



Story by Marisa Crumb  
Photos by Carolyn Bates

## VERMONT HOMES AND GARDENS

# A Penchant for Portmanteau

*Two stone cottages in the Northeast Kingdom come with very special names.*

**D**RAWING FROM HER FAMILIAL ROOTS and a literary love, homeowner Lynda Graham-Barber named her first stone cottage, “Emerley,” a portmanteau word using the first four letters of her

father’s name, Emerson, and combining it with the first line of Daphne du Maurier’s novel *Rebecca*: “Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again.” She took the “-ley” from Manderly “and I fused it with the ‘Emer-’ from



Emerley was the first of the two unique, Scottish-style stone cottages to be built, the culmination of four years’ work. It was designed by Ray Barber (Lynda’s late husband) and completed in 1998.



The two cottages' interiors are similar in style, yet set apart by fundamental differences. The kitchen in Emerley (above) has a full complement of cabinets and an oven. In Bagatelle, where more open spaces and simplicity are the chief consideration, the kitchen is smaller and simpler.





Just a few steps across the custom-made tile floor from the kitchen (and a small fireplace) in Emerley is the living room (above). Upstairs is a loft bedroom similar to Bagatelle's; small skylights help to bring in a bit of the outdoors.





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Emerson,” she explains. “I love portmanteau words—you know, they’re so much fun.” Lynda and her late husband, Ray Barber (a graphic designer who served as the architect for this project), started building this first stone cottage in 1994; it was completed in 1998. Ray, who passed away in 1996, designed it.

Construction on the second cottage, “Bagatelle,” was started in 2007 and finished in 2008. Not a blend of two different words, this cottage’s nomenclature came from an old window that Lynda felt an affinity for when she saw it in a junk shop. As she recounts it, “We were camping in Maine, right before we decided to build. We knew we were going to build *something*, and I fell in love with this old window. It was

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The covered walkway's door opens onto a courtyard. The walkway's interior (below) serves as a mudroom, besides a passageway between cottages. The well-weathered interior door was originally part of an inn in Newport Center.



quite large and had come from Europe, probably from a café or store.” One can see the word *Bagatelle* etched in the glass and centered, with a Roman design framing the edges. Lynda was a French major in college and says she has always loved the language. Lynda’s present husband, David Hunter, was the architect, and when they were in the junk shop, she said, “David, we have to buy that window! And when he asked why, I said “because it’s going to be in the bathroom of something we haven’t built yet!” The couple had to pack it up and bring it back to Vermont in a camper, which Lynda adds “wasn’t easy.”

Lynda is effervescent when narrating details and stories about the two stone cottages, and I’m guessing this is typical of the children’s book author, who has 15 books to her credit. “I just love the window,” she continues, “and years later, as I was looking at it, I realized there’s the shape of an owl, and I’m very fond of owls. So, we named the guest cottage Bagatelle.”

Interesting story there too—of course—as Lynda and David initially built the smaller Bagatelle with the purpose of providing space for company. We thought, “Oh, people come and go; we should have a guest cottage,” recalls Lynda. In reality, they spend more time in Bagatelle, and have guests stay in Emerley. At 1,440 square feet,



David designed and fabricated the iron railings on Emerley's staircase. "Most everything here is repurposed," Lynda says, "or either my husband made it." In Bagatelle, an old farm dray on the property makes a fascinating, re-purposed railing (right). Each cottage has its own bathroom (below); Emerley's (at left) sports a collection of curios and framed artwork while Bagatelle (at right) features a European-style bathroom.



Lynda describes Emerley as “more fussy,” and 800-square-foot Bagatelle as “more practical and easier to heat.” Bagatelle doesn’t have an oven, so any meals (or cookies) are made after a trek through the connecting wood-clad passage between the two structures.

The architecturally appealing transition deserves some ink as well. Painted a stormy, dramatic, deep-teal/blue/gray, the covered and enclosed walkway opens to either side, not just to the entrance to the two cottages. It has two transom windows over the formidable curved doors that swing wide for access to the gardens and yards just beyond the brick walkway. The covered passageway is both necessary for moving back and forth between the two places in inclement weather as well as serving as a mudroom and a bit of storage. In any season, views of Bear Mountain in neighboring Canada are stunning; Lynda and David think the view from atop the mountain toward the lake “looks like Switzerland.” Emerley was purposely oriented to maximize the exhilarating scenery—it definitely succeeded.

