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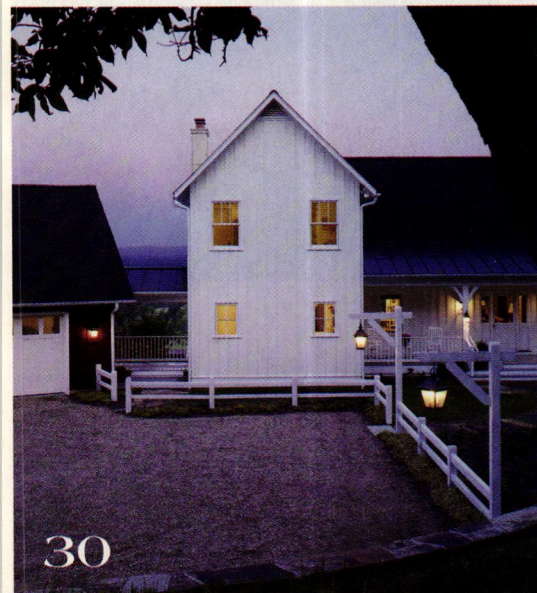
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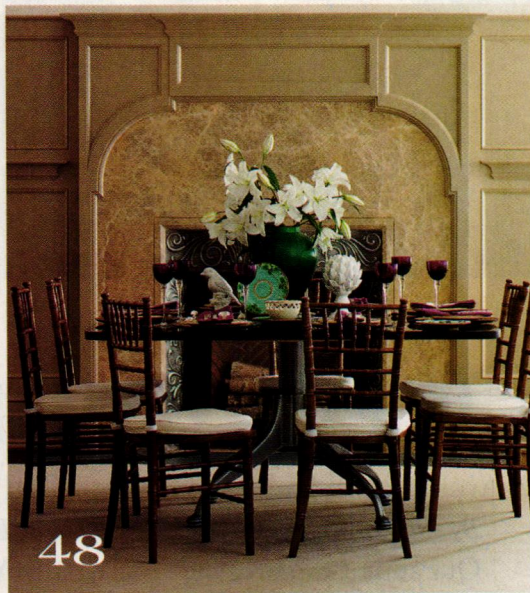
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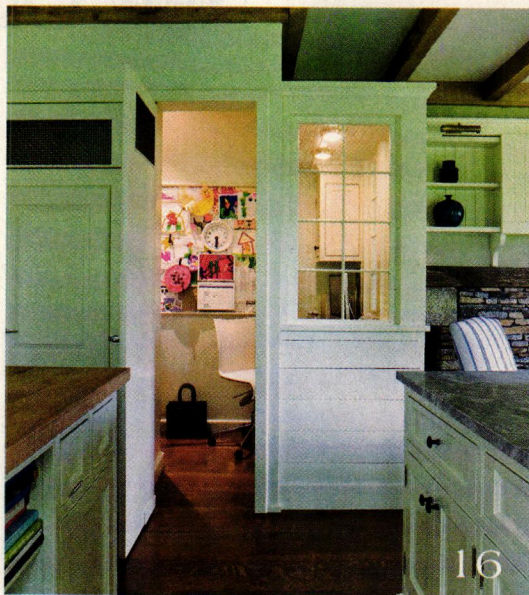
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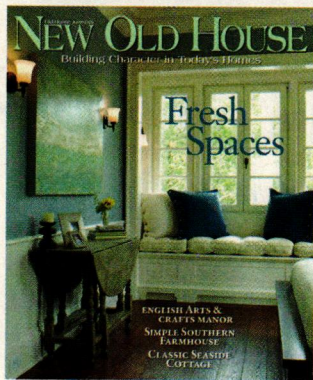
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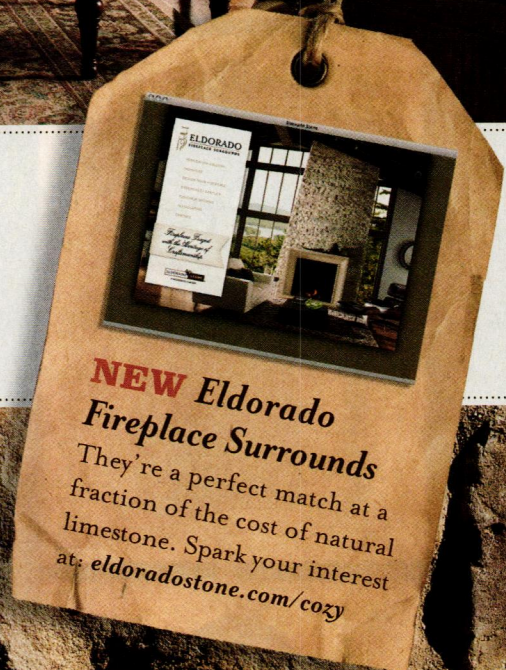
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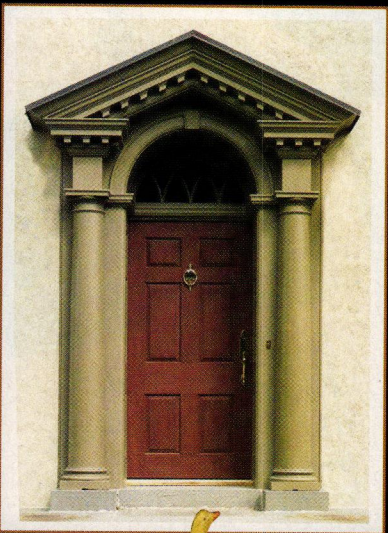
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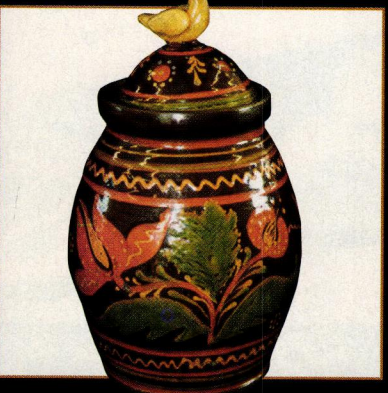
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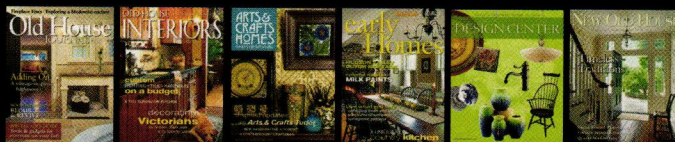
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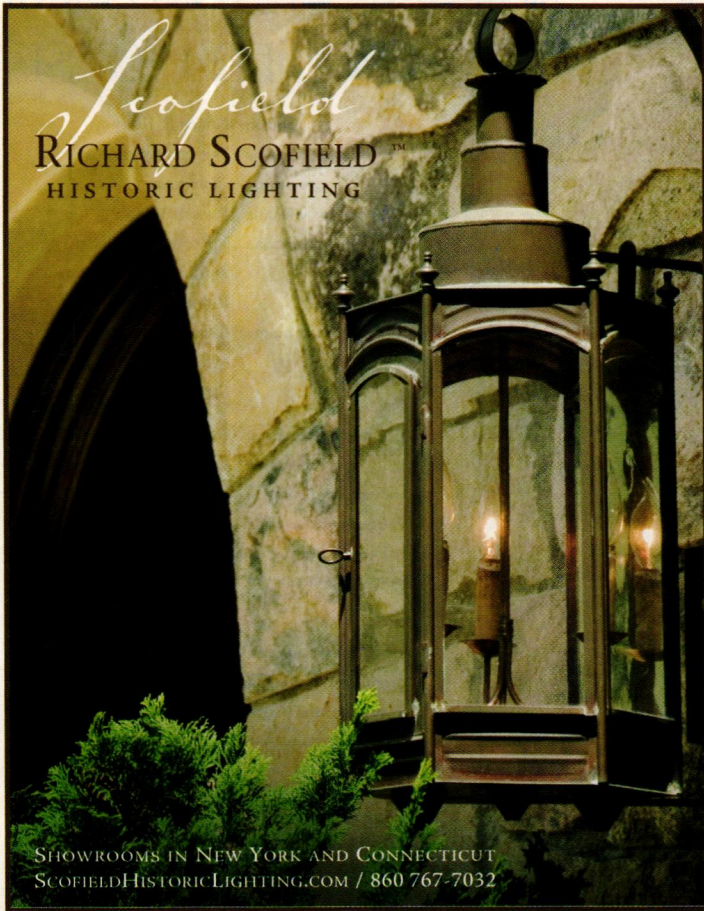
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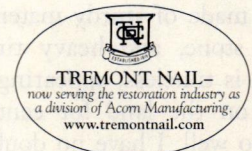
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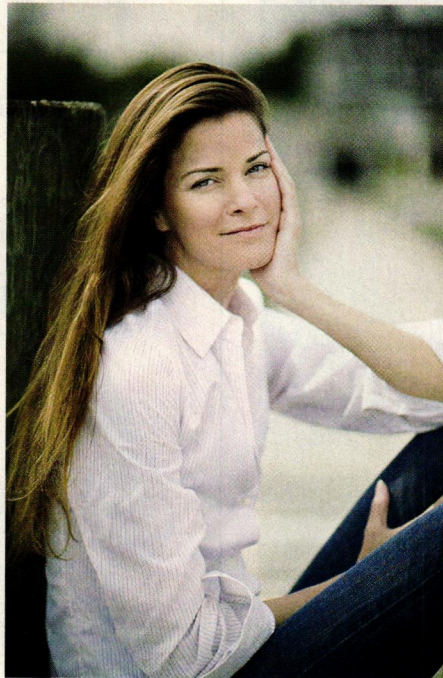
# Built to Last

This past summer I went to the historic Exchange Building on Boston's waterfront to attend a conference on traditional design—the themes were sustainability, craft, and traditional building. I arrived just in time for the keynote address given by Jean Carroon, FAIA, principal of Goody Clancy Architects in Boston (the firm responsible for Copley Square's Trinity Church restoration). Carroon's focus was on the power of preservation. She discussed adaptive reuse of historic buildings and the strategies architects can take to make historical buildings more efficient.

Architect Sandra Vitzthum was the second speaker of the day, and she offered tips for timeless design as well as setting sustainable goals in new residential construction. During the lunch break, I was able to visit with some of these thoughtful architects who are creating new traditional houses or revamping historical buildings. They all shared the same objective: to create places that are built to last—making them inherently sustainable. If we reuse an existing building, we put less stress on the environment by limiting the amount of new resources harvested. And when we construct new buildings with integrity as well as sustainable practices, they will last for generations.

In this issue of *New Old House*—as with every issue—we feature beautiful homes built to last. Austin Patterson Disston Architects created a new old house in the English Arts & Crafts genre based on designs by nineteenth-century architect Edwin Lutyens. The home is a shining example of a carefully crafted house made of sturdy materials such as brick, stone, and heavy timbers. The design is timeless, appearing as if it has stood on the land for centuries—it is built so well, I have no doubt it will be standing for centuries to come.

Architect Sandra Vitzthum redesigned mid-twentieth-century additions



to an 1820s Cape in Vermont. The original house was in pristine condition, but the 1950s and 1970s add-ons were poorly constructed and poorly designed. Vitzthum worked her magic to reinvent the spaces within the existing footprint. Taking cues from the historical structure, Sandy created a light-filled contemporary space with traditional sensibilities.

Barnes Vanze Architects designed a vernacular farmhouse in Virginia in the midst of a rolling vineyard. Informed by historical precedents in the area, the house sits quietly in its agricultural surroundings. Although its form is traditional the home's open plan speaks to today's way of living. The outcome is a solid structure that its inhabitants will enjoy for years to come.

So when renovating or building your own home, adhere to this simple rule: build well once. And following the tenets behind a new old house will help you achieve this goal.

Enjoy!

*Nancy E. Berry*  
Editor

Old-House Journal's

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OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL'S NEW OLD HOUSE (ISSN 1941-7721) is published by Home Buyer Publications and Active Interest Media Inc. The known office of publication is located at 475 Sansome Street, Suite 850, San Francisco, CA 94111. The editorial office is located at 4125 Lafayette Center Drive, Suite 100, Chantilly, VA 20151; 703-222-9411; 800-826-3893; fax: 703-222-3209. COPYRIGHT: 2011 by Cruz Bay Publishing, Inc., El Segundo, CA. This publication may not be reproduced, either in whole or part, in any form without written permission from the publisher. PRINTING: RR Donnelley, Strasburg, VA. Printed in the USA.



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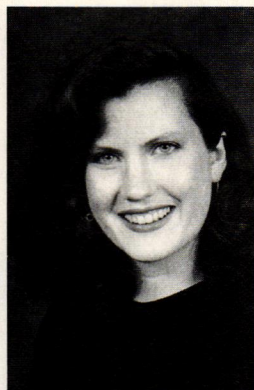
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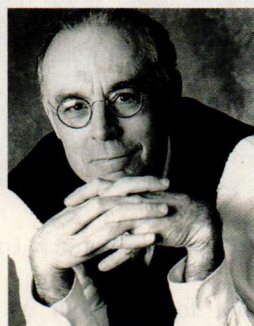
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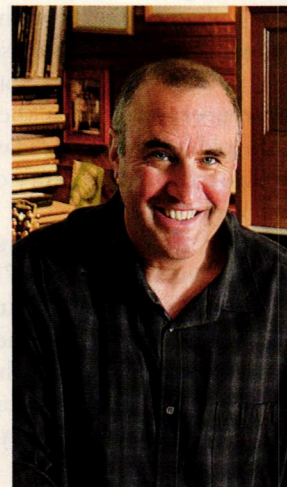
**Editor-at-Large Russell Versaci** is a residential architect who has spent two decades designing traditional houses. He attended the Harvard University

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For more than 30 years, **Eric Roth** has been capturing life through the lens, which has guided him on local, national, and international journeys. He has shot for such publications as *Traditional*

*Home*, *Metropolitan Home*, *Elle Decor*, and *Coastal Living*. He lives in Topsfield, Massachusetts, and has two lovely daughters.

# American Yesterday

Documenting our past has been invaluable in preserving our built environment.

BY RUSSELL VERSACI, AIA

As America turned toward the new millennium in 1900, the republic paused in its storied quest for the future. The 1876 Centennial International Exposition had marked a turning point for the young country. For the first time, America took time to reflect on its past.

While Europe had long prized its history, America had spent its first 100 years rushing to greatness without a backward glance. After all, Europe was the past, and America the future. But with the industrial age dawning and the twentieth century looming, Americans began looking back with pride at their heritage.

As public interest grew, history buffs and civic leaders rallied to seek out the surviving remnants of the colonial past, traipsing like a new breed of explorers through the countryside. What they found was that the old buildings were fast disappearing, collapsing after a century of neglect and the ravages of time.

Architects were among the first to document what remained. In 1877, Charles McKim and Stanford White launched a study tour of New England, searching for “the old farm houses, the taverns, the mills, and the inns” to measure and draw. More historic surveys soon followed.

New technology played an important role in these studies. George Eastman’s invention in 1877 of the portable Kodak camera and roll film enabled laymen and professionals alike to take photographs with ease. As large-format sheet film became available, professional photographers were freed from reliance on heavy glass-plate negatives.

One of the first professionals to take advantage of this new technology was a family friend of George Eastman, a young woman who had forsworn her



Photographer Frances Benjamin Johnston, Edgemont, Albemarle County, Virginia

society upbringing for a career as a photojournalist.

## Frances Benjamin Johnston

Born into comfort and privilege in 1864, Frances Benjamin Johnston was raised in Washington, D.C., the only child of wealthy parents. At 18 she left home to study art in Paris and returned to Washington two years later to establish herself as an illustrator and writer.

After writing several magazine articles, Johnston decided that photojournalism was her true calling. She began studying photography at the Smithsonian Institution, and asked George Eastman to send one of his new cameras, beginning her photography career in earnest.

A tour of Europe in 1905 kindled

her passion for architecture and garden design. Back in the States, Johnston opened a photo studio in New York City with Mattie Edwards Hewitt, another pioneering woman photographer. The duo won acclaim for their pictures of architecture and gardens, landing commissions from the leading architects of the day, including McKim, Mead, & White; John Russell Pope; and Charles Platt.

While on an assignment for *Town and Country*, Johnston fell in love with the old colonial architecture of the South, developing an appreciation for “the fine old houses which figured so importantly in colonial history and which are falling to wrack and ruin unhonored and unsung.”

The historic buildings of Virginia truly captured Johnston’s heart. After a

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HAB5

photo tour of the city of Fredericksburg, she exhibited her pictures of the old buildings to much acclaim. Eager to continue this work, Johnston persuaded the Carnegie Foundation in 1932 to fund a more extensive photographic survey of historic buildings in the South.

By the time Johnston began the Carnegie project, she had established solid survey methods, using old deeds and plats, maps, and information from local historians to catalog her photographs. In North Carolina she compiled 800 photographs later published in *The Early Architecture of North Carolina* (1941). Then she traveled to Louisiana to photograph plantation houses, and on to Georgia, producing a second book, *The Early Architecture of Georgia* (1957).

In her later years Johnston recalled a career spent hurrying “ahead of the march of neglect and progress” to document simple old structures she called “primitives,” convinced that photography was the best strategy to preserve their memory before it was too late. Today all of Johnston’s Southern images are collected at the Library of Congress in the Carnegie Survey of the Architecture of the South.

### Samuel Chamberlain

Another photographer with a passion for old buildings was Bostonian Samuel Chamberlain, born in 1875. A generation younger than Johnston, Chamberlain was an architecture student at MIT when World War I broke out, and he sailed for France to join the American Field Service ambulance corps.

