THE LITTLE HOUSE IN THE ORCHARD: BY LAURA RINKLE JOHNSON

NOT always is it possible, when building, to combine the conveniences of village life with the location and environment of a home in the country. Our situation on the edge of the village of Lyons, New York, is a happy solution of this problem. The house stands on the brink of a valley in an apple orchard, many years old. It faces the east, and the slope directly across the road is so abrupt that we have reason to believe that no building will ever be erected there, to obstruct our beautiful view, which extends for many miles to the north, east and south.

When looking for a design from which to build a home we naturally turned to the back numbers of The Craftsman Magazine, and found a plan that strongly appealed to us, and which, with some alterations, has proved to be a most livable home, to our minds at least. The house seems well suited in shape and proportions to the location we chose for it. It nests down under the sweeping branches of the trees as though it were as much an integral part of the landscape as the sheltering boughs above!

The building is one and one-half stories in height, and stands upon a foundation of split field stone 38 feet square, 10 feet of which is utilized as a porch. This space of

Exterior view of house of Mr. W. T. Johnson, Lyons, New York, adapted from a Craftsman plan.

To be 38 feet was not excavated, but after the wall was built it was filled in with earth, upon which a 4-inch concrete floor was laid, marked off in 9-inch squares. Steps of field stone—split—with treads of concrete lead to the porch. The house is covered with 24-inch hand-split cypress shingles, exposed 1½ inches to the weather. The exterior trim is also cypress, and the rafters and exposed purlins are of yellow pine. The windows throughout the house are casements, opening out, and the sash are painted white. The exterior doors are of oak. The sweeping roof in front forms the covering of the porch, being supported by four posts each 16 inches square. The 3 by 8 inch yellow pine rafters are left exposed in the roof of the porch. The dormer in the front forms a sleeping porch 6½ by 12 feet, the roof of which has exposed 2 by 6 inch rafters. The roof at the rear is broken by a flat-roofed dormer, 26 feet in length, Ruberoid being used as a covering for this.

The entrance, through the vestibule, leads into the living room, 12 by 38 feet, extending across the entire front of the house. There is a slight division of hall and living room, but we do not make this distinction, treating them as one large room. Built out from the west side is an inglenook 6½ by 13 feet. There is a large fireplace, built of split field stone, gray in color. The floors,
of the inglenook, as well as the vestibule, are of Welsh quarries, in two shades of red, which we find give just the right touch of color. At one end of the inglenook a door leads into a very convenient coat closet. At this southeast corner of the living room are double French windows leading out onto the porch. Built-in bookshelves are a feature of the south end of the room.

Opposite the French windows is the opening into the dining room, and at the west end of this room a French window opens onto a brick terrace, which is surrounded by a stone wall, with steps of split field stone leading down into the orchard.

The living and dining rooms are paneled in chestnut, the former to the height of 5 feet 10 inches, and the dining room (and entrance hall) to the height of 7 feet. The finish is soft and dull in effect. This result was obtained by fuming slightly with ammonia, then shellacking, sandpapering, waxing and polishing, until a soft warm shade of brown was attained. In these rooms, above the wainscoting we used a green art canvas for wall decoration. This gives an excellent contrast with the brown of the woodwork and the gray of the fireplace stones. The chestnut ceiling and beams were waxed before the fuming was done. For this reason the ammonia had no effect on them, the result being a lighter shade than that of the wainscoting. The floors, both upstairs and down, are of maple, first treated with an iron-rust stain, then shellacked with orange shellac, sandpapered, waxed and polished. The finished floors are of a dark velvety brown color, most effective. No plaster has been used on the walls of the living room or dining room. As a protection from cold in winter and heat in summer three-ply quilting was placed on the studding back of the wainscoting, and we find it forms a most satisfactory insulation, the house being remarkably cool in summer, and in spite of much window space and an exposed location, it is very easy to heat with hot air in winter. We have found storm windows and weather strips entirely unnecessary. We have also learned from experience and observation that the only practicable form of casement and French windows are those opening outward; they are proof against wind and rain, since the harder the wind blows, the more securely the windows fit.

The curtains in these rooms are very simple, and we feel that they solve for us the problem of curtaining casement windows satisfactorily. No shades are used, and there is merely one pair of curtains at each window. The material we have chosen is English wool casement cloth, a warm tan in color. We find it sufficiently opaque to answer the purpose of a shade at night, and still light enough to draw back and hang gracefully out of the way during the daytime.

From the dining room a swing door leads
into the pantry, 13 by 5 feet, at the opposite end of which is the kitchen, most convenient and compact with built-in cupboards and convenient shelves and tables. A door opens from the pantry onto the terrace, and this room, like the kitchen, is amply provided with cupboards and shelves. Stairs lead down from the kitchen into the large and convenient laundry and cellar, which has an outside entrance at the rear.

The inglenook with its built-in seat and low beam construction is a most comfortable and cheerful place in which to spend a winter evening. The fireplace itself is made of field stone embedded in cement and it is in excellent contrast with the darker tones of the inset wooden mantelshelf and the tiled hearth. Comfortable chairs grouped about the hearthfire can supplement the long seat with its piled up cushions, and altogether the nook is one of the most interesting corners of the house.

The lavish use of woodwork in the living and dining rooms of this house gives the interior an effect of friendliness and permanency that no other material can furnish. When so finished the walls of a room are as lasting as the rest of the construction, and if the color scheme and arrangement are well related in the beginning they will leave little desire for change.

The stairs leading to the second story are at the north end of the living room, built-in and well screened. The upper floor contains hall, four sleeping rooms, tiled bathroom besides cupboards and closets. These rooms are necessarily rather small, but we find that they answer our purpose admirably. From early spring until late in the autumn we occupy the sleeping porch, which is fitted with a double bed and one single bed. The view from this porch is very unusual, extending for miles in three directions.

FIREPLACE NOOK IN THE LITTLE HOUSE IN THE ORCHARD, WITH BUILT-IN SEAT AND TILED HEARTH.

A heavy plaster board is used in the second story, on the ceilings of which an additional extra heavy coat of plaster acts as an insulation against heat. The plaster is rough-finished and is painted yellow in the north room, pink in the west, tan in the east, while the south chamber has walls and ceiling of a soft gray, with a bluish tinge. The woodwork is cypress, shellacked and waxed. A very good feature of the south room is the set of built-in drawers, running on rollers. There are four in all, two large deep drawers, and two smaller ones, supplying a welcome addition to storage space.

The hardware and fixtures throughout the house are finished in black, the electric fixtures being of wrought iron purchased from the Craftsman shops at Eastwood.

Conveniently near the house stands a garage, and at a little distance to the rear is a small pony barn. These buildings are painted with creosote stain, brown in color, and harmonize well with the architecture of the house. Vines, shrubs and flowers add to the general appearance, but the most picturesque features of all are the rows of gnarled old trees, making our three acres beautiful whether in spring, blossom-laden, in summer, heavy with dark green foliage and shining fruit, in autumn with their leaves of gold and brown drifting slowly to earth, or in winter, tracing the outlines of bare and graceful branches on the drifted snow.