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Photo by Durston Saylor
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American Farmhouse

What does the word “farmhouse” conjure in your mind? For me, it brings a memory of a summer day I spent visiting my brother, Richard, at an old farmhouse in Vermont. Richard was hired for the entire summer to care for two young boys on this rural farm—a property the boys’ family had owned.

The house was perfect: a white clapboard structure with a simple gabled front—with just a hint of a Greek Revival pediment revealing its age. The two-over-two paned windows were open, and thin white

curtains, caught by the warm breeze, billowed into the rooms. The blue-painted floorboards were wide and uneven. The furnishings were simple: antique chairs, a sturdy table in the kitchen, and well-worn club chairs were scattered about.

The property, once a dairy farm, was now a getaway home for this family’s vacations. They kept a vegetable garden, ancient apple orchards, and had local farmers tap the maple trees for syrup in the fall. As a young girl visiting from the big city of Boston, this place was magical.

In this issue, we celebrate the farmhouse in all its varied forms. Architect John Lawrence Upton revives an old farm in Jamestown, Rhode Island, for a new family who wanted to keep the integrity of the old structure while modernizing it for the 21st century.

Designer Rafe Churchill takes

on the challenge of his career by creating a net-zero new old house in Connecticut. The house looks like it has been nestled on the land for years, yet has sustainable attributes to make it independent from fossil fuels, with a geothermal system and solar panels. The house also uses no-VOC paints and renewable materials to create the “greenest” farmhouse possible.

Landscape architect Janice Parker transforms an old Christmas tree farm into a wonderful collection of garden spaces, complete with cutting gardens, vegetable gardens, a lap pool, and stone terraces. She repurposed hundreds of Christmas trees, replanting them to create borders for the various garden rooms.

We also visit a home on the Hudson River reimaged by architect John B. Murray. Murray renovates the country house, turning it into a handsome retreat for a New York couple. He oriented new spaces toward water views, creating inviting, comfortable spaces. You can see more of Murray’s impeccable designs in his new book *Classical Invention* (Monacelli Press, 2013). You’ll see how Murray seamlessly captures tradition and modernity in all of his projects.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *New Old House* as we move into our 10th year. The new old houses featured in 2004 are just as fresh and relevant today, aging gracefully—just as homes of the past have for centuries. It’s a true testament to the concept of timeless architecture.

Nancy E. Berry
Editor

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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 Graduate School of Design in 1973 and received his graduate degree from the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Fine Arts in 1979. He has designed traditional country houses, cottages, and farmhouses, as well as restorations and significant additions to period homes. Versaci is also the author of *Creating a New Old House* and *Roots of Home* (Taunton Press).



Michael Weishan is host emeritus of PBS's *The Victory Garden* and has shared his design tips, expert advice, and trademark sense of humor with gardeners of all levels. In addition to heading his own design firm, Michael Weishan & Associates, which specializes in historically based landscapes, he has written for numerous national magazines and periodicals and authored three books: *The New Traditional Garden*, *From a Victorian Garden*, and *The Victory Garden Gardening Guide*. Weishan lives west of Boston in an 1852 farmhouse surrounded by three acres of gardens.



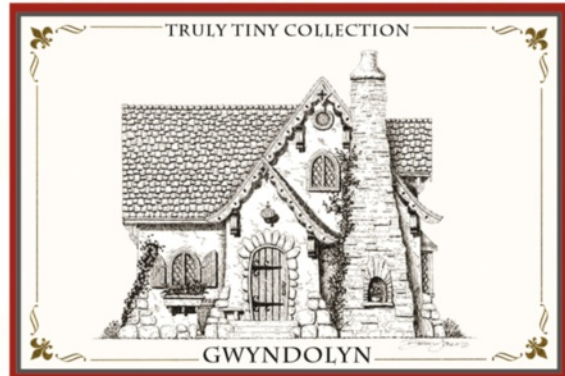
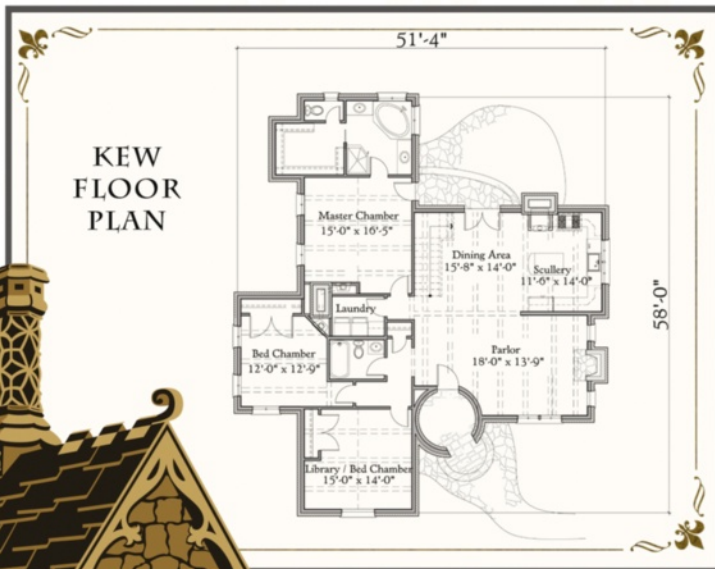
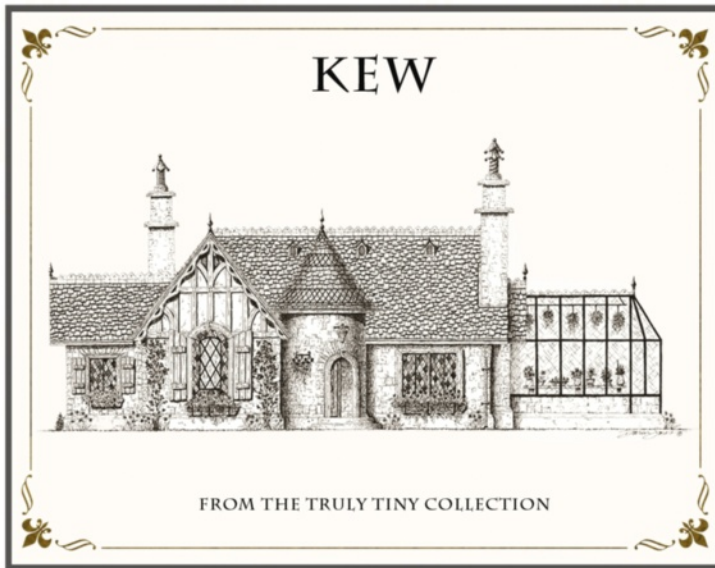
For more than 30 years, **Eric Roth** has been capturing life through the lens, which has guided him on local, national, and international journeys. He has shot for such publications as *Traditional Home*, *Metropolitan Home*, *Elle Decor*, and *Coastal Living*. He lives in Topsfield, Massachusetts, and has two lovely daughters.