The door going in to Bagatelle was previously on an inn in nearby Newport Center; David happened to drive by and saw that the shuttered establishment was “eliminating doors.” For a mere \$20, the door was theirs. The outside has a leathery finish, Lynda relates, which are the collective layers of paint—“maybe 80 years of paint” she guesses. “I love that surface. It looked like a lizard.” Rather than strip it, she wanted to preserve it, so she put layers of butcher’s wax on it so that the door’s history is still maintained. The other side of the door “was a mess” and Lynda did what she calls “some cre-



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Lynda is a children's book author, with 15 books to her credit. She named the first cottage Emerley, drawing from her familial roots and a love of literature.



The 1994 construction of Emerley is well-documented in a family photo album, and in a scale pre-construction mock-up (below) that has become a keepsake.



ative faux painting”—the interior side is very complementary to the décor. The striking patinaed outside, of course, speaks for itself and is entirely unique and quite the conversation starter.

Back to the kitchens. Both cottages were designed to resemble the Scottish style of a stone dwelling; with Scottish ancestors, Scotland holds a very special place in Lynda's heart and is her “favorite place on earth.” She has traveled there several times and has incorporated a custom-made tile in the floor, with Gaelic words for “to follow your star,” but freely admits that they “got carried away” as sometimes happens when undertaking something for the first time. Lynda prefers the kitchen in Bagatelle partly for the fact that there are no upper cabinets; she also likes the subway tiles and finds it easier to clean and maintain. “It just has a different feel.” Although she quickly adds that she often goes next door to work. Emerley is also where the couple entertains, and Lynda laughs and says that when guests come for dinner or parties, sometimes they'll start in Bagatelle for appetizers and then do the main course in Emerley.

Clearly, both spaces are distinctive, nontraditional, and intimate, yet both imbue personalities that very much complete each other and integrate each other's strengths and individual features. “Most everything here is repurposed,” Lynda says, “or either my husband made it. Practically everything in here has some interesting little story to it, as to where it came from or who made it or where it was found.” For example, the lighting fixtures were handcrafted by using old tools and kitchen items that Lynda supplied to artisans at High Beams Lighting in Sutton, Vermont who then turned them into lighting. David, a tile setter and sculptor,





Lynda and her husband David Hunter relax at their table on the backyard patio near a pond, together with their dog, Biscuit. David is a tile setter and sculptor, and examples of his work are to be seen outside the cottages, as well as inside.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LYNDIA GRAHAM-BARBER



fabricated several unique pieces, including a buggy step that he inverted and made into a beautiful sconce that resides by the fireplace in Emerley.

Both cottages have one loft bedroom and one bathroom. Bagatelle features an all-wet, European-style bathroom—there is no tub, everything can get wet (there’s a drain in the center of the room), and it’s all tile. Emerley has a large, bright bathroom with a see-through fireplace, glass shelves, a Jacuzzi soaking tub plus a shower, and curios, souvenirs, and framed artwork. Refreshingly, not your average bathroom.

The all-stone Emerley was quite the construction process. “We collected stones, oh gosh, for so long,” groans Lynda. “A lot of it came from the horse pasture down the road. And we’d go canoeing and find some stones and put them in the canoe; we’d be driving down a country road and we’d stop if we saw a great stone! We needed flat stones, of course, and the area around here seems to have *round* stones, so we were forever looking for stone.” And when they built the second house, Lynda continues, “we thought ‘oh dear, how about just half stone and stucco.’” On Emerley, there are beams set into the stone; Lynda’s late husband Ray brought timber out of the woods and used an ax to hew them, which she then stained. The rustic beams inside came from an old barn that had fallen down. “I knew I wanted old beams in there,” Lynda explains, “and the farmer at that point decided to sell those beams because the barns had come down. And so I could buy the beams!” Yet another serendipitous moment.

“And the silo from that barn,” enthuses Lynda, “is part of the floor upstairs in the loft.” In the bathroom, if you look up, the underside of the silo wood is visible. “I left all of



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Lying between the two cottages, the covered and enclosed walkway sports two transom windows and opens to either side, plus the entrances of the two buildings.

the anomalies on there that formed over the years, that almost look like lichen. I just left them because I love looking at them!”

In every nook, every wonderful area, the mingling of the two cottages display Lynda and David’s obvious proclivity and adept skill for blending two distinct entities into one well-loved home.

Even the two cottages are port-manteaus in their own right... **T**

Marisa Crumb enjoys hiking, kayaking, and all forms of chocolate. Carolyn Bates is a professional photographer who lives and works in Burlington, VT. To see more of her work, visit [carolynbates.com](http://carolynbates.com).

## JUST THE FACTS

**Lynda Graham-Barber**  
(children’s book author)  
Visit [lyndagrahambarber.com](http://lyndagrahambarber.com).

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