began in November 2004 and took approximately 14 months to complete, including a month delay because of an unexpected twist. “After we had poured the basement, the owners decided to install an indoor pool at ground level,” he explains. “We dug for that, then had to wait for the pool to be shipped from Texas. We had it craned over the walls, and it was worth the wait; the pool is beautiful. We built a totally contained room for it to protect the rest of the house from humidity.”

**MASTER GUEST ROOM (RIGHT)** - This sought after upstairs guest room has some of the best views in the house. From its curved window you look out onto the beautiful Niagara Escarpment rock cliffs. With the door open you have a view out the windows of the Great Room of the 40 ft waterfall and river valley beside the house. This bedroom has its own ensuite bathroom and the regular occupants love to view the stars in the evening sky from bed. Fur throw and pillow from Jonna's Rustic Interiors.

**DAUGHTER'S ROOM (ABOVE RIGHT)** - The owner's daughter helped plan her own room, worked with Tricia Jeffery to find her perfect fabric - by Robert Allen - and loves to cuddle up at night and close her curtains and read & play video games. The built in beds allow for great storage space with baskets for toys & books underneath.

**SON'S ROOM (ABOVE LEFT)** - The owner's son gets the feeling of camping out while at home with these great curtains inspired from a tent - custom designed by Dovetail Interiors. The birch bark curtain rod was found on the property. The built in beds & closet allow for maximum play space in the room.



## “The home had to be grand, yet comfortable.”

**LOWER LEVEL FAMILY ROOM** - This family size couch has a queen size pull out bed and double recliners built in. Custom made by Dovetail Interiors of “Not-A-Hide” Leather this practical piece stands up to family wear & tear. The coffee table is formed by a vintage piece of Redwood from Jonna’s Rustic Interiors. After swimming the “faux parquet” ceramic tiles provide another practical surface for wet feet as they warm up with the radiant heat and the Heat N’ Glow propane fireplace. The blanket fabric wool drapes were sourced by Dovetail Interiors and allow you to feel cozy even on the coldest days.

**POOL ROOM** - The Aqua Swim N’ Spa resistance lap pool and attached hot tub create that Home Spa atmosphere. A favourite place to relax after a long day of skiing or in any season. The room also doubles as a home fitness area with a mirror down one length of the room. Tiles picked from Ciot for their terra cotta feel mixed with the blue hues of the water and their ability to compliment the wood trim of the home.

The home includes in-floor radiant heating in the basement and in some tiled areas on the main floor. “This is a very low-cost operational heating system that offers a high comfort level,” Becker says. “We also installed a forced air system for air conditioning and heating, and they have a ground-source heat pump that cuts their gas consumption to a fraction of what they would otherwise use for heating. Even with the extra up-front costs, it’s far less expensive than propane or electric in the long run.”

Four fireplaces in total grace the welcoming rooms, three of which are crafted from cultured stone. The use of natural elements extends to the stone floor throughout the foyer, kitchen, pantry and mudroom. Hardwood maple flooring planks vary in size and feature cherry pegs.

When it came to the interior décor, the owners enlisted Tricia Jeffery of Dovetail Interiors, who specified everything from flooring choices to paint chips. She worked with local retailer Jonna Chalmers of Jonna’s Rustic Refinement to source furniture items and accessories. “The home had to be grand, yet comfortable,” Jeffery says. “The owners created a deer logo for Whitetail, so I brought in items such as the deer-print drapery in the library. It looks like a high-end lodge. The house has real personality; when you walk in, it speaks to you.”

What it says is come on in and make yourself at home. The leather sectional in the lower level contains a sofa bed, which is handy when family members visit. “We went with a woody palette and brought in the natural colours you see through the windows,” Jeffery

adds. “I particularly love the library, which has floor-to-ceiling bookcases and a built-in sofa/banquette and desk. We had a lot of fun with the kids’ rooms, creating the built-in beds that can be closed in or opened up. These are real people who live in their home. It’s not just a showpiece. We chose durable items that still convey an upscale look, such as the faux-hide sofa in the family room. I’m proud to have been part of the design team that created this exceptional home.”

Chalmers agrees. “It’s a pleasure to see my things in such lovely surroundings. We had a great time adding a touch of whimsy, such as the antler chandelier and candelabra in the great room. We even found the owners antler-handled serving pieces for the dining room. The theme of nature is everywhere.” There are herons on the wall tiles in the master bath and Inuit art on the wall in the guest bedroom. Antiques have a place in the home, too, including the extra-wide American pedestal dining room table, which is over 100 years old.

The owners are delighted with their home. “The final result of everyone’s efforts,” Bill Brown says, “is what the family will enjoy for years to come.”

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