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A modern farmhouse incorporates a farmer's porch to accommodate a bicycle and topiaries.

Modern Farmhouse

Lessons from our past can shape beautiful dwellings for our future.

BY RUSSELL VERSACI

A hundred years ago America was a pastoral land of villages and farms spread out across a vast countryside far away from cities. We were a society of farmers and people whose lives depended on farmers, and we lived in ways that were attuned to our land, climate, and natural resources. Aware daily of both the bounty and limitations of the local environment, we were stewards of the land by necessity.

Sadly, as industry and technology prevailed in the last century, we lost this vital connection to the natural world. But in the past decade, the grim realities of climate change and a global recession have shown us that how we choose to live matters greatly, and today Americans are realizing anew the wisdom of living sustainably. To take better

care of ourselves and the planet, we are embracing movements such as smart growth, recycling, renewable materials, and locally sourced foods—all movements that harken back to earlier times.

When our nation was young, our agrarian caretakers built on and with the land, creating farmsteads and farmhouses of practical simplicity. With distinctly local characteristics, the farmhouse became the first dwelling type to symbolize the qualities of what it meant to be an American—a colonist, a pioneer, a settler, a citizen. In the early 19th century, President Andrew Jackson deemed agriculture to be America's religion. Known as Jacksonian democracy, "Old Hickory" promoted America as an agricultural republic, and its farm economy

as "the first and most important occupation of man."

By the end of the 19th century, however, agrarian Americans had begun to urbanize in large numbers, leaving the countryside for new opportunities in industrialized cities. Farming and farmsteads were left to molder, to become antiquated reminders of what life used to be like—abandoned curiosities; quaint, lost ruins; increasingly irrelevant. Thus they remained until adventurous architects "rediscovered" the bounty of the past and reclaimed it in their work, promoting a uniquely American building style, separate and distinct from Europe.

The farmhouse revival began in earnest at the beginning of the 20th century with architects Arthur Little, Robert Swain Peabody, Charles Follen McKim, William Randolph Emerson, and other East Coast champions. In books of photographs and sketches, they documented what still remained of colonial homes and designed new houses in the Colonial Revival style. Their sketchbooks are still invaluable references today, as we new old house architects strive to re-create classic farmhouses for a devoted clientele.

In fact, the American farmhouse is well-suited to today's world. Our lives whirl by at breakneck pace, infinitely complex, disconnected though hyper-connected, relentless and stressful. Our comfort zone is no longer comfortable, and we look for a time out, a place to catch our breath. What better place than the old agrarian ideal—the farmhouse?

Our love for farmhouses comes from a place inside that many of us don't realize is there. "Memories are an underrated idea in terms of making people feel comfortable," says new old house architect Gil Schafer. Psychology professor Fred Bryant suggests that, as we age, "People begin to reflect on their younger days with nostalgia, which involves a longing for the lost past... Nostalgia plays a big role in how we build our lives and the things we choose to surround

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ourselves with. This nostalgia reconnects people with their roots and strengthens their sense of personal identity, often at a time when life circumstances make them question who they are and who they are becoming... It provides a source of security and stability in a turbulent and unpredictable world."

Yet, while we seek the emotional comforts of the past, few of us want to be full-time 21st-century farmers, sowing crops and mucking out the barn. A farmhouse in the country, easily accessible to and from the city, is a place where we can find emotional peace and a retreat from a hectic world. Owning a farmhouse has a mythic aura that hits all the right buttons. Farmhouses are simple. Farmhouses are local.

What do we think of when we picture a farmhouse? Perhaps we imagine white clapboard, with a front porch, red tin roof, and a picket fence. Maybe we see a kitchen garden out back and a few outbuildings. Rustic, plain, folk, country—these are all farmhouse words. But the contemporary relevance of a farmhouse goes much deeper than its aesthetic trappings.

In the 1970s, the environmental movement began with the baby boomers, Earth Day, and the Whole Earth Catalog. Today the popular concepts of

sustainability, farm-to-table, slow living, and related movements are part of a second environmental wave.

New environmentalism is being embraced by the millennial generation, those young Americans born after 1980 who came of age in a world that can only be described as soul-crushing. Tough times have imposed dislocating lifestyle changes, and after the chaos of the past five years, there is a collective yearning for simpler, calmer, more settled times, like those perceived to have existed in the past. Many young people are streamlining their lives by making choices in home designs that are simple and timeless, none more so than the farmhouse.

The "urban farmhouse" and "urban agriculture" are popular ideas today. Though an urban farmhouse may sound like an oxymoron, as a design style it is catching on. Many people now prefer to live in the city for its walkable neighborhoods, public transportation, cultural attractions, and daily socializing, and they are bringing the trappings of country living along, with rusticated decor, balcony planter boxes, and rooftop kitchen gardens—even chicken coops.

The current generation is not the first to want to meld the city with country living, but it may be the first who succeed at doing so. Eighty years ago,

bringing the farm into the city was Frank Lloyd Wright's idea for Broadacre City, an urban concept he proposed in 1932.