After the war Chamberlain spent 12 years traveling through France, Spain, and England, developing skills as a printmaker in etchings of buildings and landscapes with an architect’s eye. His prints were published by the Architectural Book Publishing Company of New York in *Domestic Architecture of Rural France* (1928), *Sketches of Northern Spanish Architecture* (1928), and *Tudor Homes of England* (1929).

When war threatened Europe again, Chamberlain returned to Massachusetts, settling into Boston to work as a teacher and writer. Fascinated by photography and intrigued by its potential as an artistic medium, he pitched an idea to his old publisher. Chamberlain believed that a book of photographs of the humble colonial homes



Photographer Samuel Chamberlain, Gore Place, Waltham, Massachusetts

of New England would interest Americans needing ideas for modest homes during the Great Depression.

Company editor Walter Frese was so smitten with the idea that he left his position to launch his own publishing imprint, Hastings House, dedicated to Chamberlain’s work. Frese was sure that there was a broad market for his photographs, and ultimately, he and Chamberlain would publish four dozen titles together.

Chamberlain’s photographic eye helped shape the mythic image of New England that still captivates visitors today. *A Small House in the Sun* (1936) was followed by *Beyond New England Thresholds* (1937), then the *American Landmarks* series of small, inexpensive volumes with photos of picturesque tourist destinations like Deerfield, Salem, Marblehead, and Nantucket.

Over the next 30 years Chamberlain ranged far and wide, photographing old buildings for the *Visage of America* series, with volumes devoted to Williamsburg, Charleston, Natchez, New Orleans, Princeton, Yale, and Harvard, among others. His books of rich silver-gelatin photographs remain a rare contribution to the preservation of America’s past.

### Photography and the New Deal

While Johnston and Chamberlain continued building successful careers during the Depression, most photographers and architects were out of work. With the landmark New Deal program, President Roosevelt hired unemployed photographers, architects, historians, and writers for the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS). Using survey methods pioneered by Johnston and Chamberlain, the contributors produced text, plans, elevations, perspective views, sketches, and drawings of buildings both commonplace and grand, creating a vast visual archive documenting America’s built heritage.

Unparalleled in the world, the HABS archive today is a national treasure that resides at the Library of Congress. Digitization has opened the archive to the world, free for anyone to browse and download through the Library of Congress website.

Today we are in the grip of another depression, the Great Recession. There are 14.1 million Americans out of work, with a third of all architects unemployed and even more underemployed, according to the American Institute of Architects. Suffering along with them are the architectural photographers and writers who depend on the work of architects. This perfect storm cries out for another New Deal.

HABS is still a vital government project funded through The National Park Service. While more than 28,000 historic buildings have already been recorded in over 157,000 photographs and 51,000 drawings, there are thousands more that cry out for cataloging before they disappear—and there are many talented hands free and eager to do the work.

The New Deal saved our country’s architects and photographers from drowning during the Great Depression. If we want to rescue a new generation of architects and photographers from today’s recession, while preserving America’s built heritage for posterity, we could devise no better life raft than the Historic American Buildings Survey. **NOH**

*Russell Versaci is an architect and the author of Creating a New Old House and Roots of Home (both by Taunton Press).*

*For resources, see page 62.*

# Heart of a Home

History, purpose, and location inform the new old fireplace.

BY JENNIFER SPERRY

At heart, they are pure function, but on the outskirts, all form. Fireplaces have been integral to the American home since settlers built their very first structures, and have evolved over the years from sprawling, multifunctional necessities to refined showpieces of craft and design.

Determining appropriate new old fireplaces and mantelpieces requires investigation on multiple fronts: architectural trends, cultural precedence, and material availability. A historic fireplace tells a story about a home's inhabitants and their origins, whether stone or marble was quarried nearby, or which designers were in vogue at the time. A successful new old version should do no less.

## Evolving Standards

The first permanent American homes were one room, sometimes with loft spaces above. Fireplaces began as hearths centered in this "hall," with smoke funneled outside by either holes in the roof or short wooden chimneys. Spark protection amounted to hearths and back walls (called "reredos") made of local stone. Without jambs, these early versions were inefficient and unable to direct heat into a room or prevent smoke from blowing crosswise. Eventually, fireplaces migrated and were built into walls or outside; their jambs often were faced with heavy hewn timbers with massive lintels in between.

Since these more rustic beginnings, fireplaces and their mantelpieces have evolved over the centuries, typically in relation to the aesthetics of an era combined with the European influences of a particular region. As Henry J. Kauffman writes in *The American Fireplace*: "Chimneys, fireplaces, and mantelpieces are intimately interrelated...Such facilities, long used and fondly remembered from their homelands, were copied by the English, Dutch, Swedes, and Germans for their first permanent dwellings in America."

Architect John Milner specializes in restoration projects, as well as designing new homes that reflect the traditions of American architecture. Based in southeastern Pennsylvania, he is privy to a rich collection of vernacular architecture created by diverse settlers. In order to help restore some of the region's earliest homes, he traveled to the builders' original areas. "It was fascinating to discover that a wood mantelpiece I saw in a pub in Cornwall, England, was remarkably similar to the mantelpiece in a 1714 house in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania," he explains of the correlation between Old and New World construction.



For a new old house in New York, architect Gil Schafer replicated the mantelpiece on the opposite page and placed both in the living room. The pair offers symmetry and elegance. It's nearly impossible to tell the historical mantel from the newly fabricated one.

As houses grew more sophisticated with more rooms, the number of fireplaces increased, creating the opportunity for variety. Architect Gilbert Schafer of G.P. Schafer Architect in New York explains: "It is a measure of the settlers' design sophistication that mantelpieces would not be identical from room to room." Typically parlors boasted the grandest



Decorative Box



Top left: Gil Shafter incorporates delicate details in a mantel for master bedroom.  
 Top right: Architect John Murray adds classical elements such as Grecian relief scene.  
 Above: Architect John Milner replicates Colonial-era mantels for many of his Pennsylvania designs.

designs, followed by dining rooms and master bedrooms. Second-floor fireplaces were common with improved construction techniques and tended to be smaller and less ornate.

Kitchen fireplaces were usually generous in dimension, oftentimes between 6' and 9' long and 4' or 5' high, with 3' of depth. Built in the seventeenth century, a kitchen fireplace would typically be made of stone, with wooden lintels and without mantels or ornamentation. In the late seventeenth century, ovens were added to the back wall, typically placed to one side but occasionally centered. Even as mantelpiece ornamentation increased in the early eighteenth century, kitchens fireplaces changed very little.

As European medieval characteristics gave way to Georgian features, craftsmen began to treat fireplace walls with paneling, which were usually of various shapes and sizes, their general arrangement tending toward asymmetry. Often, entire walls were paneled, with cupboards and doors included.

Various architectural styles, including Georgian, Federal, Neoclassical, Greek Revival, and Victorian, made their marks throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Marble, a particularly elegant facing that could be quarried in America or imported from Europe, was incorporated more frequently in the latter eighteenth century, as were mantelshelves. Wealthy merchants and landowners, often influenced by designs seen in books or along trade routes, afforded the best designers, carvers, and plaster molders of their time, creating some of America's most spectacular showpieces.

### Working with Established Traditions

Whether a new old homeowner desires a Federal-style mantelpiece with molded ornaments or a Dutch-style design with painted tiles, a specific look can be achieved with either reclaimed or newly built mantelpieces. Milner

TOP LEFT: ERIC ROTH PHOTO; TOP RIGHT: COURTESY OF JOHN MURRAY ARCHITECT; BOTTOM: COURTESY OF JOHN MILNER ARCHITECTS



John Milner uses a simple, unadorned mantelshelf for an early American look.

encourages both avenues, while cautioning that historic finds must work with the project's architectural story. "I like to incorporate preserved mantelpieces the way they would have existed originally, to treat them as part of the architecture and not as just found objects. It needs to work," he explains. Schafer adds that deciding on a reclaimed mantelpiece before construction is helpful for two reasons: It can affect a room's overall molding characters and also determine the firebox dimensions.

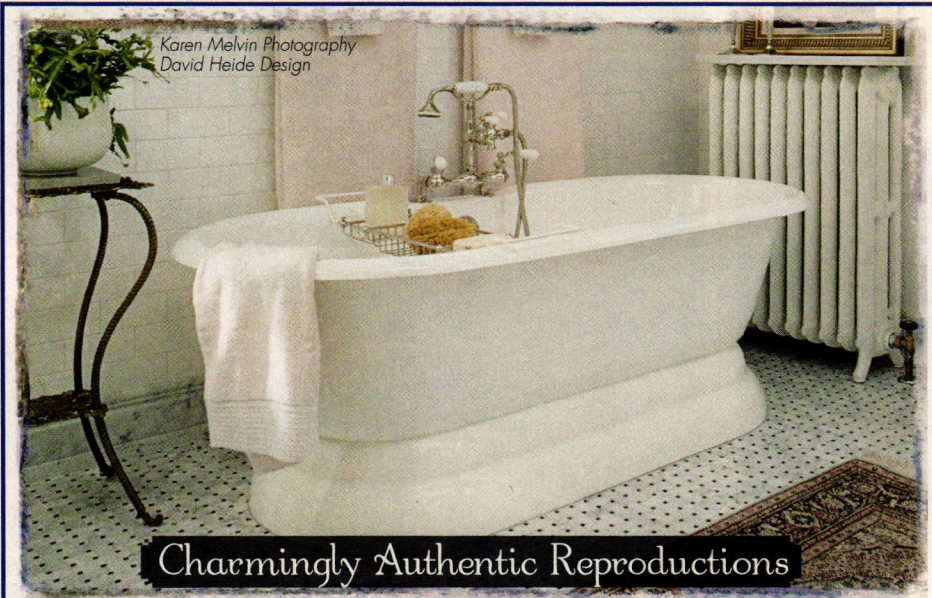
Milner's own Pennsylvania home, the 1724 Abiah Taylor House, exemplifies eighteenth-century English Quaker style, including the parlor's mantelpiece of bolec-



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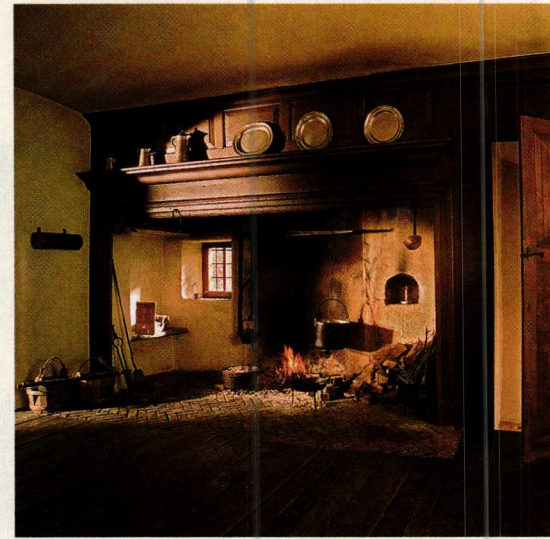
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Early American hearths were not only used for warmth but also for cooking. Note the size of the firebox opening above.

tion molding topped by a mantelshelf. For an addition, however, he drew plans for a new old fireplace “based on the precedent for simpler designs.” Its firebox of stone is surrounded by white plaster and topped by a salvaged antique mantelshelf. “I exercised a little creative license and went with the French raised hearth with supporting limestone brackets,” he says.

Schafer agrees in the potential for creative variances here and there, particularly since “new old houses can express that feeling of having grown over time. It’s not outrageous to think that a successive generation might incorporate a mantelpiece that worked in their period,” he explains.

No matter the decade, a fireplace afforded the opportunity for many craftsmen—carvers, potters, marble cutters, and more—to exercise their trades. Not unlike a front door or china collection, a high-style fireplace symbolized an owner’s wealth and prestige. But while one design greeted guests in a parlor, another baked bread in the kitchen while yet another warmed an attic bedroom. Often beautiful but always utilitarian, fireplaces are ubiquitous throughout architectural history and are just as pivotal in new old homes today. **NOH**

*Jennifer Sperry is a freelance writer based in New Bedford, Massachusetts.*

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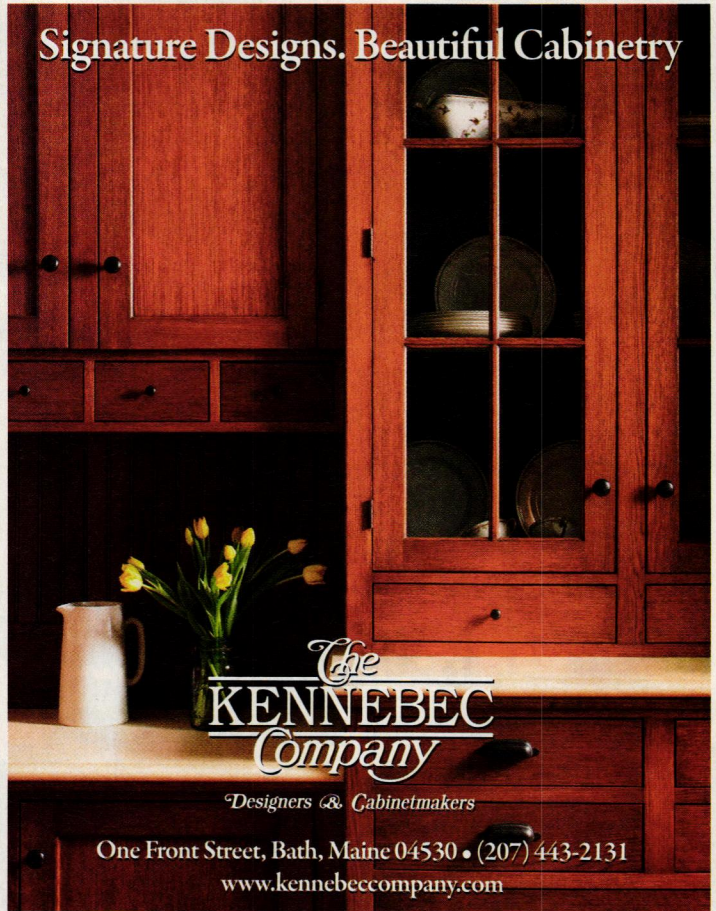
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# Kitchen Connections

Creating a functional space where friends and family gather takes planning.

BY MARY GRAUERHOLZ | PHOTOS BY CHICHI UBINA

The best kitchen is like a French pastry: An artful exterior hides a brilliant array of surprises inside, both parts serving to form one glorious whole. Thanks to keen architecture and an ever-evolving marketplace of traditional-style design techniques and amenities, kitchens like this are within reach. The trick is creative design, thoughtful layout, and a clear vision that unites form and function.

McKee Patterson, AIA, of Austin Patterson Disston Architects in Southport, Connecticut, brought this philosophy to the table when he designed a new home for a young, social couple who love to entertain. Patterson, the firm's principal, created a kitchen that would have the same traditional look of the home, but with a twist. The home needed to have a hard-working cooking space, including modern high-end ame-

Above: McKee Patterson designs a bright, functional kitchen for a young couple who love to entertain.

nities such as a professional stove and walk-in refrigerator. All in all, it called for a clever mix of old and new styles and an airy openness that encourages conversation anchored around food and good cheer.

"This is a young couple who both



A small home office is located just off the kitchen.



Rough-sawn oak timbered beams and wide-plank flooring give the kitchen its rustic look.

appreciate cooking and being together,” Patterson says. “If they have friends over, they want people to feel like they can hang out in the kitchen and be a part of it all.” Another must was capitalizing on the home’s location, on a small tributary of Long Island Sound in Darien, Connecticut.

Patterson’s success in achieving his two-pronged goal is stunningly clear. The kitchen is awash in a creamy white. Deep windows, including an ample triple bay over the farmhouse-style porcelain kitchen sink, enhance the soft colors of the natural world outside. The ocean

and marshland offer constant views from the kitchen and nearby sitting area and breakfast room. Patterson likens the overall intimate feel of the room to a polished American saltbox, “in an era when family members naturally gathered in the warmth of the kitchen.”

These references to another era—a deep farmhouse sink, open plan, exposed wood ceiling beams, and tongue-and-groove flooring—do wonders to capture tradition and encourage communication around good food. Disguising modern appliances also helps achieve the simple, rustic atmosphere with clean, uncom-

plicated lines. To house the appliances, dishes, and implements, Patterson chose gleaming paneled cabinetry with simple drawer pulls. Combined with a backsplash and countertops of gray-blue Newport granite, the effect is more decorative than functional. “The amenities are sophisticated, but downplayed by housing them in cabinets that look like furniture,” Patterson says. The dishwasher, espresso machine, microwave, and even the freezer and refrigerator are set in cabinetry. Electrical outlets are set within small drawers.

Rough-sawn oak timbered beams

Right: The kitchen is equipped with all the latest gadgets, such as this espresso machine, as well as ample storage space.

and wide-plank oak flooring run throughout the kitchen and the rest of the family area, warming the entire space and visually connecting the kitchen with the adjoining family-oriented spaces, including the breakfast room, sitting area, and home office. These spaces, like the rest of the rooms in the 5,900-square-foot home, are relatively small. "The idea was to make the house feel generous but not overly grand," Patterson says.

The open plan carries a sense of spaciousness and allows friends and family, including the homeowners' small daughter, to be near the person who is preparing the meal—in contrast, Patterson notes, to the isolated kitchens of the 1950s. In the adjoining sitting area, with walls of colored clay plaster and a stone fireplace, the couple's daughter can play in full sight of her mother while she is working in the kitchen or her home office.

Ironically, achieving a traditional, homey aura at times meant incorporating industrial-like details. On the wall opposite the sink is a set of four doors, two of which lead to a refrigerator and freezer, streamlined and unobtrusive. "We used industrial handles to evoke the refrigerators of the early twentieth century," Patterson says. A mesh grill above adds another industrial detail. Another door leads to the pantry, and a fourth to the home office.

