

# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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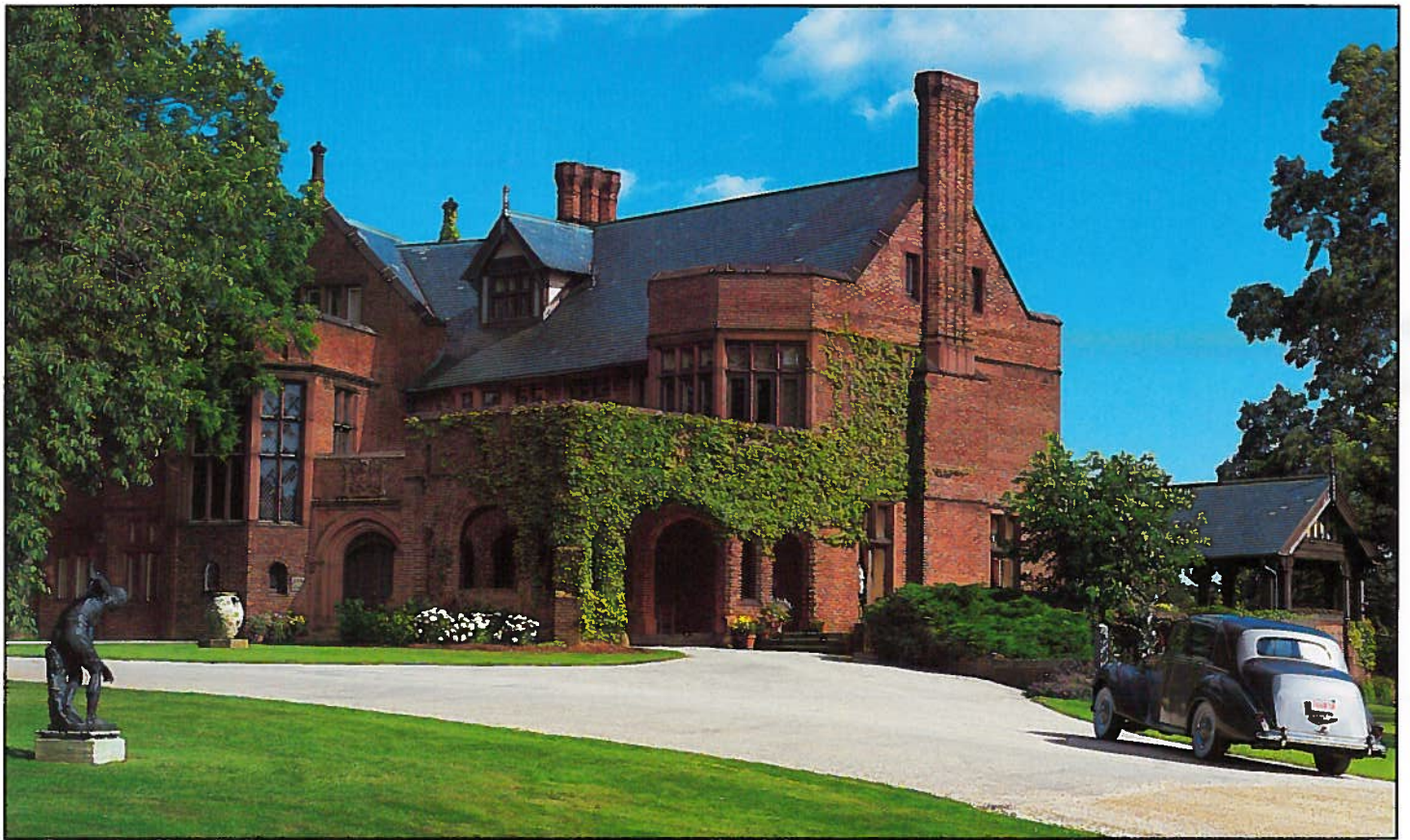
## Bonny Blantyre

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Text by Steven M. L. Aronson/Photography by Billy Cunningham



**B**EFORE THE IMPOSITION of the income tax and the catastrophic stock market crash put a term to the vestigial gaiety of the Gilded Age, Lenox, Massachusetts, in the bosom of the Berkshires, was a social resort on a par with Newport and Bar Harbor. Like them, it was celebrated for a concentration of great summer houses misleadingly called cottages; each had upward of 20 rooms, and some, with nearly a



hundred, were more like lavish palaces. Indeed, the towered, turreted, and all but battlemented Blantyre was once known in Lenox and its environs as “the castle.” Nowadays it is the greatest great house going—or rather, *still* going, most of the rest having long since been broken up or razed or, alternatively, converted into convents, conference centers, country clubs, camps, schools, spas and sanatoriums.