"The Broadacre City, where every family will have at least an acre of land, is the inevitable municipality of the future... We cannot solve our living and transportation problems by burrowing under or climbing over, and why should we? We will spread out, and in so doing will transform our human habitation sites into those allowing beauty of design and landscaping, sanitation and fresh air, privacy and playgrounds, and a plot whereon to raise things."

Unfortunately, Wright's pioneering vision for the benefits of urban homesteading didn't pan out as conceived. Instead, what we got was the "suburbanization" of America in cookie-cutter houses and rural subdivisions.

Recently, a newer, more inclusive concept of farm-to-city has emerged. Introduced as Agrarian Urbanism by the founders of The New Urbanism, this idea is being promoted by Andrés Duany's firm, Duany-Plater Zyberk (DPZ). As described by DPZ, "Agrarian Urbanism is a concept that involves food, not as a means of making a living, but as a basis for making a life and structuring the places in which we live."

This refreshing concept aspires to make agricultural pursuits a foundation of urban planning, from small-scale growing in town centers—using window boxes, balcony planters, and rooftop gardens—to larger yard-sized gardens, community gardens, and small farms in the suburbs. Agrarian Urbanism is gaining ground with environmentally conscious New Urbanists. And while the new farmhouse may differ in looks from the old white-clapboard classics, it shares the same heritage of homegrown food, fresh air, and close community ties.

"Farmhouse" as an aspirational ideal has morphed over the past four centuries, from the nation's primary home for earning a living on the land, to a revitalized concept for making life worth living. In all of its myriad guises, there is something genuinely American about a farmhouse, no matter how we fancy it. It is a sturdy ideal that says much about who we are as a people, somehow still defining our idealistic pursuit of a more perfect world. **NOH**

A simple farmhouse sits in a suburban area in Massachusetts.



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Open and Shut

A look at what makes a traditional window and door design.

BY LAUREL KORNHISER

Windows and doors are portals of light, of air, of human activity. On a practical level, they allow ingress and egress. They keep out the unwanted—excess heat and cold, insects and other small creatures, and rain. More than that, though, doors symbolize our hospitality, and windows frame our views. Together, they are the face that meets the street. Whether restoring, renovating, or shopping for new old windows and doors, you will face both opportunities and

challenges as you stand on the threshold of faithfulness to the past and judicious use of present technologies.

In times past, available materials and elemental realities often dictated architectural style. Andy Keefe of Green Mountain Window explains the historic trajectory: “Farmhouses in areas settled early in American history typically have small pane sizes since imported glass was generally only available in 6" x 8" or 7" x 9". These

early farmhouses often had 12-over-12 double-hung windows.” Once the country started making its own glass, he continues, “the light sizes became larger, and by the mid-19th century, the two-over-two pattern with one vertical muntin dividing the glass became the quintessential farmhouse style.”

Today, new materials and construction techniques afford environmental benefits as well as improved means for emulating past craftsmanship. Twenty-first-century glass, for example, not only keeps heat either in or out and modifies the sun’s rays, but it also can deaden outside noise, an important benefit for those historic homes built on main byways.

Though you may want to maintain the original glass in the windows of a beloved farmhouse, colonial Saltbox,

PHOTO COURTESY OF GREEN MOUNTAIN WINDOW

Left: Green Mountain Windows designs perfectly proportioned windows. Right: Heartwood Windows and Doors creates the foldup window, perfect for a porch or kitchen.



Gothic cottage, or Arts & Crafts bungalow, the reality of heat loss or air escape may take precedence. With renovation or creation, you have the opportunity to use energy-efficient krypton or argon gas-infused panes. You also may decide to add a bit of UV coating to regulate sun exposure. In these situations, the key is moderate use of new technologies. Sandra Vitzthum, a Vermont-based architect, loves that new glass can be made to look imperfectly old and embraces double-paned windows for better insulation, but she stops short of recommending available triple pane lights, as their thermal efficiency rarely exceeds their expense. As for UV coating, which helps regulate both heating and cooling, she says, "I usually specify 72 percent; more coating can make the

glass seem more blue on the inside."

While using these new technologies makes sense for renovation and new construction projects, in the case of some restorations, the preservation of original detailing, including the glass, becomes paramount, and the best course of action is simply to add storm windows and doors for cold weather protection.

In another scenario, it may be tempting to install plastic or metal muntins based on the belief that they may wear better or longer (just as some believe that metal doors stand up to the elements better), but according to Steve Benson, a third-generation woodworker with deep experience in energy-efficient technologies, that may be misguided. As countless old homes attest, properly treated and protected



wood will last hundreds of years. Wood muntins and mullions are key to an authentic-looking window. "If you are trying to do a convincing restoration and yet use simulated divided lights," Benson says, "that can be spotted from miles away." Besides not being the best aesthetic choice, the very values desired from manmade materials may not bear out: "Sure, it won't rot," he

says, “but the cladding’s weep holes clot or rot and have to be replaced in 20 or 30 years.”

In all cases, it’s critical to do your homework. Historical societies, pattern books used by builders past, and close scrutiny of area architecture will give you the clues you need: “You have to become an amateur architectural historian,” Benson says. Soon you will learn not only what was typical of the period you want to emulate but also to spot previous renovations, such as Victorian-era embellishments of colonial architecture or 1960s suburban-style cover-ups of Arts & Crafts detail.

Many companies, including Green Mountain, Heartwood Fine Windows and Doors, and Marvin Windows and Doors, customize windows to fit your home’s dimensions and period. “If peo-

ple want wavy glass, we can do that,” says Berit Griffin of Marvin Windows and Doors. She adds that the company also addresses a lament familiar to those with old windows: double-hung sashes that stay up only with the aid of improvised methods. “You can get a new double-hung that looks historic but stays up and locks securely.”

While in some cases it makes sense to adopt new techniques, such as replacing counterweight systems involving chain and weight window lifting mechanisms with springs, but other times, the solution is a compromise between old and new mechanisms. Steve Benson, for one, has developed a hybrid weight and chain double-hung window, with the outside upper sash operated with a concealed spring and the lower sash on the weight and chain system.