The desire of the homeowners to make their kitchen more than just a place to prepare food is reflected deeply in our culture today; in fact, Patterson says it is a request all of his current clients have made. "In people's busy lives, they want spaces that draw them together," he says, "to concentrate on the important things." NOH

*Mary Grauerholz is a freelance writer in Falmouth, Massachusetts.*





## Solid Design

How one man has built a career in masonry, one stone at a time.

BY STEPHEN T. SPEWOCK PHOTOS BY NEIL LANDINO

“Work starts at 7:30 a.m. and goes until dark everyday,” says stonemason and landscaper Oscar Sandoval. “That way the job gets done right—not fast.” These words are revealed slowly and firmly by a man who has spent more than 20 years perfecting the craft of stacking stones, oftentimes shoulder to shoulder with his employees.

Originally from Guatemala, Sandoval feels fortunate to have discovered his passion for stonemasonry early on. “I became so enthralled in the process that time would fly by while

working,” he recalls. “Every day I have an opportunity to learn something new, to create something new.” And create he does: single-sided stone walls, double-sided stone walls, stone retaining walls, stone paths and walkways, stacked slab steps, floating slab steps, stone and brick terraces, and stone foundations.

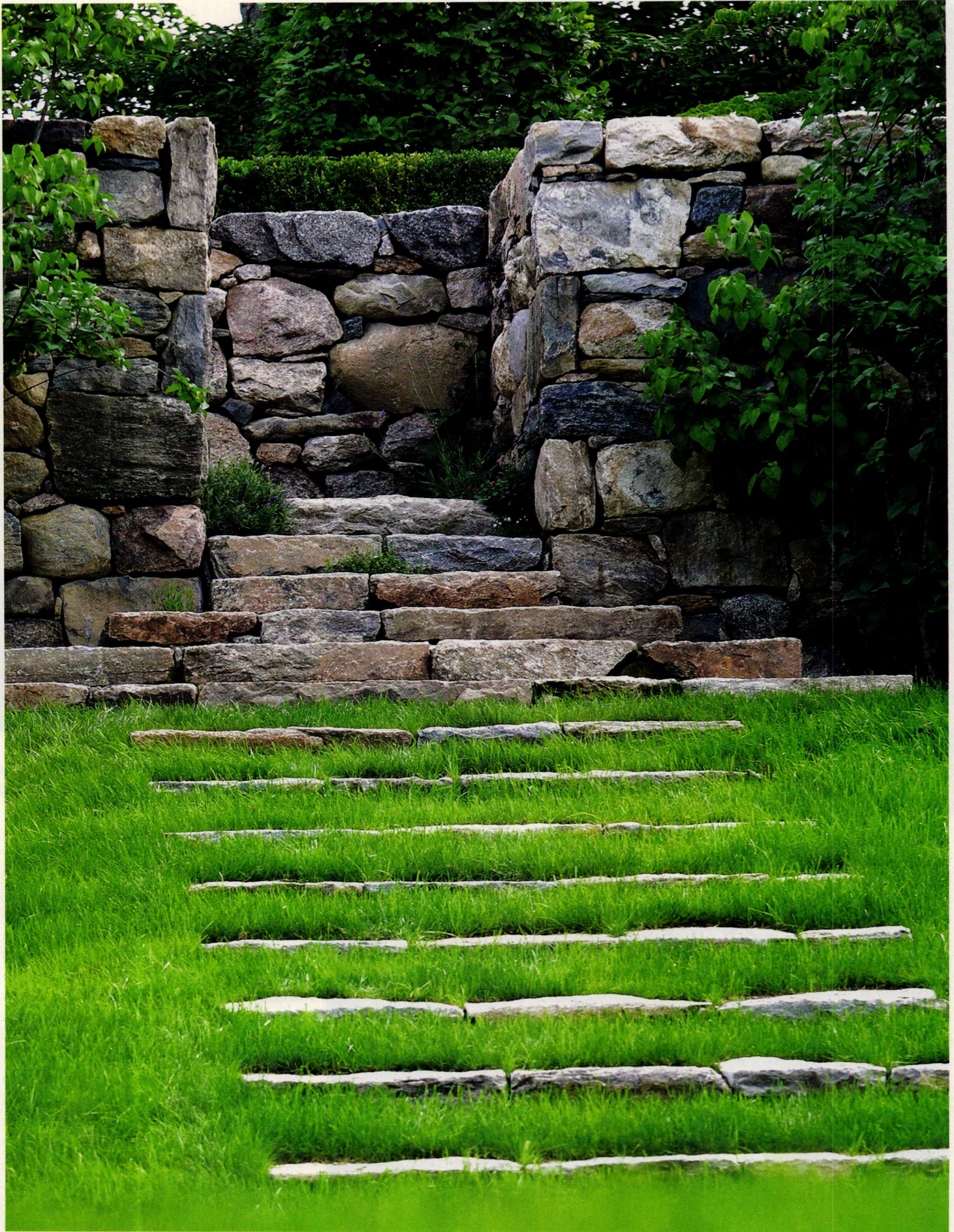
“Typically there is a lull in the winter,” he says, “but we’ll work year-round.” And that’s about as close as Sandoval will come to a boast, especially when you consider the volume of material his team processes during New England’s darkest days of bitter

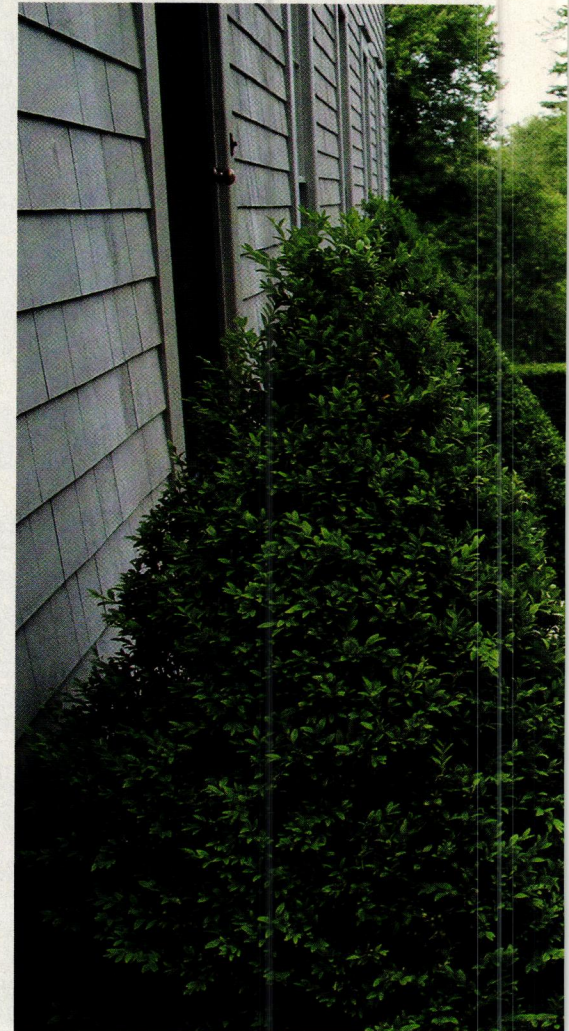
Above: Stonemason Oscar Sandoval handpicks each stone for his projects. Shown here is a wall made of reclaimed Connecticut fieldstone.

The garden was designed by James Doyle Associates of Greenwich, Connecticut.

Opposite: Stone steps act as connectors between the various plateaus in the landscape.

cold and knee-deep snow. This unwavering commitment to a project has helped Sandoval secure a steady stream of clients and collaborators who not only appreciate the quality of his work, but also his resilience. One such collaborator is award-winning landscape designer James Doyle, principal of James Doyle Design Associates (JDDA) in Greenwich, Connecticut. Doyle first worked with Sandoval on an 8-acre property in Connecticut. “We were brought into the Harmony Farms renovation at a later time,” remembers Doyle, “and were impressed by the work Sandoval





Left: Sandoval also built this massive stone fireplace for an outdoor terrace. Below: Retaining walls create structure and form in the landscape.



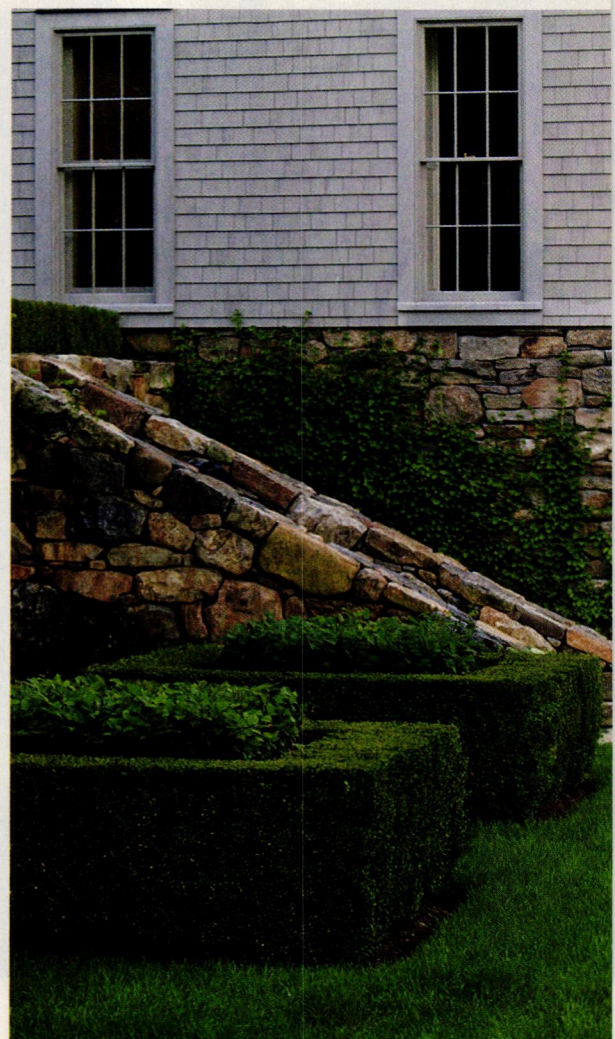
previously completed for the client.” (Since this time, the two have completed over 25 projects together.)

The landscape at Harmony Farms was a narrow, steep slope that runs from the road to the wetlands. The plan was to develop a series of gardens and an orchard that would be easy to access from any point. In order to achieve this goal, Doyle needed to introduce structure in the landscape. The best solution was to build massive retaining walls to create plateaus in the landscape, with the different levels accessible by stone steps. At this point, Sandoval shows his skills. “Initially, he learns what the client wants, listens to everyone’s ideas, and then provides input to the design,” explains Doyle. “And during the actual





Above: The more formal spaces in the garden are found close to the house. Stone pathways offer another formal element in the garden.



Right: Sandoval is a perfectionist when he works, creating walls of stone that appear as if they've always been part of the landscape.

installation, he is always on-site, managing all aspects of the project—adjusting to any changes in design or material.”

It is this hands-on approach that garners Sandoval the most accolades. “Ultimately, I’m creating something that is custom,” he says. “The most important step starts with the selection of the material—stonework itself is always the same, but different stones create different looks.” That’s why he spends a lot of time picking through available stones, selecting exact shapes and sizes. Not only does this cut down on waste (sometimes up to 50 percent of the product), but it also helps the finished project look unique. “I pick each stone from the quarry by hand,” he explains. For Harmony Farms, the walls were built from reclaimed

Connecticut fieldstone. The weathered, dry-stacked stones look as though they have been on the property for centuries.

This may sound simple enough, but not when building a wall 8’ high and 100’ long, where the total volume of rock could wind up weighing untold tons. To ensure that all his effort pays off, Sandoval has devised a method of building a “mock-up” of the desired wall. “One week before the project starts, I will pick out five types of stone that seem to fit the project, then have the client pick out which one he/she prefers most—based on size, shape, and color,” says Sandoval. Once determined, he’ll go pick up about a ton of the same stone, and begin building two mock-ups: one more finished, and the other more natural. This way the client can better see

which type of stone and finish they prefer, leaving nothing to the imagination.

Doyle is a believer in Sandoval’s determination. “It’s been said,” he recalls, “that stronger architecture relates more closely to house and site. And if architectural opinion is a team decision, then ultimately, we are only as good as our contractors. Having someone like Oscar, with a good eye and flexibility in the field, is beneficial to all parties.”

And no doubt with people like Sandoval on the team, James Doyle Design Associates will continue to win awards for its thoughtful landscape for years to come. **NOH**

*Stephen T. Spewock is a freelance writer living in Massachusetts.*



# Greenscape

A lush lawn can lead to a more sustainable garden. BY MICHAEL WEISHAN

You might be tempted to think that gardening is the greenest of all hobbies. After all, what could be problematic about spending time in the great outdoors creating your personal Eden? But the sad truth is that gardening, at least as we practice it today in America, isn't particularly green. How so? Well, for starters, consider the amount of petroleum that goes into most landscapes. There's oil in all those plastic pots; there's oil in the fertilizer; oil heats the greenhouses that produce those lush annuals that tempt you each year; oil transports all those plants to the nursery, and finally, to your home. Then, of course, there's our love affair with lawns. For years we've been hearing that lawns are a bad thing: pampered, petroleum-consuming mono-cultures that make deserts seem rich by comparison. Rip out lawns, and replace them with shrubs, or groundcover, or even gravel has been the mantra for decades.

But recent independent research is

starting to suggest this view might be too simplistic.

Lawns, of a proper size—we'll talk more about that in a minute—are not quite the bugaboo we previously thought. Grasses, it seems, are tremendously efficient mechanisms for filtering and purifying rainwater before it reaches the watershed, and can serve as significant reservoirs for storm runoff in extreme weather conditions. (A majority of water pollution in urban environments occurs when storm runoff overwhelms municipal systems, flooding lakes and streams with raw sewage.) In city environments, there's also the air-conditioning factor: Grasses can lower ambient temperatures as much as 30° compared to adjacent artificial surfaces, and more and more rooftops, parking lots, and other hard surfaces are being converted to green space in order to reduce ambient warming and trap rainwater. Plus, there's considerable psychological benefit to those tiny soft blades: Who

isn't soothed by the soft, rolling green of a good lawn?

But here's the catch: To fully "green" your grass, you'll need to break some bad habits we've accumulated in the last few decades.

First, and perhaps most importantly, for landscapes under a half-acre, you must switch to an electric mower. (Or hire a maintenance service that uses them—there are several services that are actually solar-powered!) In a single hour of operation, a gas mower produces as much pollution as 11 new cars driving one hour each, according to EPA studies. Collectively, gas mowers produce 5 percent of all air pollution from mobile sources in the US.

Above: Maintaining a lawn is more environmentally friendly than we once thought.

Opposite: Use an electric mower—in one hour, gas mowers create as much pollution as 11 new cars driving one hour each.





The good news is that these days, electric mowers are powered by high-efficiency batteries, not cords, and the technology has advanced to the point where a single charge will mow up to a half-acre at a time. I've been using battery-powered mowers for five years, and have never looked

back. (Not to mention never having had to buy another gallon of gasoline.) Better yet, electric mowers are almost silent: only a pleasant, low-pitched hum marks my progress back and forth across the lawn, meaning I can mow whenever I want, not when my neighbors want.

Above: Lawns only need an inch of water a week to survive. Left: Grass paths are an eco-friendly alternative to hardscaping.

Second, the practice of throwing resources at your grass helter-skelter must be banished for good. Clean water is rapidly becoming a precious commodity, and the overwatering of lawn areas contributes significantly to scarcity issues in many parts of the country. But that doesn't have to be the case. Lawns only need an inch of water a week—just like most other plants—but many people pour on the water because they think that's what's required to keep the grass green, when in reality color is as much a factor of fertility as it is of moisture. Very often, if your lawn is brown, the problem is that it has been under-fertilized. I must admit I've been a poster child for this bad habit: Until fairly recently, I threw some fertilizer on my grass every other year or so, and promptly forgot about it. It was growing, wasn't it? Yes, it was, but not well, and I had the water bill to prove it. For a really healthy lawn,

TOP: COURTESY OF SCOTTS



you need to fertilize not just once, but three times a year: in the very early spring, again in late spring, and in the early fall. A well-fed lawn with a deep, extensive root system stays green and resists drought; even more important, healthy grass has far fewer noxious weeds. Given sufficient nourishment, turf crowds out the competition all on its own, and removes the need for herbicide applications. Of course, it goes without saying, when applying any kind of fertilizer, you must follow the manufacturer's instructions to the letter in terms of quantity and application method—making sure fertilizer stays on the lawn and out of the watershed is terribly important. Also, if you use an automatic irrigation system, you need to install a rain sensor that overrides pre-programmed water settings in wet weather. I can't tell you how many times in my travels I've watched sprinklers rotating uselessly in the rain, needlessly adding wear and tear to the irrigation system, wasting energy, and pouring precious water, if you'll pardon the obvious pun, right down the drain.

Even more critically, stop raking and bundling up your leaves.

I can almost hear the howls from here: "Sacrilege, sacrilege! What is he saying?"



Top: Create balance in your garden with a variety of plantings and shrubs.

Above: Add a rain sensor to your irrigation system to save on water consumption.

Has he lost his gardening marbles?"

But wait—here's the trick, direct from the turf experts: Mow your leaves into the lawn instead. Several passes of the mower, reducing the leaf fragments to the size of dimes, allow the leaf mass to sink down between the blades of grass, converting the biomass into fertilizer while improving the tilth, or quality, of the soil beneath (something fertilizer applications can never do). It's absolutely amazing how much leaf waste can be absorbed into the average lawn; recent tests have shown that

up to 18" of leaves can be successfully absorbed by grass each year. The glory of this process is that not only can you abandon all that raking, but you also save the energy required to bag and dispose of immense quantities of leaves.

