

# ...publishers choice



# LURGAN MANOR

By Brenda Lange  
Photography by John Armich

The prospect of building a new home in what is arguably the most desirable corner of Bucks County presents a plethora of questions, challenges and opportunities.

The owners of Lurgan Manor knew they wanted to design a large home that would blend with the mix of farmhouses and European estates they found here. Remaining true to their love of nature and natural materials also was important to them. They wanted a home that would seem appropriate in its surroundings, yet unique, and set apart from anything else in the area. They also planned to draw from design elements found in the western ski lodges they frequent during the season.

To meet those goals, they decided on an 11,000-square foot home in the French County Manor style. The result includes architectural elements of that classic style, such as gable roofs and an abundance of windows, many of them dormers. It also includes rustic elements such as a cedar shake roof with green metal roof accents. Antique brick accents punctuate the old world stone and stucco exterior, with keystone designs over the windows, and more along the roof line. Window boxes with tiny blooms peeking over the top dress up the windows, which are bordered by soft green shutters, and a copper and wood cupola stands proudly atop the garage apartment. Lurgan Manor is grand, yet never overwhelming or ostentatious. Rather, it exudes a sense of stately self-assurance that is at the same time commanding and subtle.

At two years of age, this totally custom designed home is young enough that its amenities are all state-of-the art and technologically top-of-the-line. And yet it was designed using mostly natural elements—fieldstone, marble, limestone, and wood, rather than man-made—and antiques or replicas and reclaimed items from barns long-gone. The first hint that the manor may hold some surprises is the front portico, which is framed by reclaimed barn beams rather than round or square ornate columns.

These hand hewn oak beams set the theme of the home and provide a flow and continuity. They were salvaged by Mountain Lumber, a Virginia company that specializes in using wood from old structures to create beautiful new floors and other wood products for the home. These beams are used throughout the entire house in such a way that they feel like its backbone. Sometimes solidly massive, sometimes almost delicate in their arched designs, the pegged beams are "woven" into the tapestry of the home, and add to the aura of rusticity. The beams are visible from every angle of every room—soaring to the roofline along ceilings, accenting walls, framing doors and even arching over an upstairs hallway.

The ubiquitous beams join another distinctive feature: reclaimed granery oak random-width floors, which were hand-oiled at the site before installation, and are quite durable, aging gracefully and contributing to the relaxed atmosphere. Other flooring in the home includes a travertine entry foyer with inlay brass tiles, limestone tiles (with radiant heat in the master bath), and brand-new cork flooring in the lower level.

The finished product is open and airy yet warm, never rambling or cold. The family room ceiling that ends two stories up with a peaked ceiling is softened by the antique barn beams, large, floor-level palladium windows, all highlighted by dramatic lighting creating a cozy and inviting room.

Dramatic use of color enlivens each room, while rounded corner moldings throughout soften the overall look. Ten-inch wide baseboard trim and wide trim around windows and doors open the space even more. The custom lighting choices are impeccable and varied, including carriage lamps that line one stairway and hall and round wrought iron twin chandeliers in the dining room. Unique wrought iron chandeliers with thick, chunky electric candles that appear at first to need matches, but glow softly when the switch is flipped, grace the family room and master bath. Unobtrusive recessed and off-set lighting pervade the remainder of the home.

The antique ambiance is juxtaposed seamlessly with high-tech touches so important for modern life. Each of the home's six wood-burning fireplaces is ready for easy conversion to gas. Above each is a set-up for plasma TV, hidden behind a sliding door made of reclaimed wood with a heavy iron handle. The home has five separate zones for heating and cooling, CAT 5 wiring, and a whole-house high-end stereo sound system.

As in so many homes, the kitchen often is the heart and where much of life is lived. Lurgan Manor's expansive kitchen and breakfast room are no different. The farmhouse feel carries through with a farm sink, massive center island with seating for four, a work sink, plenty of storage space, and double limestone counters. A true chef's delight, the kitchen contains a SubZero refrigerator/freezer camouflaged by creamy yellow cabinetry, a Wolf six-burner gas stove in a tiled cooking alcove, Miele dishwasher, and Thermador double oven. Practical touches include an abundance of closets, two laundry rooms, one on the second level, and two two-car garages, one which is attached to a one-bedroom apartment, perfect for an au pair or in-laws.

Personally designed by the owners, each of the nine bathrooms is different and possesses a distinct personality. For example, the master bath's limestone floor includes brass inlays of dolphins and mermaids. A steam shower with rain shower head, Bain Ultra soaking tub with a hand held shower wand, and twin vessel sinks of onyx sunk into antique wooden cabinets. Black marble sinks, antique mirrors, Venetian plaster walls, and marble floors are some of the charming touches found in the other bathrooms. Again, the colors and materials are culled from nature, including soft ochre, smooth gold, deep green and vibrant red. Only the best fixtures adorn each space—Rohlf, Waterworks and Herbeau and Kholer.

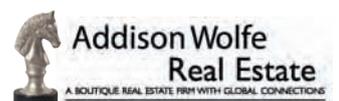
Even the home's doors are custom designed and spectacular. All the interior doors, including innumerable closets, are creamy white, custom plank doors with wrought iron handles, and hinges and straps to give them that old world feel. The two front doors are made of alder wood and forged wrought iron hinges, clasps and knobs. The home is bathed in light from the innumerable Kolbe & Kolbe casement and palladium windows and doors; even the finished lower level is bright, where the large windows are set at ground level and three French doors offer access to a brick patio.

Deemed too attractive to be relegated to the cellar, a wine room is located just off the entry foyer, behind massive antique wooden doors with wrought iron grillwork. Temperature and humidity controlled, the ten-foot wine storage racks are accented by a rolling ladder, numerous display areas and custom lighting. The space—which can accommodate 2,000 bottles—appears grotto-like, with a vaulted brick ceiling and surrounded by fieldstone walls. Sip a glass of this wine while relaxing on the covered patio, which is surrounded by antique brick walls and Turkish limestone floors and exterior fireplace, overlooking the hillside and groves of trees.

Carefully built into a gentle slope on the 10.5 acre property, the design allowed for a walk-out basement which is newly finished in three separate rooms, one with a complete wet bar and entertainment kitchen, stone fireplace, tray ceiling, and gold Venetian plaster walls creating a Tuscan feel. The other two rooms access the brick patio. Preliminary plans for a freeform pool (with disappearing edge and waterfall) pergola, and patio area, including detailed landscaping plans, are available. Lurgan Manor demonstrates the successful result of melding high-quality craftsmanship with a thoughtful and sensitive eye for detail. The home is a study in fusing old and new, formal and relaxed, illustrating just how well contrasting elements can complement and blend, creating a home that is comfortable, welcoming, warm, and truly home.

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- Large hand hewn beams, reclaimed grainery boards, and intricate tile work
- First floor master with stone fireplace and private terrace
- Wine cellar with barrel brick ceilings
- Expansive kitchen island with double limestone counters
- Lower level family center with fireplace
- Separate Au Pair suite
- Office with fireplace