Just as important as all of the technical considerations are the aesthetic values of windows and doors. Sandra Vitzthum reminds us that just as the human body is roughly twice as tall as it is wide, so, too, are the most pleasing windows and doors, though Vitzthum often adds a couple of inches to the height; as she says, “It looks more correct.” Again, though, homeowners have to know their region. Vitzthum points out that, for example, Charleston doors were traditionally very narrow, while those in the Hudson Valley, developed under Dutch influence, are wider.

In terms of doors, Vitzthum is clear on one point: Use a wood door whenever possible. She recognizes the risks of a wooden door rotting or warping, and so recommends that homeowners always give a door a hood or a roof, as well as top-quality weatherstripping. Along with Steve Benson, there are many reputable custom door makers, including Historic Doors, based in Pennsylvania, and Jeld-Wen, whose website offers several tools for homeowners and professionals. For really specialized periods, one might consult with Artisan Du Bois, which focuses on Old World French and Italian custom doors, but which has worked with other places and periods.

Vitzthum also advises thinking carefully about a door’s hardware: “A lot of historic hardware used a skeleton key, and people today want more security. Fortunately, there are many companies that make period hardware.” The hardware, she says, is not the place to cut corners: “The handle of the front door is one of the most special details of a house. The front door’s handle is literally a welcoming handshake.”

Our windows are our eyes to the outside world, and our doors proffer our welcome. Though the number of choices involved when renovating or creating these features may seem overwhelming, the simplest advice is to let the period dictate the big picture and new technologies improve upon the details. **NOH**



Architects look at size and materials when designing the perfect new old house door or window.

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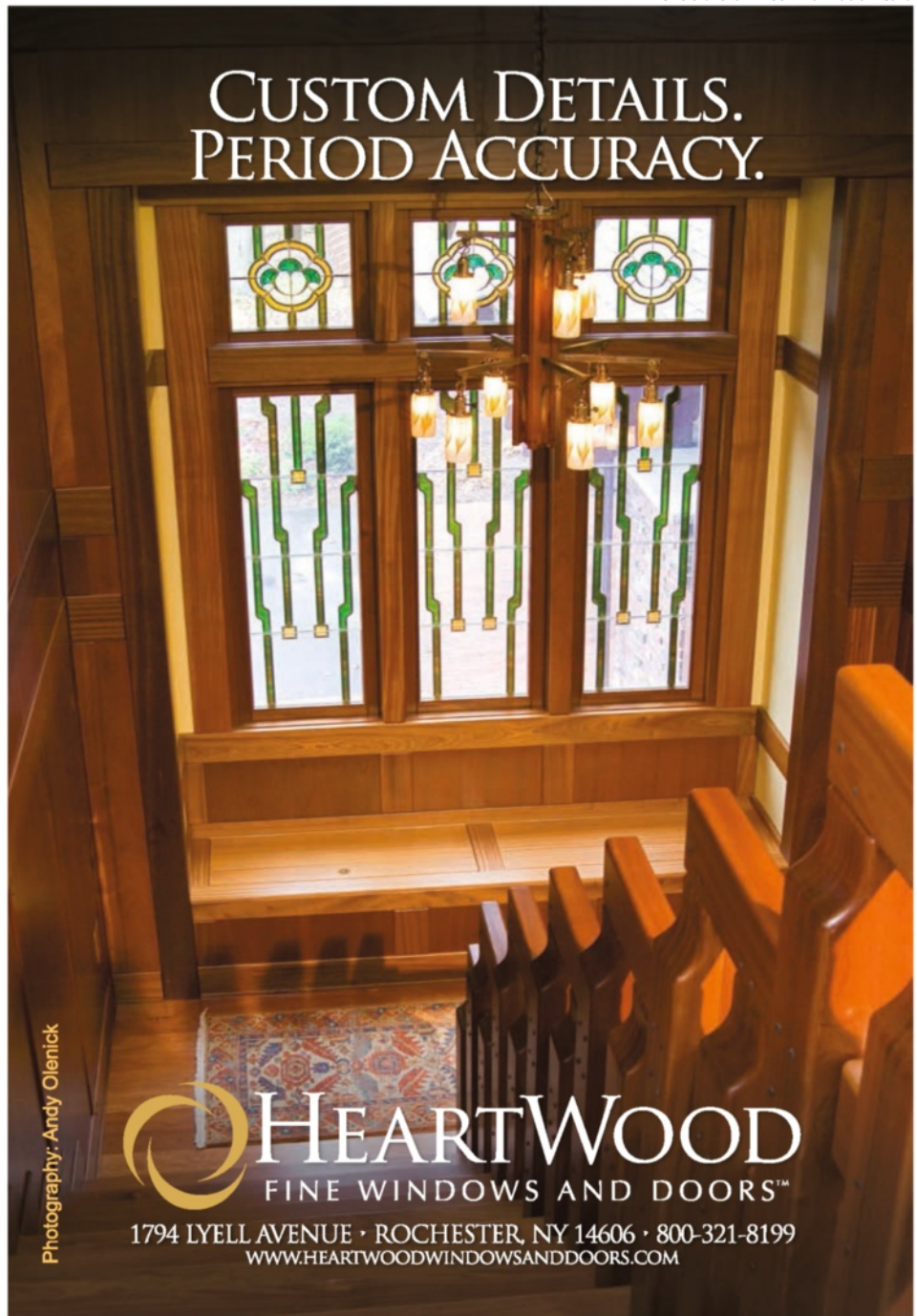
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A Step Up

The farmhouse porch—an American classic.

BY JENNIFER SPERRY

Farmhouses are deeply entrenched in American culture. As Chippy Irvine writes in *The Farmhouse*, “The first dwellings built by Europeans in America, as well as those constructed over the next two centuries by settlers on the continually moving edge of the frontier, were farmhouses.”

Because of the style’s staying power from America’s beginnings through present day, there are seemingly endless variations on the original timber-frame theme. Geographic preferences for certain building materials and layout resulted in farmhouses that differ in personality from region to region. An earthy fieldstone-laden version in Pennsylvania; a prim, clapboarded structure in Vermont; a gracious plantation house in Georgia: All qualify if they were built to facilitate living off of and profiting from surrounding agricultural land.