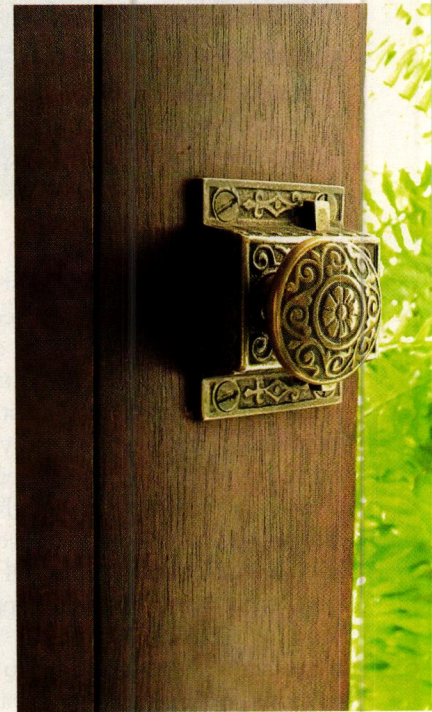
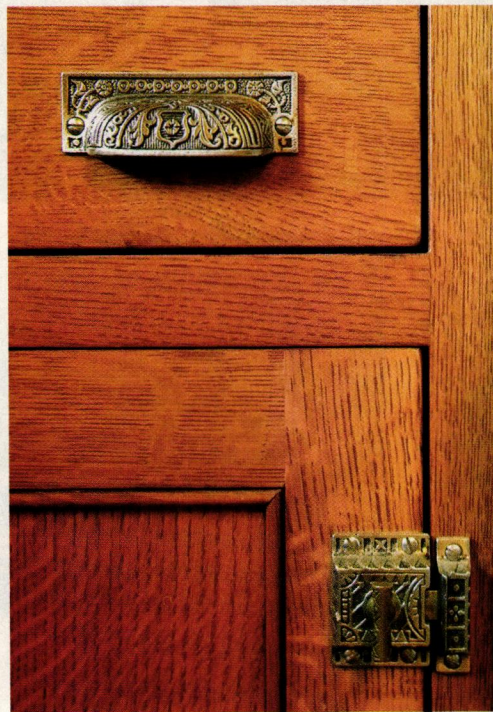
Finally, as with all aspects of your garden, you need to carefully analyze the amount of lawn on your property. My grandfather used to say that landscapes that are more than 50 percent grass aren't landscapes; they're just would-be pastures longing for sheep. And that's even more applicable today. Truly greening your landscape requires creating a series of balanced, diverse micro-environments in your garden that will appeal to the widest possible range of natural species. That means not just leaving room for turf, but for wilder, un-mown areas; places for native plants; water sources for wildlife; and flowering species for birds and insects. Diversity is not the just byword in nature: It can, and should be, the byword in your back yard as well. NOH

*Landscape designer and PBS horticultural guru Michael Weisban gardens outside Boston and writes a nationally acclaimed weekly garden blog at [michaelweisban.com](http://michaelweisban.com).*

# Hardware History

The hardware you choose for your historically-inspired house can make or break your desired look. Luckily, there are period and vintage knobs, handles, and pulls on the market to give your home a sense of patina and age.

PRODUCED BY NANCY E. BERRY



## 1. Vintage Salvage

Historic Houseparts offers a variety of reproduction and salvaged pieces from the Victorian era. Shown here is just a sampling of the company's offerings. Cast bronze aesthetic entry door plates and knobs (left) by Sargent & Company (circa 1875-1885) are from the company's inventory of vintage hardware. The cast-iron antique bin pull and cabinet latch with a brass T-handle (center) are also from the company's

vintage hardware inventory. The cabinet hardware has been replated with an antique nickel finish. A reproduction cast brass flush-mounted storm or screen door latch (right), called Beulah, is from the company's Classics collection. Cast from a circa-1880 antique set, the piece is available in three finishes: antique brass, antique nickel, and antique copper. For more information, visit [historichouseparts.com](http://historichouseparts.com).

## 2. Blossom of Hope

Notting Hill's Hope Blossom knobs and pulls are hand-cast of solid pewter and available in several finishes. A striking motif featuring stylized elements of the peanut plant, the design is reminiscent of the artist Henri Rousseau. The peanut plant was specifically chosen this year due to the importance of peanuts as a sustainable food source in South Sudan. Notting Hill Decorative Hardware has partnered with South Sudan Voices of Hope; 75 percent of the profits from Hope Blossom will be donated to this nonprofit organization. For more information, visit [nottinghill-usa.com](http://nottinghill-usa.com).



## 3. All American

Acorn Manufacturing creates early American hardware that fits perfectly in eighteenth-century houses or reproduction Cape Cod and Saltbox styles. Shown here is the company's double handle drop latch sets. It measures 11" by 3 7/16" with a 2 3/8" projection. The latch uses no springs and operates by gravity alone. For more information, visit [acornmfg.com](http://acornmfg.com).



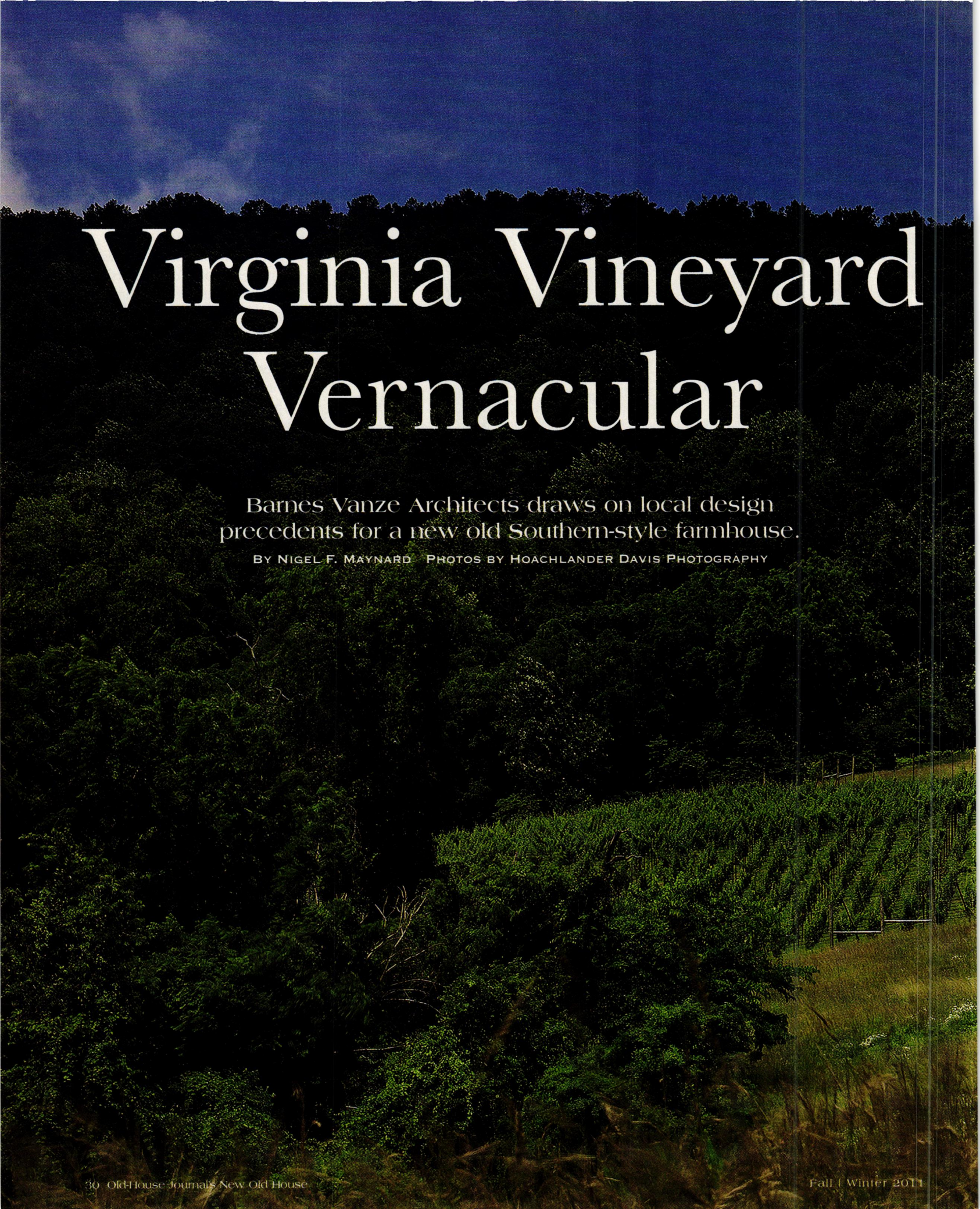
## 5. Porcelain Past

White porcelain knobs were ubiquitous in nineteenth-century houses across America. Bring back this historical look with Rejuvenation's Owen beveled edge door set. The style comes in seven different finishes and retails for \$139. For more information, visit [rejuvenation.com](http://rejuvenation.com).



## 4. Art Glass

Glass artist Jesse DeMoss creates stunning glass knobs for Sun Valley Bronze. Shown here is the Jewel Art Glass knob. It is mounted in a custom bronze post and can be paired with any of Sun Valley Bronze's escutcheons. For more information, visit [sunvalleybronze.com](http://sunvalleybronze.com).



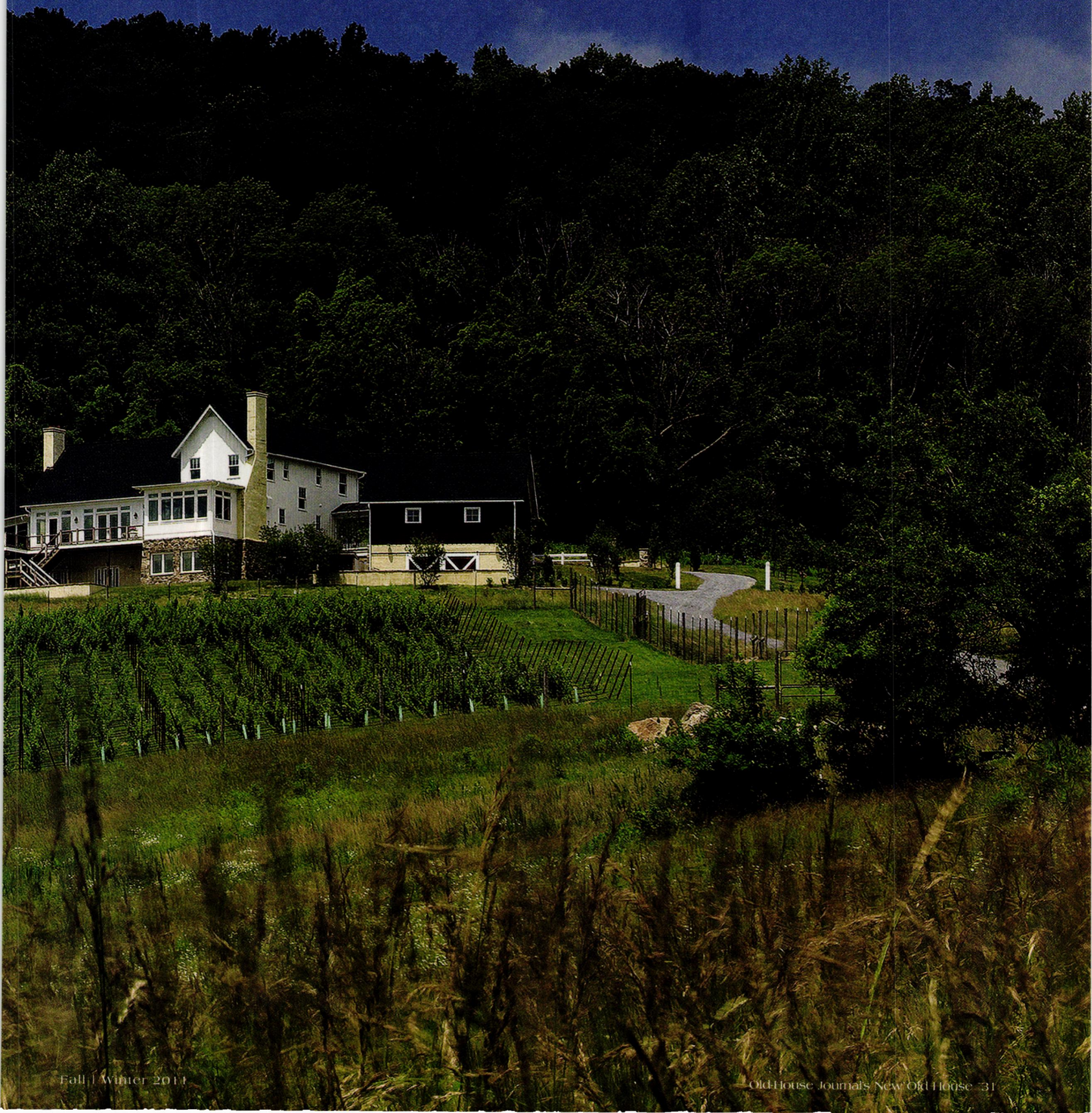
# Virginia Vineyard Vernacular

Barnes Vanze Architects draws on local design precedents for a new old Southern-style farmhouse.

BY NIGEL F. MAYNARD PHOTOS BY HOACHLANDER DAVIS PHOTOGRAPHY



Betsy and Mitchell Russ  
worked with Barnes  
Vanze Architects to real-  
ize their dream home in  
Bluemont, Virginia.





The house's façade is kept simple with board-and-batten siding. Breezeways connect the master suite on one side of the main living space and a recreation room on the other side.



Entering the front door, one is struck by the views of the mountains and countryside seen through the home.

Most Americans entertain retirement dreams that are suffused with leisurely pursuits like tending a rose garden, driving the country in a Winnebago, or fly fishing in Montana. Betsy and Mitchell Russ's aspirations were much more ambitious: Their dream involved owning a vineyard and a new old house from which to run it. "Farming is not retirement," Betsy jokes.

The idea of owning a vineyard was years in the making for Mitchell, a retired physician, and Betsy, a former nurse. Starting about 15 years ago, the Indianapolis, Indiana, couple envisioned themselves cultivating the soil and getting their hands dirty. "I wanted to get into the wine industry in a very small way," Mitchell says. "We didn't want to do a winery or anything; we just thought we could grow grapes." But the house was a much newer development, one that would require some research and due diligence. So after considering wine regions in California, Oregon, and New York State's Hudson River Valley, the couple settled on property in Virginia and began interviewing architects to execute their wishes.

"We looked at a number of different architects and interviewed several, but we liked Barnes Vanze's approach," says Mitchell. "We wanted an open-floor-plan-style home, but we wanted it to fit in with the Virginia landscape, so we settled on the idea of a contemporary farmhouse."

The farmhouse option was appropriate. It's one of the few architectural styles that not only announces its current

(or past) use in the name but signifies its design style and attitude. Details vary from region to region, but in general farmhouses are simple, straightforward structures that are relatively open and informal. The houses also seem to have been cobbled together over time, says Steven Vanze, a principal at Washington, D.C.-based Barnes Vanze Architects.

"I think the appealing thing about old farmhouses is that they have been put together in haphazard ways," Vanze says. "There isn't this consistent design attitude to the different adaptations, so when you're thinking that you want to do something and have it feel like it's an old farmhouse, you have to kind of let your design control go a little bit." This is the approach the firm took in creating the home for its clients.

Located on 25 acres in Bluemont, Virginia, with commanding, long-range views of the Loudoun Valley and the Bull Run Mountains, the Ridgeside Vineyard Farmhouse takes advantage of its site, but the architect tucked the home into the hill (instead of squarely on the crest) for easy entry and to maximize the vistas. "We wanted to come up to the house and approach it from the high side so that when you came inside you saw those long-range views," Vanze explains.

He conceived the 7,985-square-foot home (including the unfinished basement, garage, and barn) as three separate buildings—a main house, a master bedroom wing, and a bank barn wing—resting on a stone base. The main house (including the



Salvaged wood was used  
for the kitchen cabinets  
and countertops.





Ripped tobacco wood floors are found throughout the house. Floor-to-ceiling shelves in the hall offer ample book storage.



A deck wraps around the family room.

public spaces and secondary bedrooms) anchors the floor plan, while the two wings flank each side of the home like a triptych painting. “The master bedroom suite is connected to the house by a breezeway that’s been glazed in, and the barn is connected by an open breezeway,” Vanze says.

In typical farmhouse fashion, the main house consists of a large open room with cathedral ceilings and a laid-back design that accommodates the couple’s casual lifestyle. Adjacent to the great room is a farm-style kitchen with large windows and doors that open the space to the deck, providing the best views of the vineyard and valley beyond. Interior details maintain the simplicity and style of an old farmhouse, too, with ripped tobacco wood floors, a beadboard ceiling, flat-stock casing, and white-painted built-ins. “The house is not formal at all,” Vanze says. “It fits into a casual lifestyle extremely well.”

Because a driving force of the design was to create a home that felt like a farming compound to which structures had been added over time, the firm created distinct volumes with a white and red “modified” board-and-batten siding and with standing-seam metal and asphalt roof shingles. They also used windows to express the dissimilarities. “It’s kind of schizophrenic,” Vanze says. “The main block of the house fea-

tures three-over-one windows on the side second floor. Then we wanted to do something different on the master bedroom wing, which is why we have the six-light casement windows to make it feel like it was done at a slightly different time. But the back of the house is all just single-light windows because the clients really didn’t want to interfere with their views at all.”