**ABOVE:** Blantyre, a 1902 Gilded Age summer house in Lenox, Massachusetts, was transformed in the early 1980s by the Fitzpatrick family into an intimate luxury hotel.

**LEFT:** A brick-and-stone gatepost marks the entrance to the winding, treelined drive to the hotel, which sits amid some 100 verdant acres in the Berkshires.





**ABOVE:** The two-story cedar-clad Ice House is one of four available cottages on the grounds. **RIGHT:** Blue-and-white toile from Brunshwig & Fils envelops the master bed.

**BELOW:** Boston ivy climbs the south façade of the brick Main House. Half-timbered stucco, towers and turrets express the structure's Tudor-style architecture.

on a high lawn he built (with the help of 300 masons) a country seat in the feudal Tudor style of his wife's ancestral home in Blantyre, near Glasgow. It boasted rows of leaded-glass windows and paneling of magnificent dark oak, sweeping staircases, monumental fireplaces, intimate parlors and mammoth reception rooms, not to mention an attic one could practically play polo in.



Believing as they demonstrably did that “there is a beauty in the right enjoyment of riches,” the Patersons went on to outfit their cottage with museum-quality furniture and paintings, priceless porcelains and tapestries, exotic trophy heads, medieval English armor and “implements of the chase.” Today Blantyre’s paying guests have the run of the roughly 100 acres that remain of the original land holding—a combination of woodland and gently sloping, velvet-smooth green-sward. And, all obligingly, the trees that sheltered the Patersons’ privilege persist in their height and glory: towering white pine and Norway spruce, majestic copper beech, luscious sugar maple, giant black locust and horse chestnut. . . .





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called “the complex art of civilized living”; and from antiques shops to spare. And when all else fails, there’s the Appalachian Trail.

Throw in 24-hour room service, in-room massages and a fitness center soon to be a full-blown spa, and one appreciates that it is not exactly for nothing that Blantyre has garnered the Mobil Five-Star Award (given to only 30 hotels in the entire United States) and placed third in New England in *Zagat’s Top U.S. Hotels, Resorts & Spas*. Since 1984 it has been a member of Relais & Châteaux, the

prestigious worldwide association of family-owned and -operated hotels.

The rolling Berkshire Hills, according to no less inestimable a surveyor than Henry James, lent themselves to an “expensively workable American form of country life.” Palpably, one of the people who happened to agree with him was the Scottish-born Robert W. Paterson: Having made his fortune in Manhattan as a banker and a merchant, he went so far as to snap up a couple of hundred acres of Lenox in the very first year of the 20th century. There



ABOVE: The Laurel Suite—one of 25 guest accommodations at Blantyre—offers views of sweeping lawns and two croquet courts. The English painting is 19th century.

LEFT: Breakfast may be enjoyed outside on sunny days or in the adjacent conservatory. Chef Christopher Brooks oversees the hotel’s country-house cuisine.



Blantyre is a country-house hotel with service, cuisine and décor that only luxury tempered by good taste can bring into being.



And the going is still good. It's no longer a private house, Blantyre is perhaps an even better thing—a country-house hotel dispensing the kind of service, cuisine and décor that only luxury tempered by good taste can bring into being. The staff of 80—under the tutelage of general manager Katja Henke, who previously did stints at the Bristol in Paris and England's exclusive Chewton Glen—encompasses three gardeners and two flower arrangers; 12 in the kitchen, including "six on the stoves," two pastry chefs and head chef Christopher Brooks, whose mantra is elegance, simplicity, freshness and flavor; a wait staff of 17 presided over by a tuxedoed maître d' (at dinner, jackets and ties are mandatory for men); and a harpist who plays every evening in the Main Hall.