When time and fortune allowed, farmers were heavily influenced by the prevailing architecture of a certain time, leading to farmhouses that incorporated hallmark elements of popular styles. “Farmers were very educated people with a high level of civility,” explains Vermont-based architect Sandra Vitzthum. “They were interested in making a statement with their

ERIC ROTH PHOTOS; JAY GREEN PHOTO COURTESY OF STOLTZFUS ENTERPRISES



Local building materials, from wood to brick or stone, are in keeping with the simplicity of style.



houses and would keep up with architectural fashions by referencing and sharing pattern books.”

PORCH EVOLUTION

Historically, the work required to run a farm and raise a family took on many forms: raising livestock, gardening, preserving, spinning, cooking; the list goes on and on. When time and materials allowed, farmers began covering outdoor spaces for utilitarian purposes, such as accepting deliveries, shedding dirty

clothes and boots, and storing firewood.

“The earliest buildings didn’t have porches except for a specific purpose,” says Vitzthum. “But by the 1840s, the veranda became popular as a place to sit and look over the landscape. As a result, the expansive front porch came about as a fashionable way for farmers to relax and survey their land, and also to create a more gracious entry for guests.”

OVERALL STYLING

Ultimately, a porch’s design depends

on the home’s prevailing architectural style, says Vitzthum. One of the best ways to re-create history with a new or renovated project, she adds, is to visit a nearby historic neighborhood to survey porches and perhaps even take measurements.

Historically, chosen building materials—wood, brick, and stone—depended on what was available locally. Olde Bulltown Village, a new old planned community in southeastern Pennsylvania, continues this tradition. “Chester County fieldstone is native to our area, and we use it in our construction,” says David Stoltzfus, principal of Olde Stoltzfus Enterprises, Ltd., Olde Bulltown Village’s builder/developer. “When we dig a foundation, we use whatever stone we find on that particular home.”

Olde Bulltown’s homes are designed to evoke 18th-century German craftsmanship, but are constructed with segments evoking different eras, as though the homes developed over time. Porches range from covered cutouts with exposed beams and rafters and simple square posts, to more elegant outdoor spaces with tongue-and-groove beaded ceilings and decorative balustrades.

DETAILS

Plain and simple styling governs most farmhouse porch components, points out Jeffrey Davis, found of Chadsworth’s 1-800-COLUMNS, a Wilmington, North Carolina-based company that specializes in columns, balustrades, and millwork. “For farmhouses, we typically fabricate square columns with simple base and cap designs and no tapering. Or we create a basic post with no detailing at all: no capital, no base.”

“One common mistake, warns Vitzthum, “is to make posts too thin.” The post for an Italianate porch on a Greek Revival farmhouse, for example, should be 5½" or 6" thick. “It could be turned or chamfered as it rises up past



the railing height. There are so many beautiful possibilities,” she says.

Omitting rails and spindles delivers uninterrupted views, but code requires them for any porch higher than 30" off the ground. Code impacts spindle or baluster formation as well. The gap between balusters can be no more than 4"; however, Vitzthum warns that 4" is often too much space. “If you are working with square 1½" balusters, you only need 1½" to 2" of space in between. And if the balusters are turned, the negative space between them should be about the same heft as the baluster itself. Too much negative space is unattractive.”

Porch depth is another consideration. “I’ve seen older utilitarian porches no more than 6' deep and some as narrow as 4',” says Vitzthum. “For

the front porch, somewhere between 8' and 10' is plenty of room for fitting furniture; anything approaching 12' to 13' is way too deep.”

LONGEVITY

For optimum historic accuracy, Chadsworth’s millwork division produces wooden columns, rails, and spindles out of enduring woods such as cedar or mahogany. But to combat the elements and ensure low maintenance, architects and designers are warming up to the latest synthetic materials, such as Chadsworth’s award-winning PolyStone. “It’s a fiberglass-reinforced polymer that is paintable,” says Davis. “Using a mold, we can execute any custom design.”

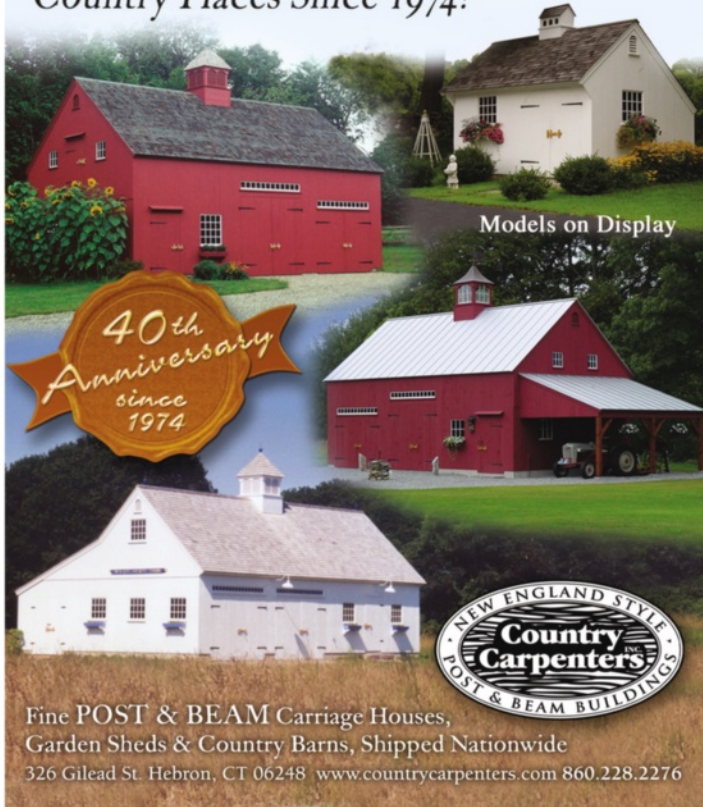
Decking is usually tongue-and-groove and crafted from the most dura-

An enclosed porch with tongue-and-groove decking and a painted brick wall provides a light, airy space for houseplants or just enjoying the scenery.

ble materials available, including plastics, composite woods, pressure-treated woods, and hardwoods—exotic ipe is an architect favorite. Oil paint requires less upkeep than stain or sealer, and Vitzthum recommends a semi-gloss finish for both floors and ceiling—“It reflects light into interior rooms.”