Today, Betsy and Mitchell aren’t really making wine, but they’re living the dream by growing grapes and selling to wine-makers. And they finally have the house they’ve always wanted. “The house we lived in for 20-something years in Indiana was a two-story red brick colonial with pillars in front, and it was very formal,” Betsy says. But this new house is a perfect fit to the couple’s new lifestyle. “For a number of years, we had a condominium on the west coast of Florida, which was an open-floor style and very informal. That’s sort of the model we were looking for here, only with a country and farmhouse flair to it.” Thanks to their architect, they got it. **NOH**

*Nigel F. Maynard is a freelance writer and senior editor of Residential Architect.*

*For resources, see page 62.*

The furnishings are kept traditional but casual.

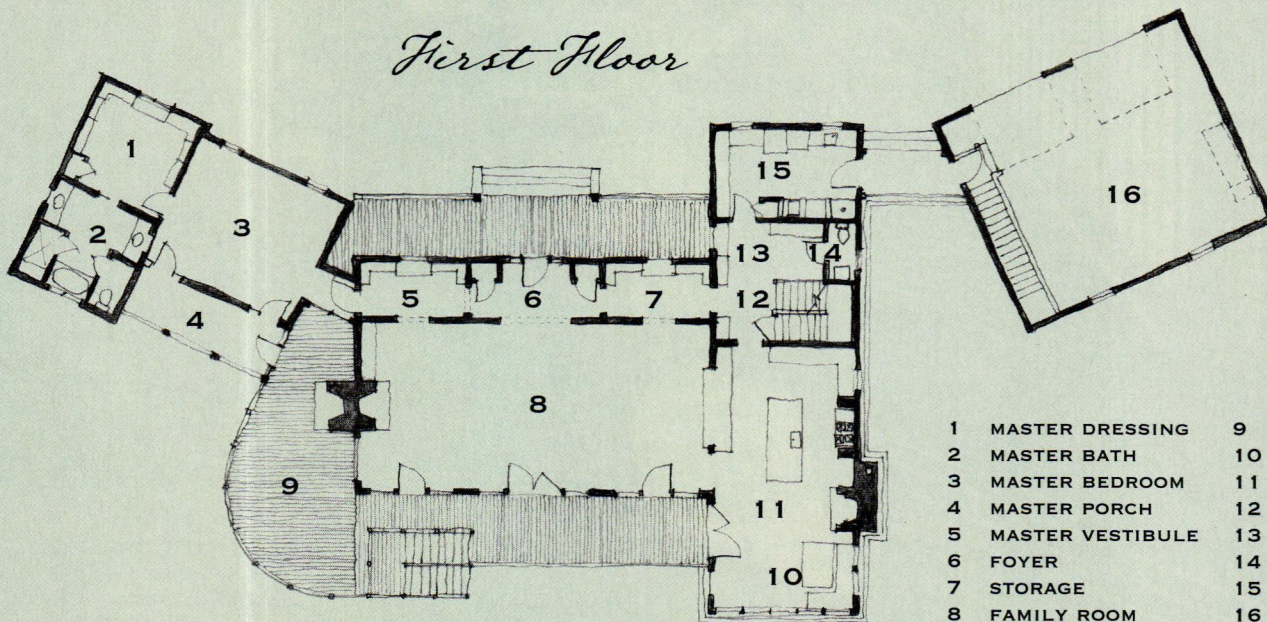




The massing of the house is broken down into distinct sections.



*First Floor*



- |                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1 MASTER DRESSING  | 9 DECK             |
| 2 MASTER BATH      | 10 BREAKFAST ROOM  |
| 3 MASTER BEDROOM   | 11 KITCHEN         |
| 4 MASTER PORCH     | 12 STAIR HALL      |
| 5 MASTER VESTIBULE | 13 PANTRY          |
| 6 FOYER            | 14 POWDER ROOM     |
| 7 STORAGE          | 15 LAUNDRY         |
| 8 FAMILY ROOM      | 16 RECREATION ROOM |



# A Towering Example



Designed by Leo Casas, this coastal home shines like a beacon in Seaside, Florida.

BY LAUREL KORNHISER PHOTOS BY JACK GARDNER

Above: With three porches and a tower balcony, the Seaside, Florida, home has ample outdoor living space.



Left: The kitchen is traditionally inspired with glassed cabinets and period bin pulls.

“the code,” and this recently built home on Forest Street stands as a shining example of its intent. “The prescription of the building,” says the home’s designer, Leo Casas, principal of Braulio Casas Architects and at one time the town architect for Seaside, “was to take on its form based on the prescription of where it is on the street and in the master plan.” In other words, as he imagined the design for this home, Casas considered not just the client’s needs and desires, but the overall urban moment in which the house and its cornerstone tower would participate.

Urban planners have “perfect” neighborhoods down to a science, calculating their scope according to an ideal radius. Seaside, occupying 80 acres on the northwest coast of Florida, is, proportionally speaking, half a perfect neighborhood, and within this context, the Forest Street home and its tower, sitting at the threshold of Seaside and Sea Grove, serves as herald of welcome by day and, when its tower is lit, as a beacon of light at night. “There are three instances,” Casas says, “when the tower presents itself to those coming along Forest Street from the east.” It plays hide and seek with those meandering along nearby Tupelo Road as well. Of course, this would not have been the case had Casas not obtained a setback variance for it, based on both architectural and urban merit. Rather than the prescribed 10’ from the road, the tower hovers a close 4’, the better to be seen

along the byways and bestow a stronger greeting on behalf of the community.

While those medieval towers in places like Pienza and San Gimignano (where 38 of the original 100 or so towers still exist), both sources of inspiration for Seaside’s founder, Robert Davis, were built for protective and political purposes, the towers of Seaside contribute to the townscape and offer their owners views of the glimmering Gulf of Mexico just across from Highway 30A. While Davis and his partners could have turned this prime piece of real estate, purchased in 1946 by Davis’s grandfather, into a condominium community with multiple parking lots glinting in the sun, their plan for 600 or so homes and a handful of shops allowed for twenty-first century “urbanity on a small scale,” inspired not only by Old World cities, but also by coastal communities in the northeastern United States like Cape Cod, Massachusetts; and Southampton, New York.

Like its forebears in San Gimignano, Italy, the tower rising four stories in the air from a strategic corner lot on Forest Street in Seaside, Florida, sweeps in the surrounding vista and converses with its sister towers, all the while punctuating the collective architectural statement. Though the medieval builders, who walled in Europe’s cities as a defensive maneuver and who created towers at the behest of wealthy patrons, may have hoped their work would survive various conquerors, they probably never suspected it would become an attraction for future tourists and serve to inspire new millennium urban planners.

These planners systematized what came to be known as “form-based code.” Devised to foster cohesive neighborhoods within cities, rather than allowing for a mish-mash of individual architectural styles, form-based code offers a set of standards that encourage community growth based on a planned vision. Back in the 1980s, Seaside was the first to formally adopt and employ



Left: A coffered ceiling adds texture to the kitchen.

Below, left: Annabelle doors lead to a porch off of the cozy living room.

Below, right: Light fills the casual dining room.





Left, top: Casas incorporated several built-ins such as this vanity.

Left, bottom: The soaking tub sits in an alcove surrounded by casement windows.



Though there have been some deviations, the community vision—the “code”—dictates everything from home size and placement to the materials used in construction. In the case of the house on Forest Street, the code called for a three-story box with a possible tower. The challenge Casas faced was to make something distinctive that also satisfied the directive of contributing to the urban moment. His client, originally from England, was enamored with the architecture of New England, so Casas sought ideas from that region, both for the massing of the house and for the defining details. With images of iconic Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket sea captains’ homes in mind, Casas brainstormed sketches while pushing a car-



Casas included beadboard wainscoting the bedroom, which also has six-paned casement windows and a French door leading to a porch.

riage holding his sleeping baby daughter.

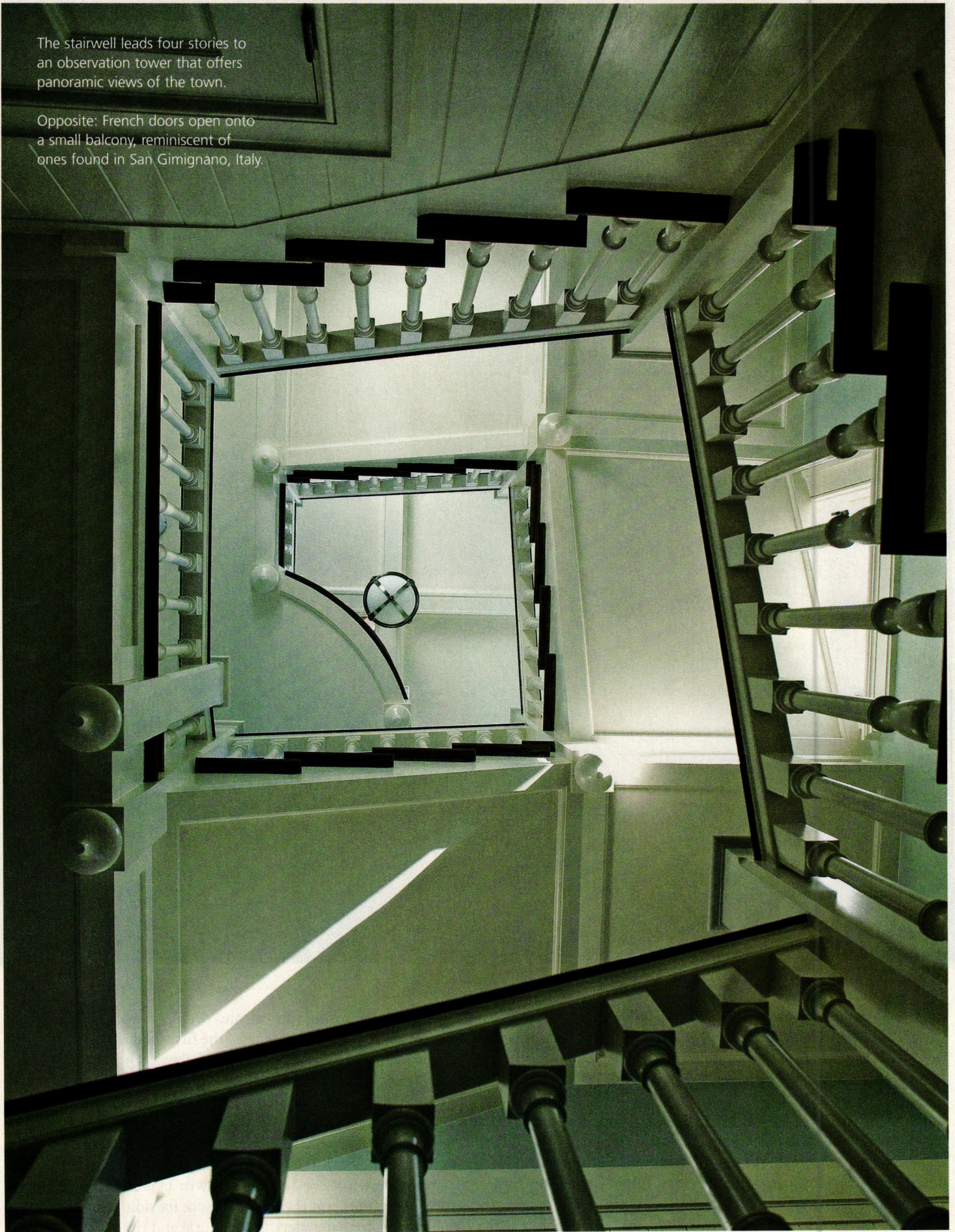
Taking his cue from the New England vernacular, Casas added shed dormers to the original box concept. He also borrowed the idea of bay windows: “Most Shingle Style and New England homes used bay windows to create space and to add interest,” he explains. In this home, bay windows not only allow for more light, but also create space for a dining area in the open-plan first floor and create alcoves in the second-floor master suite, one for built-in seating and another for a tub in the master bath. While the Northeast had its say in the design, so too did the nineteenth-century “cracker” cottages of Florida, with their metal

roofs, cross-breeze ventilation, and deep porches. This home, in fact, has three stories of porches—the first solid and foundational, the second lighter, the third open and airy.

The local environment not only provided architectural inspiration, it also presented challenges, namely incessant moisture, salt, sun, and the occasional tropical storm. Modillions, one of the Southern Carpenter Gothic elements chosen to add a bit of architectural flourish to the façade, help wick moisture away. To resist dew, rot-resistant old-growth cypress, dredged from southern swamps, was the perfect choice for siding and fulfills the code’s mandate that materials be natural and time-tested. Taking

The stairwell leads four stories to an observation tower that offers panoramic views of the town.

Opposite: French doors open onto a small balcony, reminiscent of ones found in San Gimignano, Italy.



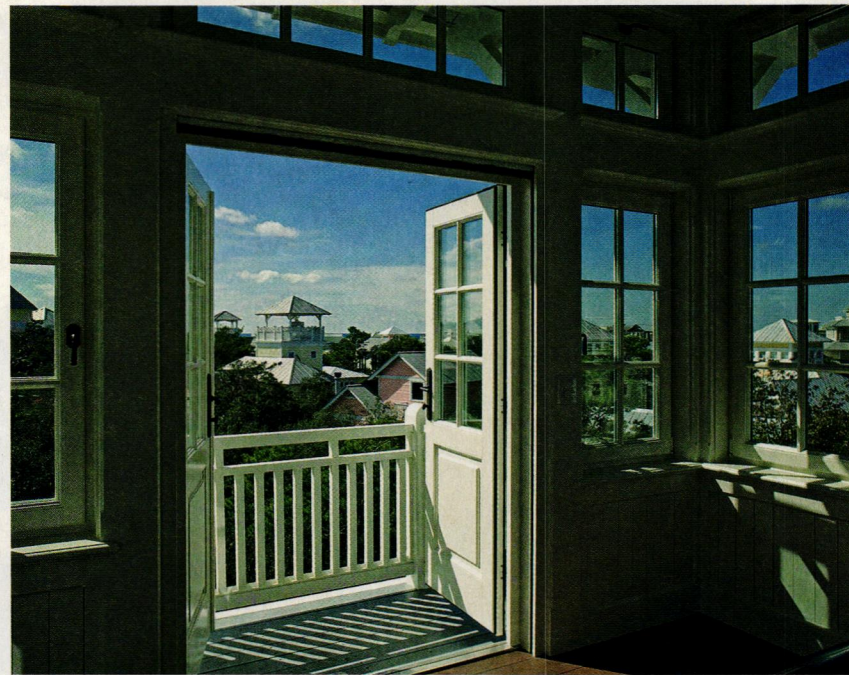


a hint from boat builders, Casas left space between the structure of the house and the siding: "This allows moisture in and allows it to evaporate," he says. Shingles are red cedar, back-primed and double-dipped in a semi-alykd stain, again as protection against water damage. Like the siding, the brick used for the chimney was also reclaimed, in this case from an old schoolhouse in Arkansas, "The texture, the color, and the palette fit our needs," Casas says. "It looks fantastic, and because the company that had it was trying to get rid of it, it was less expensive than new brick."

Inside the home, floors were stained and finished with tung oil, with 6" planks used for the smaller, private rooms, and broader 8"-wide planks filling the house's public spaces. While coffered ceilings in the first-floor living areas add a touch of elegance, lap siding walls keep the overall mood coastal casual. Throughout the interior, custom built-ins and trim add character and represent his firm's M.O., Casas says. "We touch every piece of architectural trim in a house."

Space is used quite effectively in this 3,000-square-foot home, exemplified by the built-ins and by the judicious use of what could have been wasted space, as seen in a powder room built under the first-floor stairs and in the third-floor bunk room, whose sitting area is tucked efficiently under the attic and gains beauty from a stained, hand-waxed wood ceiling. Monumental windows became the natural choice to give the illusion of more space in rooms of fairly modest size. In the major public spaces, overscaled windows "give a sense of space flowing out," says Casas. While the windows are important for connecting the homeowner to the outside, their configuration is critical to the home's conversation with the community: "It is important for the façade to feel regular and ordered," says Casas, who in his turn as town architect took pains to fine-tune the plans of his peers so they adhered to the form-based code.

