

The Beaumont

Statement of Architectural Intent

The Beaumont is a home inspired by the vernacular domestic architecture of northwestern France. The rambling form, including hipped and gabled roofs, the round-tower form, reminiscent of a colombier or dovecot, the combination of brick, stone and colombage, or half-timbering, are all features of this type of rural building. Historically, many of these buildings would have had thatched roofs, but slate, wood shingles, and tile are frequently found covering the meandering rooflines.

American architects in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and their clientele were drawn to these French houses because of their rustic forms and memories of poppy fields, lavender, and fleurs-de-lis. They instilled in them features of American houses such as larger, wider, window openings and romanticized asymmetric composition, which would evoke the natural beauty of the French countryside in an American setting. Features like hand-hewn timbers, stuccoed in-fill, handcrafted oak doors, cabinetry and paneling, along with carved limestone mantelpieces and terracotta floors typically were used to complete the designs and give them some of the attributes of the French originals. This style is identified as "French Eclectic" in McAlester's *A Field Guide to American Houses* and is also sometimes loosely referred to as "French Normandy" or "French Manor" style.

The front door of the Beaumont is sheltered under hand-hewn oak beams and corbels. Upon entering, the entrance hall opens onto a spiraling staircase tucked-into the turret, and spills into a cozy, formal living room with a low, beamed ceiling. The bold, solid limestone or oaken treads recall the ancient and rustic buildings that have inspired the Beaumont. A simple, iron railing suggests the frugality and pragmatic sensibilities of French farmers and blacksmiths. Beyond, a small study precedes a spacious master suite that includes generous closets and bath. The family room has a high, beamed ceiling and a balcony along one end at the second floor. A tall, square bay window overlooks the terrace and pool. Adjacent to the family room are a large kitchen with clerestory windows over the island, a breakfast room with its bay window overlooking the auto-court, and convenient access to the garages, laundry and guest room. Upstairs, there are three bedrooms and plenty of room to expand into with a playroom, media room, 2nd floor living room, or wide-open storage space.

~ *David H. Ellison, AIA, NCARB*