Day-to-day farming is no longer a prerequisite of farmhouse ownership, but a connection to the land is still the core theme of this enduring home style. The farmhouse porch, plain or decorative, utilitarian or wraparound, keeps these homes connected to their roots but also embraces modern living. **NOH**

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BY STEPHEN T. SPEWOCK

Keeping up with Arron Sturgis is hard these days. He is up well before dawn and home long after sunset, logging hundreds of miles a day in his truck on remote back roads, tending to a multitude of building and restoration projects scattered throughout the Northeast. It's a small price to pay to help save and preserve historical houses and barns—most built with old-growth timber by the first settlers to the region, and all constructed using a joinery process that redefines even the best carpenter's skill set.

"Timber framing was already a 500-year-old craft before coming over on the Mayflower," says Sturgis. "Ninety-nine percent of all structures initially built in New England up through the 1800s were constructed by these same exact techniques." As a member of the Traditional Timberframe Research and Advisory Group (or T-TRAG)—a 25-member group of artisans, from Maine to Pennsylvania, that focuses on recording different types of timber-framing

discovered in the field—Sturgis helps collate a growing database of historical structures. "What we're discovering is that most of these original structures are still standing today, almost 400 years later, telling their own stories of survival for generations upon generations."

FRAME FIRST

After the first settlers' homes were sufficiently weatherized, the next step was to construct a barn that would stand the

PHOTO COURTESY OF BENJAMIN NUTTER; ERIC ROTH PHOTOS

Timber framing, using traditional joinery, creates a lasting structure.





test of time. Using virgin old-growth timber, craftsmen wove oversized rib cages for barns designed to house all the animals, hay, and crops they could possibly store in an effort to survive the longest and coldest of winters. The extreme temperature changes, coupled with the massive load bearings, helped flex all the interlaced joints into overbuilt “super-structures” of amazing strength.

“Some of the best joinery in the world can be found right here in New England, especially in the village churches and steeples,” claims Sturgis, who was hired by the Topsfield, Massachusetts, Historical Society (THS) to restore the First Congregational Church’s steeple. Local architect Benjamin Nutter, a member of the THS board, remembers meeting Sturgis and watching his work unfold. “Everyone was immediately impressed with not only Sturgis and his crew’s skills, but

also his extensive knowledge about timber-framing techniques and history, tree species selection, and proper use.”

HELPING HAND

While completing the church project, Nutter was quick to call on Sturgis’ team to help complete an extensive project—known as iFarm—in neighboring Boxford, Massachusetts. “I had a unique client who was undertaking the renovation of a 17-acre farm founded in the late 1700s with five structures in need of significant restoration,” explains Nutter. “I knew Sturgis was a perfect match for the project.” That was 2009, and the team is just now wrapping up completion of the daunting overhaul in 2014.

Starting with the barn, Sturgis and his company—15 men, ages 21 to 58—began replacing rotted sills and beams, eventually adding on to the old

“English” with new “Yankee” framing, all while using traditional joinery with the same wood species for the highest-quality repairs. Once finished, they moved on to the carriage house, then the water tower, then the utility building, and finally the house itself. “We’ve been very fortunate to be part of this very unique project,” offers Sturgis. “Owner Christine Barenfeld organized a very methodical and thoughtful process to reestablish iFarm as a premier model for sustainable *terra firma*.”

KNOWLEDGE BASED

That same level of respect was reciprocated by Barenfeld. “In addition to knowing all the proper timber framing techniques and processes, Sturgis is very well grounded in preservation, which was a very key criteria for our project,” she says. “The fact that he has provided exhibits to various

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The Traditional Timberframe and Research Advisory Group keeps a database of older timber-framed structures across the region.



museums—including the Smithsonian Institution and the New York Museum of Design—underscores the breadth of his knowledge.”

After an initial walk-through of all the structures, Sturgis helped steer the project toward the proper horizon with just one fundamental question: Did Barendsfeld and Nutter want to either change or fix what existed? “His expertise helped us realize that with the proper renovation, we could put all the buildings back into proper working order for the next 200 years,” exclaims

Barendsfeld. To help determine which beams were to be left or replaced, they employed a simple contraption called a “resistograph.” By inserting a long, narrow drill bit into a beam and then stressing the beam, any resulting flex would register on a stationary chart. Depending on the size and length of the beam and the amount of reflected flex in the drill bit, Sturgis could determine the beam’s resistance, and thus assess its overall integrity.

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ronment alike. Select cultivation by local loggers removes the devastation caused by clear cutting, while the carbon footprint for processing the two to three large trees required to build a standard timber-framed house is less than the energy needed to cut, transport, process, ship, stock, and assemble dimensional lumber. “On top of that,” Sturgis reasons, “a timber-framed home is stronger, more resistant to fire, and lasts for hundreds of years.” ^{NOH}

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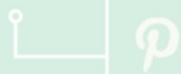
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Achieving the maximum results in a cutting garden requires planning and patience.



Beautiful Blooms

Cutting gardens offer beauty to your landscape as well as to your dining table.

BY MICHAEL WEISHAN

I've had an on-again, off-again love affair with annual cutting gardens my entire horticultural career. The on-again part has to do with the wonderful luxury of being able to create your own fresh bouquets for pennies on the dollar. The off-again part has to do with the labor involved, especially the weeding. I'm heading for my 50th birthday this August, and as much as I'm loath to admit it, I can't (or more precisely, don't want to) do all the things I did willingly when I was 25, which included dropping down on all fours and spend-

ing a few hours plucking weeds in all types of weather. And make no mistake about it—even a well-mulched garden has to be weeded now and then. But there's a big difference between now and then and constant, relentless upkeep, and I'm happy to share a few tips to help make a carefree cutting garden romance bloom in your garden this summer.