As Seaside celebrates its 30th anniversary, Casas sees it as a time to reflect and project, and he hopes his work, as seen on Forest Street, will serve as an example for future designs, especially for those seeking to capture the sometimes elusive character

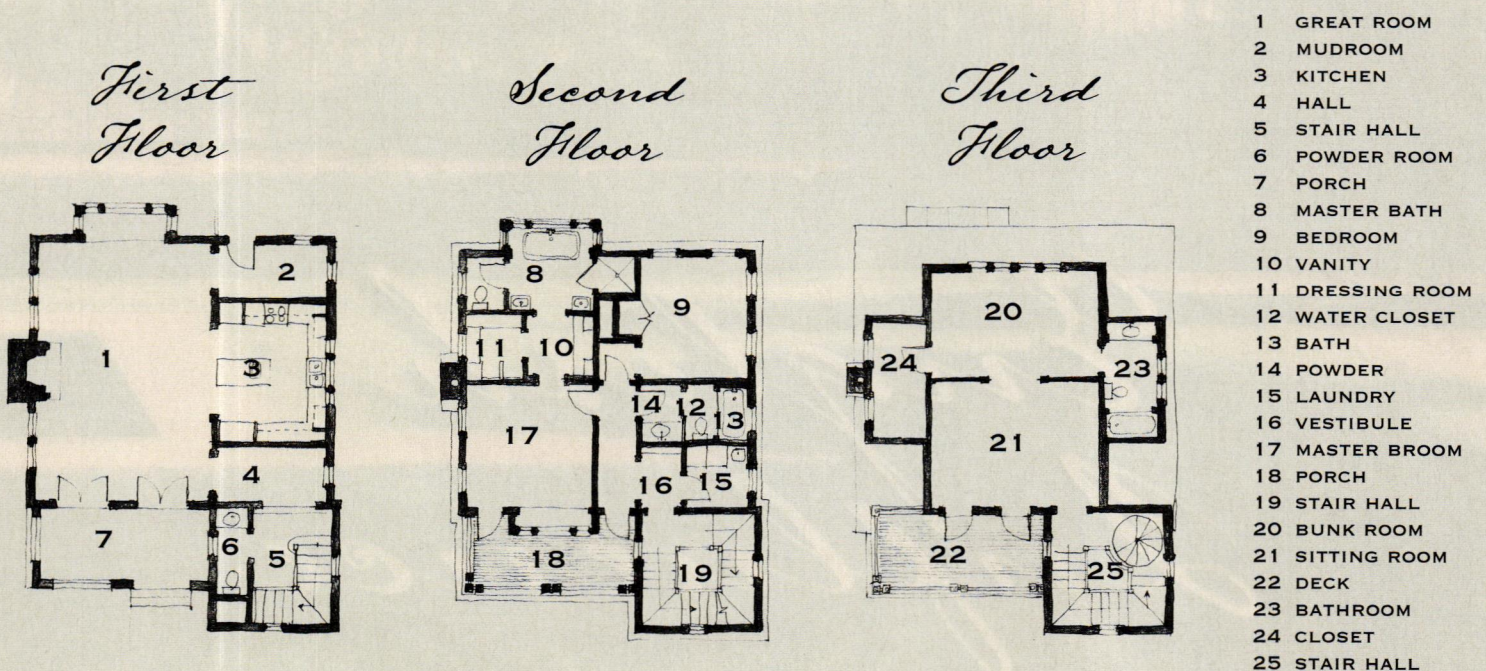


of a seaside cottage community. "It's all about how we put porches together, how the eaves meet the walls, how the house meets the ground"—all dictates of the code to which he adhered.

Just like the home's observation tower, which allows telescopic views of the Gulf as well as more intimate glimpses of the surrounding neighborhood, the award-winning design of "57 Malvern," as the house is now known, has been inspired by sites far away in Europe and those right in its own back yard. It serves as a vital landmark and as gateway to this petite city, and in its turn may inspire urban planners far in the future. **NOH**

*Laurel Kornhiser is a freelance writer living on Cape Cod.*

*For resources, see page 62.*



Nineteenth-century English Architect Edwin Lutyens was the inspiration for this elegant home in Connecticut.

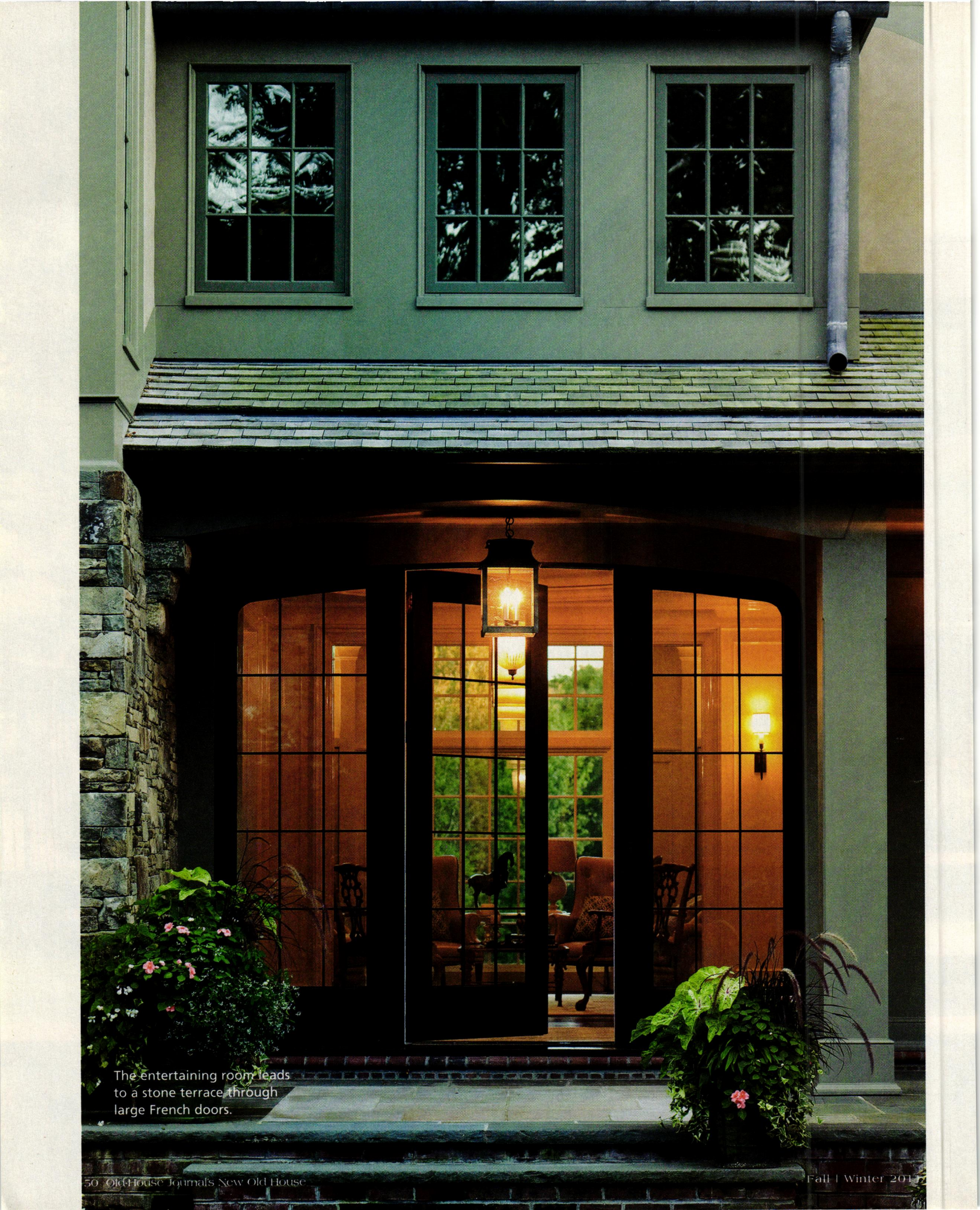


# English Influence



Austin Patterson Disston Architects brings the British  
Arts & Crafts style to Connecticut.

BY JANICE RANDALL ROHLF PHOTOS BY JOHN BESSLER



The entertaining room leads to a stone terrace through large French doors.



Left: The dining room has an English-inspired firebox with a pink limestone surround.

Below: The staircase has classical detailing.



In 1901, Edward Hudson, an English publishing magnate and the owner of *Country Life* magazine, commissioned Edwin Lutyens, regarded at the time as the leading architect of country houses in England, to refurbish sixteenth-century Lindisfarne Castle. The fortlike structure on the highest point of Holy Island in the North Sea was to become a family home. Combining the English Arts & Crafts theories of the time with his budding interest in classicism, Lutyens created something of an anti-castle, balancing the imposing structure with an intimacy of scale.

Such was the challenge more than a century later for McKee “Mac” Patterson, AIA, of Austin Patterson Disston Architects in Southport, Connecticut: how to design a manor-like residence so that the components of the home “would all hang together as a cohesive whole,” and, he quips, “not look like a big wedding cake.” Taking his cues from the homeowners (Anglophiles like himself) and inspired by Lutyens, Patterson and his team achieved a design that, similar to Lindesfarne Castle and other notable Lutyens projects, was simultaneously

unpretentious and grand. “It’s a beautiful, flowing house,” says Patterson, that “weaves a continuity” among the rooms and settles comfortably into its secluded setting.

Perched on a plateau 20’ above meadowland on a large lot with mature trees, the house and yard evoke a Brontë-esque grandeur softened by playful elements more reminiscent of Beatrix Potter. It is not a stretch to compare it to the Surrey cottages favored in the illustrations of another children’s book author, Ralph Caldecott, who encouraged young “Ned” Lutyens, his neighbor, to pursue a career in architecture. In early English Arts & Crafts fashion, stone, stucco, and brick bring a variety of textures to the exterior, along with well-proportioned solid forms, a wide terrace, a peaked roof over the master suite, and other features evocative of the movement, like upper wood shingles and timbering detail.

Noting the house’s exterior, jurors who selected it as this year’s winner of Connecticut’s AIA chapter’s Alice Washburn Award, which acknowledges excellence in traditional house



At the center of the kitchen is a freestanding custom table in walnut and burl-walnut veneers.

design, cite its “picturesque play of forms and materials,” and “the overall asymmetrical massing of elements [that] is balanced and comfortable.” Transition areas between the house and the field below it include a terrace running the length of the house, an infinity pool, and a garden. Giant windows at one end of the living room draw the eye through the front door and entry vestibule to the view outdoors.

Details abound inside as well that illustrate how the architect balanced a large house with human scale. The downstairs level of interconnected rooms is oriented from the living room. The homeowners, frequent hosts, wanted a large-scale space in which to entertain, yet they wanted it to feel cozy. So from this central party room radiates a clutch of smaller gathering areas: an inglenook—a room within a room—with a fireplace, a paneled library, and a dining room featuring British-style finish work that includes high wainscoting, a large firebox with a pink-hued limestone surround, and a plate rail.

Throughout the home, ceilings vary in height, with none under 9'. High ceilings dwarf a 7' door leading from the liv-

ing room to the library, a deliberate visual contrast that gives intimacy to the space. Dropped beams lend texture to the living room, and also to the dining room where the ceiling is coffered.

A butler's pantry leads from the central party room to the kitchen, the *pièce de résistance* in the house, where ceiling design is once again brought to the fore. Like Lutyens, who was known for his sense of fun and using space in interesting ways, Patterson approached the interior structural design with, in part, the desire to create an “element of surprise.” He achieves this in the dynamic kitchen with a steel-and-frosted-glass structure in the ceiling illuminated by dormers. “The idea was to make a bright and airy English-style conservatory space,” notes Patterson, who collaborated with the wife, an interior designer, on the project. “She knows what she’s doing and how to do it,” says the architect, noting that her design decisions were influenced by her love of cooking and gardening as well as her fondness for the lifestyle in England, where she has traveled extensively with her husband.

The ceiling in the entertaining room is barrel-vaulted. Light streams through large multi-paned windows.



An upstairs hall's décor is inspired by the English Arts & Crafts movement with high wainscoting and period paper.







The bathroom takes on a 1930s Art Deco flair.

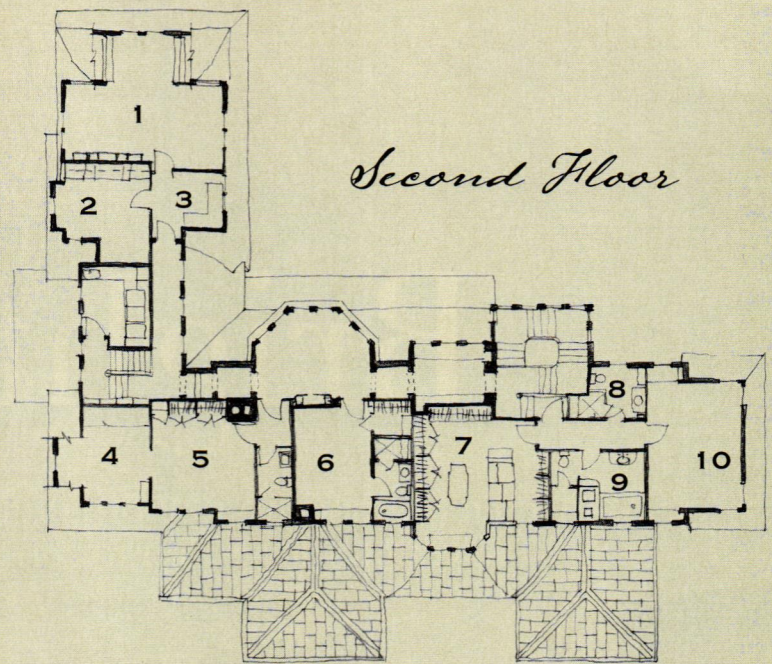
For example, her preference for a piece of free-standing furniture in the kitchen, a classic approach in a European kitchen, was fulfilled by a custom table in walnut and burl-walnut veneers. The massive table acts as a center island. Natural light streams in during the day, while at night, the ironwork canopy illuminates the main section of the kitchen. Neutral cabinets around the perimeter of the room act as a foil to the commanding walnut table and equally imposing La Cornue stove imported from France with a custom-made hood.

Dramatically toplit like the kitchen, the main upstairs hallway, or vestibule, has illuminated false-clerestory windows, a distinctive column and beam treatment, high wainscoting, and a 5' chair rail on which to rest artwork or family photographs. Eschewing a string of rooms one after the other, the architect organizes the master suite spaces centrally, with doorways in the upstairs vestibule leading to closets, dressing rooms, "his" lavatory, and "hers"—a French Art Deco jewel box of a bathroom in white onyx and brushed metal.

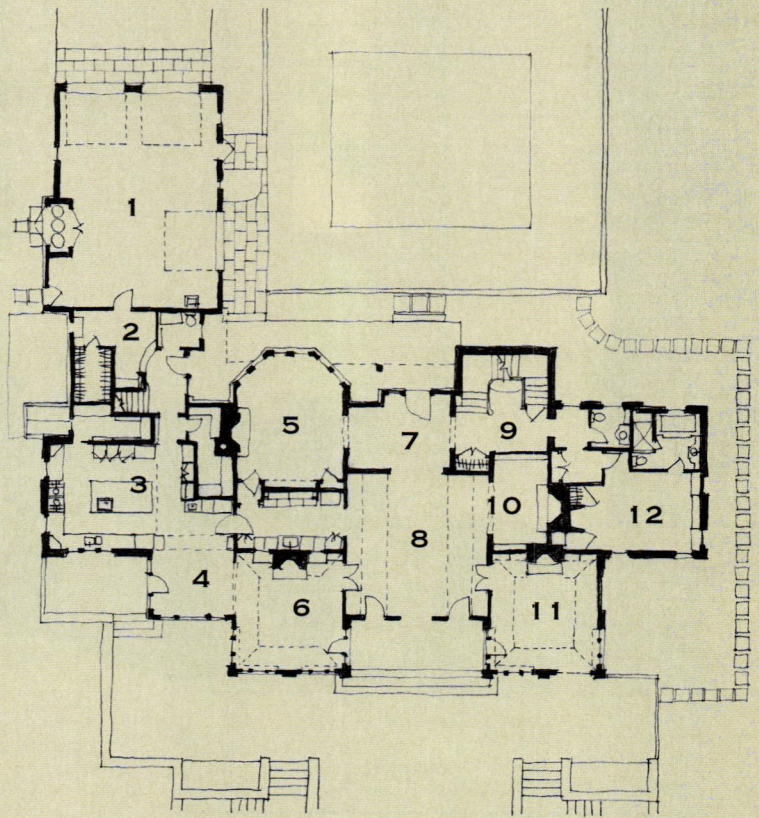
Subdividing big spaces, physically and visually; offering continuity with flooring and unification through trim systems—these preoccupations are central to Mac Patterson's and his firm's approach. "A lot of detailing, molding, the little things," are key to bringing intimacy to a large-scaled house, says Patterson. "The trick is how you use those things and the restraint with which you use them." **NOH**

*Janice Randall Roblf is a freelance writer living in Massachusetts.*

*For resources, see page 62.*



- |                   |                        |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1 HER OFFICE      | 6 BEDROOM              |
| 2 HIS OFFICE      | 7 MASTER DRESSING ROOM |
| 3 OFFICE          | 8 HIS BATH             |
| 4 OPEN TO KITCHEN | 9 HER BATH             |
| 5 BEDROOM         | 10 MASTER BEDROOM      |



- |                  |               |               |
|------------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1 GARAGE         | 5 DINING ROOM | 9 STAIR HALL  |
| 2 MUDROOM        | 6 DAILY ROOM  | 10 INGLENOOK  |
| 3 KITCHEN        | 7 ENTRY HALL  | 11 LIBRARY    |
| 4 BREAKFAST ROOM | 8 PARTY ROOM  | 12 GREAT ROOM |

# Bright Spot

Architect Sandra Vitzthum creates a new light-filled kitchen and family room for an old house in Vermont.

BY NANCY E. BERRY PHOTOS BY ERIC ROTH

Architect Sandra Vizthum used the footprint of an older addition to create new spaces for an old Montpelier farmhouse.





On the ancient post road to Montreal sits one of Montpelier's oldest houses, an 1800s Cape with hints of Greek Revival flourishes. The original structure is in pristine condition. Two large rooms off to each side of a center stair hall provide ample light through antique window openings. In the more recent past, the home was expanded by 1,000 square feet to accommodate modern amenities—a den and garage in 1950 and an “Olde German style” family room in the 1970s. These new spaces, tacked onto the back and side of the house, took away the dining room's sole source of natural light.