There are always "two on duty" at the heated outdoor swimming pool, and a tennis pro on call for lessons or matches on one of the four Har-Tru courts, where whites, it should be noted, are required, as they also are on the two championship croquet courts.



**ABOVE LEFT:** The grand staircase leads up to the guest rooms.  
**ABOVE:** An elaborate carved plaster ceiling crowns the Main Hall, where a crackling fire warms a seating area.

**LEFT:** H. W. Pickersgill's portrait of Mrs. Blount hangs in the delicately detailed Moiré Room, a private dining space off the Main Hall. Schumacher wallcovering.

An 18-hole golf course surrounds the place. And not too terribly many miles separate it from cultural events, such as Tanglewood, the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra; from the Norman Rockwell Museum and the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute; from historic sites such as Arrowhead, the home of Herman Melville, where he wrote *Moby-Dick*, and The Mount, the estate of Edith Wharton, where she both practiced her inimitable craft and perfected what she

"I've inherited my love of pretty things from my mother," says Ann Fitzpatrick Brown, the current owner of Blantyre, whose business card reads, ever so quaintly, "Proprietress." Back in the 1950s her parents, Jack and Jane Fitzpatrick, founded—"right on their dining room table"—what would become the immensely successful mail-order business Country Curtains. Well-circumstanced as they were, in 1980 they undertook to "rescue" Blantyre (post-Paterson, the house had been acquired by the pioneering motion-picture-epic director-producer D. W. Griffith, who briefly entertained the idea of

weighed a ton, Brown adds, "In putting the rooms together, I particularly enjoyed playing with shapes and colors." (In the resolutely Tudor, oak-paneled dining room, the always hands-on proprietress sees to it that the Venetian crystal, English china and floral centerpieces on each table are all changed daily.)

Astonishingly, Blantyre was ready to open within a year—by the summer of 1981. Over the intervening years it has been elaborated on, so that it now offers accommodation not only in the Main House but in the Carriage House and four cottages on the grounds, including the Ice House (Brown's

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In all, there are 25 guest units: rooms and suites. The rooms run the gamut from "country rustic" in the cottages to "stately elegant" in the Main House.

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turning it into a film studio, and later still, it was meanly reduced to serving as a restaurant-cum-bar).

Brown and her mother, with an admirable generosity of intention, set out to restore Blantyre to all it had been in its grander days: a house whole and beautiful in itself. They decorated it together, using mostly 19th-century French, English and American pieces; and meanwhile they had discovered in the basement some of the Patersons' brass sconces, bath fixtures, red velvet chairs and overstuffed sofas and had them scrupulously repaired. A good deal of the furniture, Brown explains, was acquired at auction when the other great houses were emptied out, one by one. "The local auctioneers always said it was better to behold Jane Fitzpatrick with her paddle up than have a rainy day," she laughs.

"My mother and I both felt that the draperies needed to look like ball gowns, and as you can see, they do—damask, silk, velvet, moiré. Another thing my mother has always said is, 'You have to have beautiful lamps and mirrors,' and we do. And I've made sure that everywhere there are books you would want to read or look through." A former candy sculptor whose last major commission was a castle for Macy's Christmas display that literally

14-year-old son, Alexander, has a room there named after him—"He insisted it have a giant TV screen and that there always be a bowl of Skittles"). In all, there are 25 guest units: rooms and suites, the latter complete with a sitting room and at least one bathroom—and some of those bathrooms are baronial. The rooms run the gamut from "country rustic" in the cottages to "stately elegant" in the Main House.

Rooms may be reserved singly or in any combination, and in fact the entire estate is not infrequently booked for board retreats, weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, renewal-of-vows ceremonies and family reunions. "I love it when we're given as a gift," Brown says, "because of what it means—that we're considered synonymous with 'special occasion.' Very often people give us to their parents—to celebrate an anniversary. We roll up the Kirman carpet in the Music Room and let the good times roll."

Is it any wonder that Blantyre enjoys a preternaturally high rate of return on the part of its departing guests?

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*Blantyre is open from early May to early November. For more information, contact Blantyre, 16 Blantyre Road, P.O. Box 995, Lenox, Massachusetts 01240; telephone 413-637-3556 or visit [www.blantyre.com](http://www.blantyre.com).*