First and foremost, cutting gardens should be thought of as utilitarian harvesting spaces, not ornamental areas. That's not to say that cutting gardens

aren't beautiful—they often are—but they shouldn't have to be. That's not their purpose, and many people, myself included, have driven themselves to distraction with the work involved in keeping a garden space both functional and lovely at the same time. Cutting gardens are the workhorses of the horticultural world, and as such should generally be located in areas that aren't expected to be in 24/7 public view. For me, that means including the cutting garden in the vegetable garden. In fact, growing flowers in rows alongside

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the vegetables makes a lot of sense. A wide row system, in which seeds are scattered thickly across 1'-wide planting beds separated by 3' walking areas, is ideal—both for the plants and for you. The key is to remember that most cutting flowers are annuals, which grow abundant, wide, and tall over the course of the summer. Plant them without ample walking spaces (and support—you often need staking), and you'll soon have to wade through a jungle just to cut a single bloom—a discouraging prospect on a hot, rainy August day.

Critical to this layout scheme is using professional-grade, woven polypropylene fabric over the pathways to prevent weed growth. I'm not talking the landscape fabric you see commonly sold in big-box stores. That stuff is, to use the vernacular, a royal pain: It is hard to lay, doesn't stay put, and

often accumulates pockets of soil and debris where weeds thrive. The material I'm referring to is what you see in many nurseries resting under their container plants, and is a more durable cousin to the fabric used to bag oranges—except the garden version has been UV-stabilized and is designed for intensive multiyear use. You can buy it online or at greenhouse supply stores, and it's generally sold with "garden staples," 4" double-spiked pins that hold the fabric down with ease. The material also has enough heft to allow you to walk on it easily, and if you prepare the paths well, leveling them nicely and then pulling the fabric taut over the walkways, polypropylene provides a durable, year-round surface. Some gardeners, myself included, object to the look of a lot of black plastic in the garden; frankly though, it's really only visible

in the early stages of the season when the plants are young. Once the annuals are up and growing, you can barely see it. If the fabric still seems a little overwhelming, you can spread a light coating of mulch to hide it. The critical element here is "light": just enough to hide the fabric, but not enough to provide firm anchor for weeds, or else you defeat your entire purpose.

Don't buy pre-started annuals. Instead, directly sow seeds into the garden once the soil has warmed in your area above 60°F. There are several reasons for this. The first is cost: Package annuals are expensive, and even a small-sized cutting garden will consume many, many flats, thereby destroying the price advantage of growing your own flowers. Pre-packed annuals are really only meant for areas where immediate aesthetics are of concern: No one wants a front garden bed or

SOME OF MICHAEL'S FAVORITE ANNUALS TO GROW FROM SEED:

1. Sunflower 'Bi-Color Royal Flush,' a multi-stem variety ideal for cutting
2. *Euphorbia marginata*, a great filler
3. Cornflower 'Blueboy,' an early summer favorite
4. Zinnia 'Cut and Come Again' (speaks for itself) & 'Décor,' a charming mix of apricot and chartreuse that arranges itself
5. Cosmos 'Double Click' and 'Petticoat,' both especially bred for cutting
6. Feverfew 'White Wonder,' great for fillers and will rebloom if kept cut back



Planting a variety of color and texture provides colorful, informal bouquets to accent any room.

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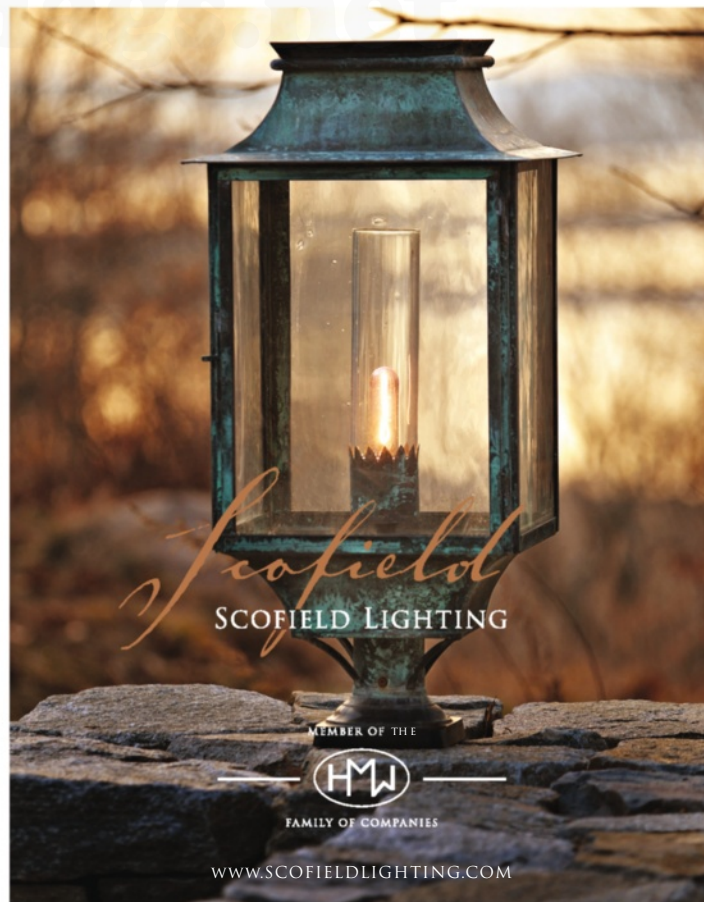


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Using the right fabric is key to impeding weed growth. Pictured are annuals planted from seed, which produce the lush effect seen here, right.



border that is entirely bare for several weeks. But in a cutting garden, that isn't an issue; here you can harvest the rewards of a little patience. The fact is that most annuals mature better and healthier if allowed to grow in a single spot from seed as nature intended. I've often been amazed to see how self-sown annuals, descended from the year previous, have rapidly outstripped plants I have purchased and planted from the nursery. All that's required is to sow the seed thickly according to package instructions and wait. You'll have to do a bit of thinning to be sure, and a single pass of hand weeding around the new

sprouts, but once the annuals take hold they will crowd out their competition without much help from you. Another factor arguing for seed rather than transplants: variety. There are simply so many beautiful cutting flowers you can grow only from seed.