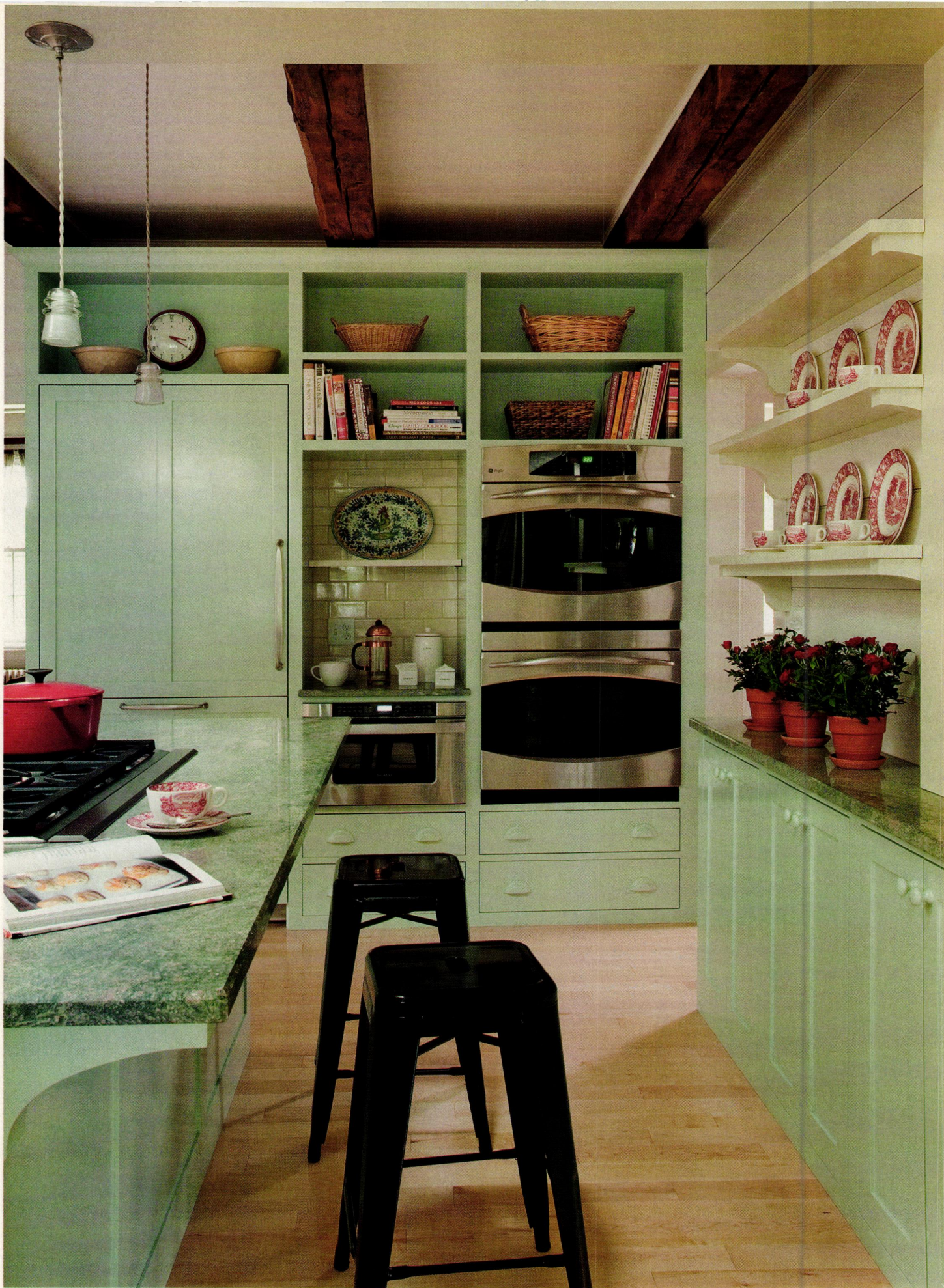
Paulette Fiorentino-Robinson and Steve Robinson had thought of moving from the old Cape, they disliked the additions so much. They approached architect Sandra Vitzthum, a third-generation Vermont native with a great sensibility for creating thoughtful new spaces on older structures, to redesign the rooms. “These really were ill-conceived spaces,” says Vitzthum of the twentieth-century additions. “They seriously compromised the original house.” The couple wanted the interiors to connect more cohesively to each other as well as to the gardens and pool. “The house needed a mudroom, more kitchen storage, and a dining area that didn't feel like a dark cave,” says Vitzthum. She set about

planning the new design within the existing footprint of the mid-century additions. Paulette wanted an open airy floor plan filled with natural light. She also wanted to keep a traditional look to the rooms to honor the age of the original structure.

“It was like putting a 3-D jigsaw puzzle together,” says Vitzthum in regard to creating new spaces that would work for twenty-first-century living. Vitzthum began her layout by relocating the new kitchen to where the dark dining room used to be. The original space had 7'6" ceilings and no windows, making the room dark and gloomy and not a place Paulette wanted to entertain. It took a bit of convincing on Vitzthum's part to get Paulette to agree to the new kitchen in this placement because of the room's dark stigma. Vitzthum explained that this was a central location, and she wanted to bring the kitchen back to the heart of the home. To open the spaces up to one another, and to the light, Vitzthum took down walls between the old dining space, den, and family room. “You can stand at any point in the new plan and look through to the other spaces and even outdoors,” says Vitzthum. The low ceilings were removed to expose beams and offer a lofty atmosphere. “We took the rooms down to the studs and rebuilt all the floors so they would be level,” says Vitzthum. The airy



The kitchen dish cupboard has glass cabinets as well as glass at the back of the shelf to allow for more light through the pantry skylights. A stairwell in the dish and storage pantry leads to a laundry room.





Opposite: Appliances are tucked into the north wall of the kitchen. Vitzthum kept original beams exposed to pay homage to the home's age.

Left: The farmhouse kitchen sink looks into the light-filled family room. Below: The dining room is now where an old 1950s addition used to be. The windows overlook the terrace and gardens.



structure is articulated with posts and beams that provide visual transitions between the different rooms.

Paulette and Steve love to entertain, so the kitchen had to be not only functional, but also comfortable and aesthetically pleasing. Vitzthum created ample workspace by incorporating a center island as well as two additional serving peninsulas between the dining room and family room. The counters also act as dividers between the spaces. An old powder room was converted into a dish pantry with open shelving for additional storage space. And to further the transparent feel in the kitchen, the kitchen shelving has two-sided glass cabinets that look through to the new pantry where the cellar stair wall used to be.

The north wall of the kitchen houses a Sub-Zero fridge behind a custom panel door and two wall ovens. The stove is located in the island; under-counter island drawers hold pots and pans. The cabinets are traditionally inspired, with Vitzthum's signature substantial bracket detailing. Vitzthum often designs cupboards with open shelving reminiscent of freestanding furniture into her designs. "These tricks can really give a kitchen an older feel," she says. The demolition revealed the Cape's original post-and-beam frame, which Vitzthum kept exposed for an added sense of age.

Not only were walls taken down and windows added, but skylights also were introduced to the pantry to offer more natural light. To further brighten the space, the color palette was kept light and ethereal. The floors, a unifying element throughout the new space, are blond maple; countertops are pale green granite; and upper cabinets are painted white, while the lower cabinets are

white with a touch of greenish blue. The ceiling is also painted a creamy white with a touch of pink. "Pink helps create peace and harmony within the space," notes Vitzthum. The walls throughout the kitchen, pantry, and family room are also painted white, completing the ethereal look.

A dining room takes the place of the 1950s den, and opens up onto the terrace and gardens. Two windows were added on the north side of the room for additional light. The family room now has three south-facing windows overlooking the pool. Vitzthum added beadboard to the cathedral ceiling for texture in the family room. She also had the chimney rebuilt and resurfaced. Again, additional windows next to the fireplace were added to wash the space in light. Vitzthum incorporated bookshelves and a window seat into the space, as well as a state-of-the-art audio and sound system concealed in the walls. For more energy-efficient rooms, she also specified radiant floors and super-insulated the walls to R-40 and the roof to R-60. "You can achieve just as much light, utility, and beauty in a traditional design as you can in a modern design," Vitzthum points out. And the addition to this old Cape proves just how well it can be done. **NOH**

*For resources, see page 62.*

# RESOURCES

## DRAFTING BOARD, PAGE 10

G.P. Schafer Architect  
gpschafer.com

John Murray Architect  
jbmarchitect.com

John Milner Architect  
johnmilnerarchitects.com

## DESIGN DETAILS, PAGE 16

ARCHITECT  
Austin Disston Patterson Architects  
203.255.4031  
apdashitects.com

SINK & FAUCET: Rohl  
rohlhome.com

REFRIGERATOR & FREEZER  
Northland  
northlandnka.com

RANGE, ISLAND WALL OVEN, &  
WARMING DRAWER  
Thermador  
thermador.com

RANGE HOOD: Best by Broan  
broan.com

GARBAGE DISPOSAL: InSinkErator  
insinkerator.com

DISHWASHER & COFFEE SYSTEM  
Miele  
miele.com

MICROWAVE: Viking  
vikingrange.com

TRADITIONAL TRADES, PAGE 20  
Sandoval Landscaping and Masonry  
203.969.7507

James Doyle Architects  
203.869.2900  
jdda.com

## HEIRLOOM GARDENS, PAGE 24

LAWN CARE: Scotts Miracle-Gro  
scotts.com

## VIRGINIA VINEYARD VERNACULAR, PAGE 30

ARCHITECT  
Barnes Vanze Architects  
202.337.7255  
barnesvanze.com

CONTRACTOR  
Bill Miller  
Miller & Blackwell Construction  
540.349.8815

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703.777.5820  
markjeffries@verizon.net

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER  
Chris Cobb  
Robert Silman Associates  
202.333.6230  
rsapc.com

GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER  
Dana Eddy  
The Eddy Group  
703.451.4686

SURVEYOR  
Stuart Dunn (property)  
540.955.3388  
dunnland@earthlink.net

Tom Lussier (aerial topo)  
Virginia Resource Mapping  
703.777.8799  
mapres.com

SEPTIC/WELL CONSULTANT  
Bob Marshall  
Cloverleaf Environmental  
540.955.9475  
cloverleaf1@verizon.net

SOIL EXPERT (Loudoun Co.)  
Alex Blackburn  
703.777.0520  
ablackbu@loudoun.gov

VINEYARD CONSULTANT  
Jason Murray  
Chateau O'Brien  
410.598.4317  
chateauobrien.com

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT  
Jay Graham  
Graham Landscape Architecture  
301.858.5330  
grahamlandarch.com

INTERIOR DESIGNER  
Annabelle Wirth  
Barnes Vanze Architects

BATH AND KITCHEN CABINETS  
Larry Dobbs Creative Kitchens  
creativekitchensbydobbs.com

BATH FAUCET: Sigma  
sigmafaucet.com

DISHWASHER: Bosch  
boschappliances.com

DOORS  
Simpson  
simpsondoor.com

Kolbe & Kolbe  
kolbe-kolbe.com

EXTERIOR SIDING: Hardiplank  
ameshardi.com

KITCHEN FITTINGS: Franke  
franeksd.com

LIGHTING FIXTURES: Lightolier  
lightolier.com

OVEN: GE Profile  
geappliances.com

PAINT  
Benjamin Moore  
benjaminmoore.com

WINDOWS  
Kolbe&Kolbe  
kolbe-kolbe.com

HARDWARE: Baldwin  
baldwinhardware.com

BATH SINK: Kohler  
kohler.com

## A TOWERING EXAMPLE, PAGE 40

ARCHITECT  
Braulio Casas Architects, PA  
850.231.0922  
casasarchitecture.com

BRICK: Old Carolina Brick  
handmadebrick.com

MILLWORK  
LaRocca Architectural Millwork  
laroccamillwork.com

WINDOWS  
Henselstone Windows & Doors  
henselstone.com

LIGHTING  
Restoration Hardware  
restorationhardware.com

Rejuvenation  
rejuvenation.com

HARDWARE  
Whitechapel  
whitechapel-ltd.com

Nanz  
nanz.com

Rejuvenation  
rejuvenation.com

PLUMBING FIXTURES  
Perrin & Rowe  
rohlhome.com

Kohler  
kohler.com

## ENGLISH INFLUENCE, PAGE 48

ARCHITECT  
McKee Patterson, AIA  
Austin Patterson Disston Architects  
203.255.4031  
apdashitects.com

BUILDER: Michael Greenberg  
Michael Greenberg & Associates  
203.226.7958  
michaelgreenberg-assoc.com

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Joan Nemirow  
Joan Nemirow Designs  
203.454.7570

WINDOWS & DOORS  
Dynamic Windows of Canada  
dynamicwindows.com

SINK: Elkay  
elkayusa.com

RANGE: La Cornue  
lacornueusa.com

REFRIGERATOR: SubZero  
subzero-wolf.com

DISHWASHER & STEAM OVEN  
Miele  
miele.com

KITCHEN FITTINGS  
Kallista  
kallista.com

LIGHTING: Vaughan  
vaughan.com

HARDWARE: Urban Archeology  
urbanarcheology.com

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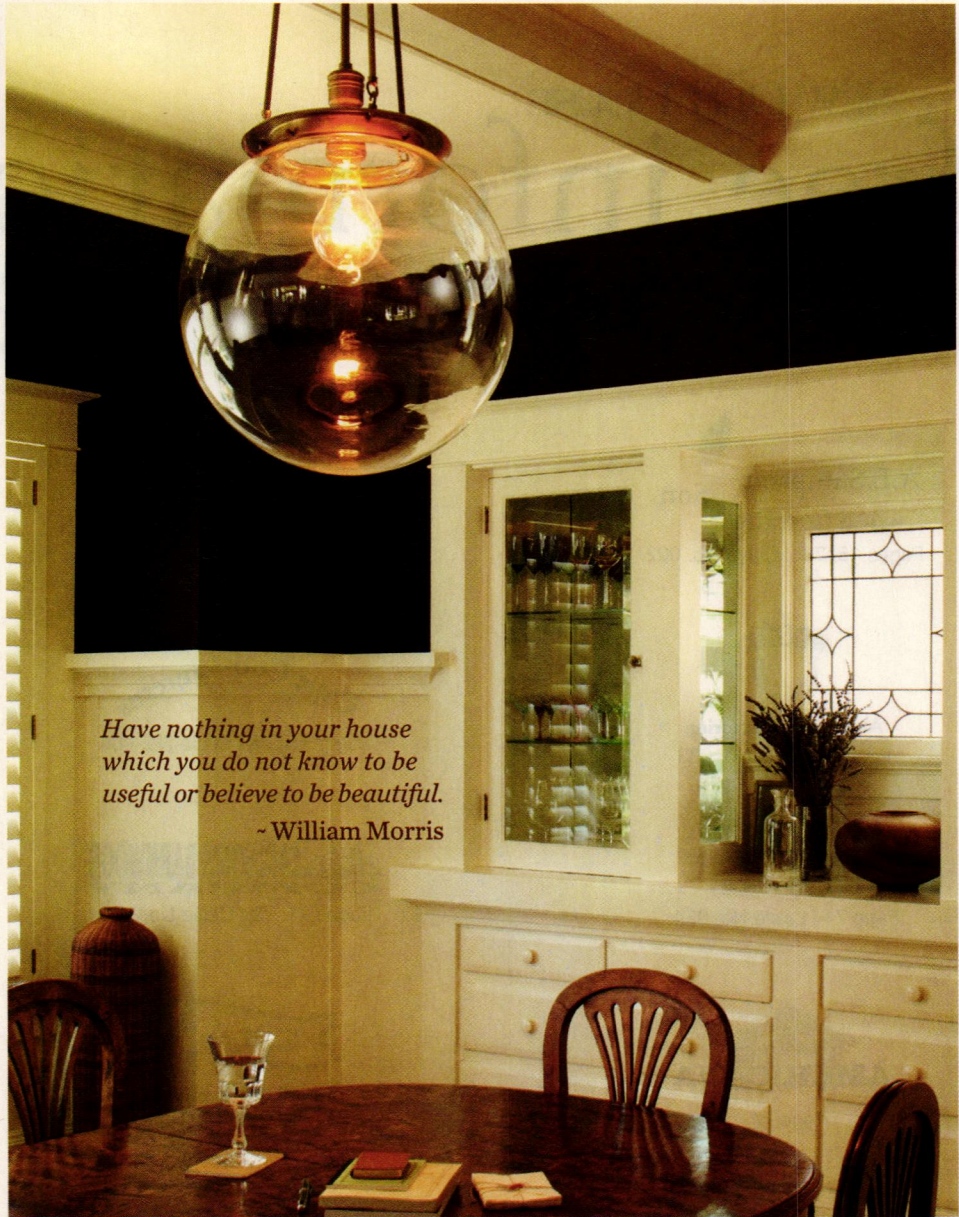


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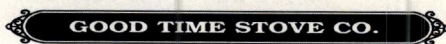
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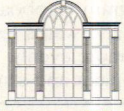


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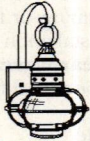
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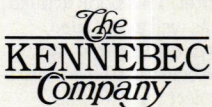


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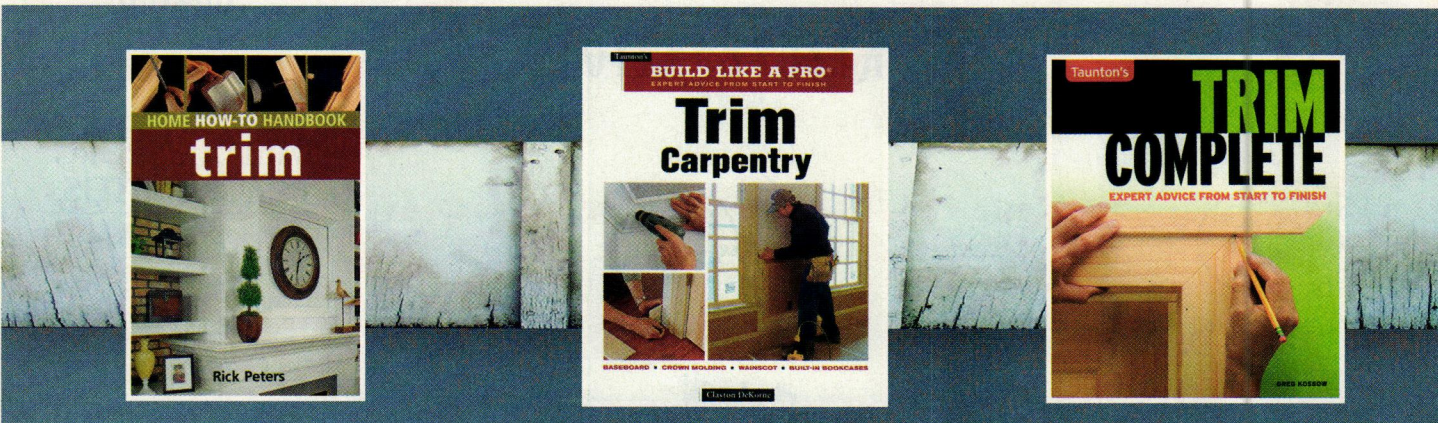
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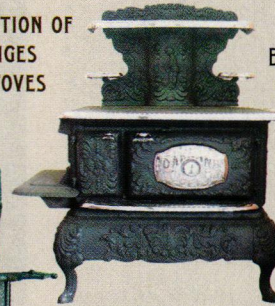
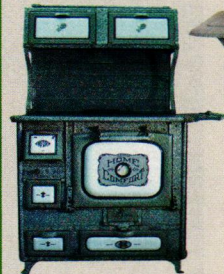
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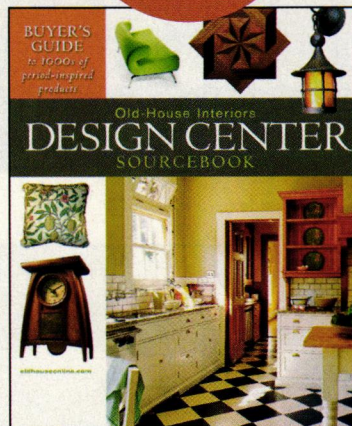
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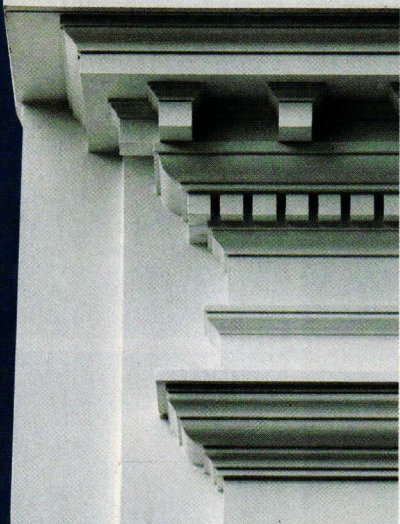
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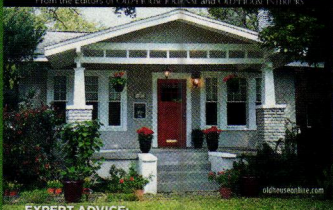
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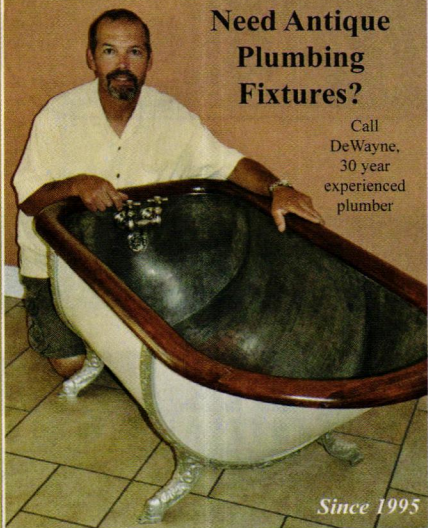
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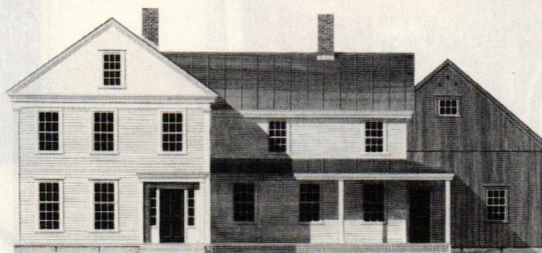
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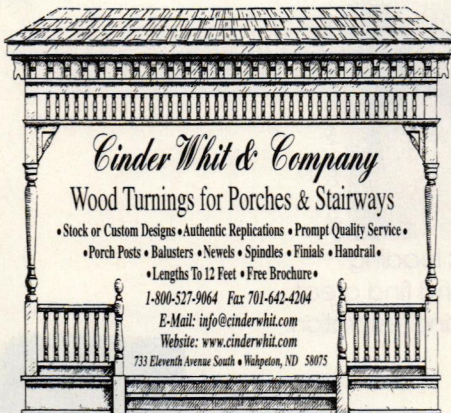


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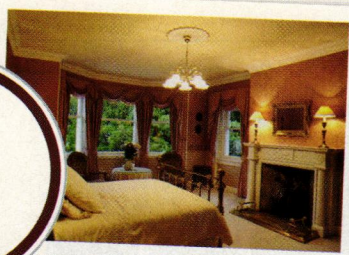
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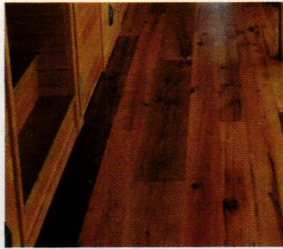
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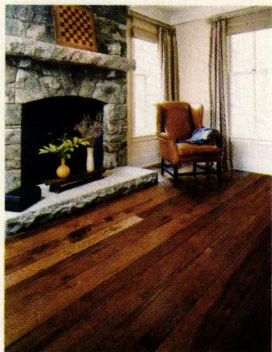
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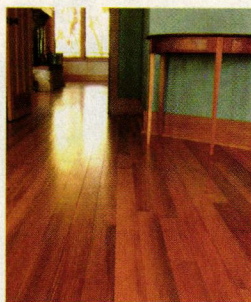
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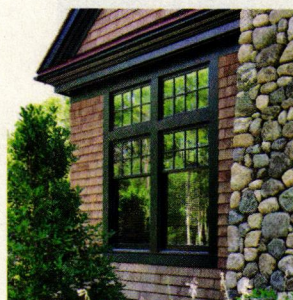
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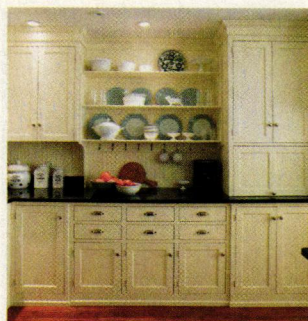
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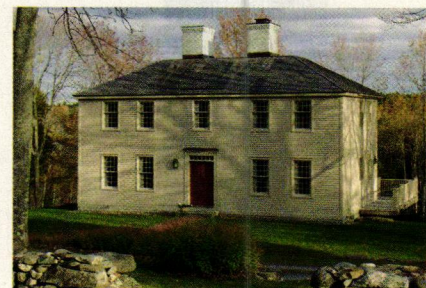
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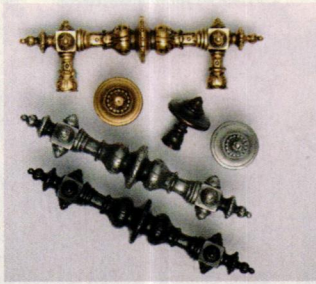
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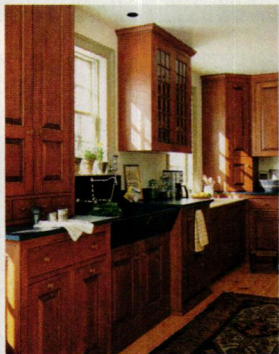
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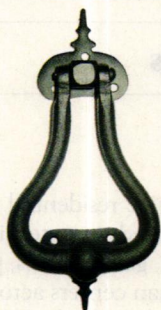
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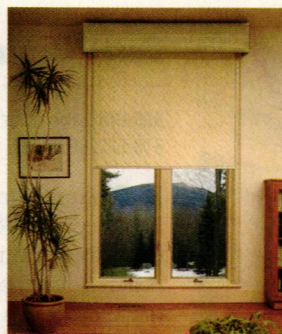


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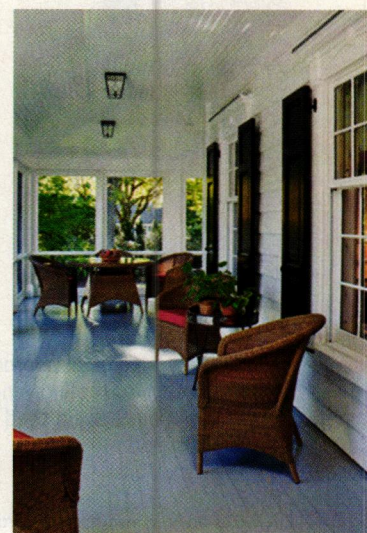
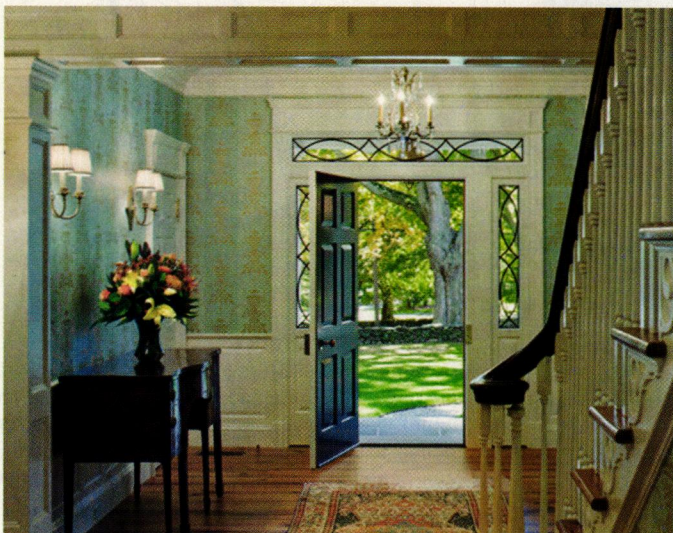
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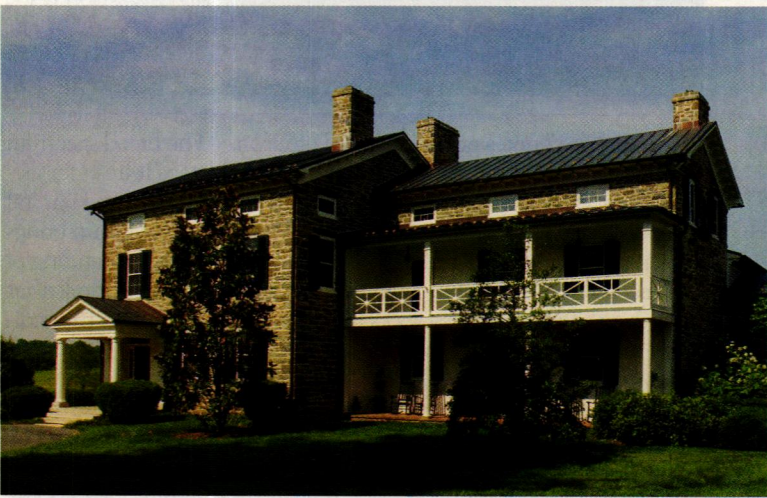
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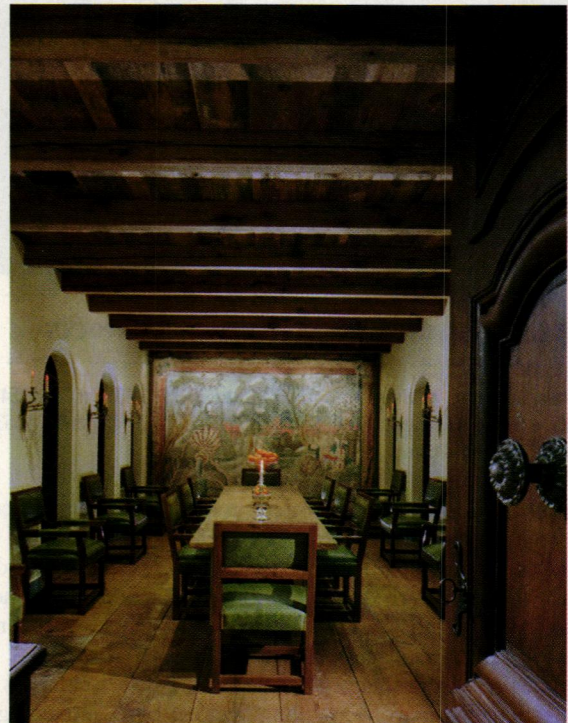


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Let us work with you to create a home that is inspired by the past, grounded in the present and equipped for the future.



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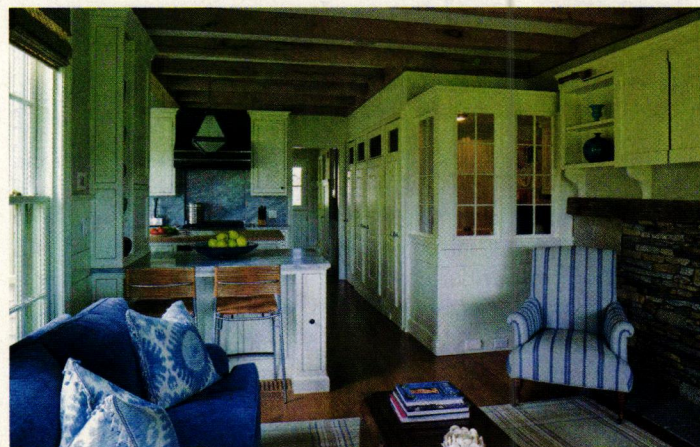
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4 Midland Street ● Quogue, New York 11959 ● (631) 653-1481 ● (631) 653-6605 (fax)  
www.apdarchitects.com

Austin Patterson Disston Architects is a full-service architectural and planning firm with offices in Southport, Connecticut and Quogue, Long Island. Founded in 1982 by partners McKee Patterson, AIA, and David Austin, AIA, the firm now includes a third partner, Stuart Disston, AIA, LEED GA, and a staff of 28 people with 8 registered architects and 14 draftspersons.

The firm's work is largely focused on bespoke residences from the Connecticut River to Montauk. "We feel confident doing a broad spectrum of styles and types: renovations, restorations, additions and

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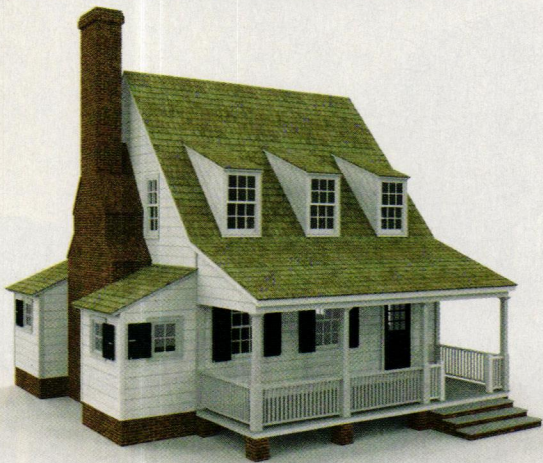
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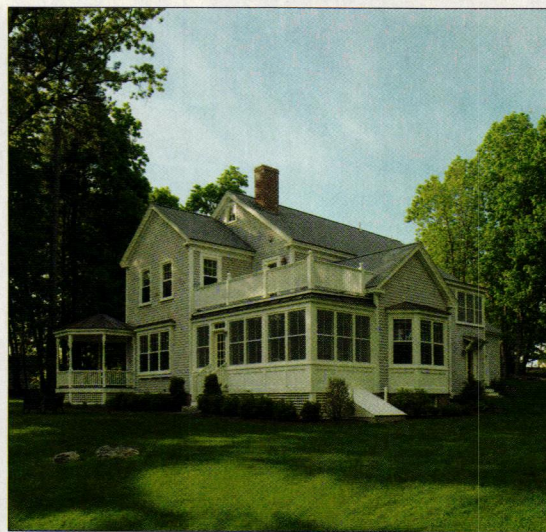
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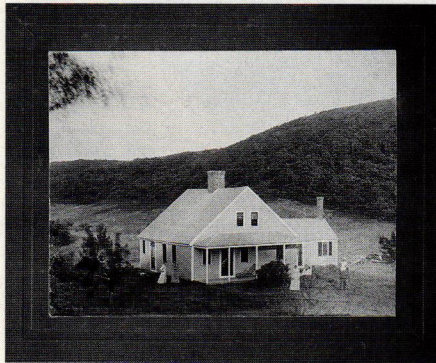
Period Architecture, Ltd. is a full service property planning and architectural design firm specializing in period-inspired design. Our portfolio demonstrates a firm understanding of the time-honored design principles, our passion for classic detailing and superior craftsmanship. For more information, please visit [www.periodarchitectureltd.com](http://www.periodarchitectureltd.com).

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## The Origins of the Cape Cod House

The Cape Cod style developed from the simple one-and-a-half-story colonial houses of eighteenth-century coastal New England.

These houses were built by English settlers in a hall-and-parlor layout around a massive center chimney.

The earliest houses were covered with wattle and daub and thatched roofs, but settlers soon discovered that hand-split wood shingles were more durable and versatile. As colonies prospered, they added two bedchambers

above and then a lean-to addition on the back for a kitchen and larder, creating the New England saltbox.

By 1800, these colonial cottages became known as Cape Cod cottages. The Cape-style house is distinctive because of its lack of ornamentation, plain boxed cornice, squared window heads, a door surround made of flat square-cut boards, and naturally weathered shingles. Some later houses were sided with formal clapboard. A Cape embellished with classical details takes on the characteristics of the Georgian or Greek Revival style. **NOH**

—From *Creating a New Old House* by Russell Versaci



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