Remember that flowering annuals, like most vegetables (which are also primarily annuals) require a deep, rich, well-prepared soil in order to thrive. Just throwing some seeds in ill-prepared ground is not going to provide those luscious blooms you see in pictures. Annuals need to finish their entire life cycle in a single

season, from sprouting to flowering to producing seed for the next generation, and to do that they need ample water and nutrients. If you spend some effort tending to your soil before sowing, you'll be amply rewarded.

Finally, keep in mind that though I have concentrated here on annuals for cutting, there are many wonderful perennials that can be used in a similar fashion: Spring bulbs, iris, rudbeckia, alchemilla, lilies, and a host of others spring to mind, and when grown using the wide row method, easily provide armloads of flowers for the summer table or mantelpiece. **NOH**

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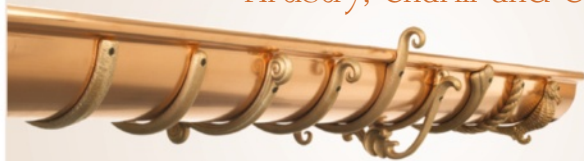
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REVIVING

FOX

HILL

FARM

ARCHITECT JOHN LAWRENCE UPTON RENOVATES A
HISTORIC FARM IN JAMESTOWN, RHODE ISLAND.

BY JANICE RANDALL ROHLF | PHOTOS BY WARREN JAGGER

The house offers sweeping views
of fieldstone walls, meadows,
sky, and Narragansett bay.



Renovations are geared toward preserving the farm's rural and historical characteristics while maintaining the integrity of the property. Opposite: The master bath incorporates modern fixtures and fittings for the ultimate in luxury.





There are few downsides to conserving open land so that people today can enjoy it as their ancestors did generations ago.

On the other hand, carrying out a 21st-century lifestyle within the outdated confines of an antique house is fraught with challenges. Such was the situation in which Boston-based architect John Upton found himself as he embarked on a renovation project at historic Fox Hill Farm in Jamestown, Rhode Island.

“The house was lovely; earlier renovations were modest, which was fine because beautiful items were intact, but even maintenance was extremely basic, and the oldest part of the

structure was in very bad condition, as were building systems,” says Upton of the 1740s farmhouse once inhabited by relatives of Benedict Arnold. It is the hub of a 70-acre waterfront property still grazed at times by sheep and cattle, and with working fields supporting various rotating crops. A gambrel-roofed addition dates from around 1810, and a second addition completed in the 1940s serves largely as a library.

Upton undertook the adaptation of the colonial-era



house to better meet the contemporary needs—both practical requirements and aesthetic preferences—of a couple who envisioned an airy retreat for themselves within the rambling house. It would include sleeping, study, and dressing areas, as well as storage space for clothing.

The first phase of the project addressed creating a loft-like master bedroom suite, along with upgrading structural, heating, plumbing, electrical, and lighting infrastructure. “Time and neglect had allowed portions of the floor structure to become dangerously taxed and trampoline-like,” observes Upton, noting just one of the hurdles he faced.

But the success of this renovation depended on more than just making the house safe and more livable for its occupants. In his work, Upton stresses the importance of “first understanding the special qualities of a place.” Jamestown, which encompasses 6,000-acre Conanicut Island, connected by one bridge to the mainland and one bridge to Newport, is a tight-knit community committed to preserving its quiet, rural, and historic characteristics. Fox Hill Farm was owned by the same family from the 1930s to the early 2000s, initially as a summer home, then year-round. While the farm’s new owners wanted to explore more modern design ideas, their main goals focused on the stewardship, restoration and conservation of the unique property.

For Upton, Fox Hill was an opportunity to apply his professional commitment “to fully explore how building design can enhance the surrounding environment and context.” By investments made in the infrastructure, as well as an adaptive reuse of interior spaces to suit contemporary family living

The farm appears as it did 100 years ago. Opposite, top: The dining room offers many original details. Opposite, bottom: Layers of paint are left visible on the mantel. An outdoor shower offers modern convenience.

requirements, the house is enhanced for another century of meaningful use as the owners look to actively protect and maintain this as a 21st-century example of agrarian open space along coastal New England, where such farms have rapidly disappeared.

The master suite was originally three small, connected rooms on the second floor and attic that, says Upton, “had a very dark, low feeling,” typical of mid-18th-century houses. Once the plaster walls were removed, revealing the ancient post-and-beam structure, it was clear that the bones of the house would align nicely with Upton’s aesthetic. “The whole thing is done to expose and highlight the textural and sculptural qualities of the original,” says Upton, citing, for example, two of the antique features that remained intact during renovation: the rugged chestnut post-and-beam structure and the enormous chimney in the master suite that has two fireplaces on the second floor and an intact beehive oven in the kitchen fireplace below.

Against the rusticity of such artifacts-turned-design-elements, the sleek, new interior details—a floating bookcase headboard for the bed, steel rail for the loft, and built-in mahogany vanity in the bathroom—provide the home’s defining look: the contrast of contemporary against the ancient fabric of posts, beams, doors, and floors.

Not only were the wide-plank pine floors refinished, and



Antique features include post-and-beam structures and a massive chimney with two fireplaces. Strategically placed windows in the upper story usher light into this previously dark space. New and old features blend together while maintaining the character of the original structure.









doors and all mantelpieces stripped so that the age of the wood shines through, but pragmatic technical upgrades also were made to the structure of the floor: introducing electrical for low-voltage lighting on the first floor, and sound insulation and radiant heating under the second-floor finish boards. All boards were numbered, removed, and gently cleaned, then restored and replaced once the retrofitting of the floor cavity space was complete.

While Upton admits a fondness for “delving down into the minute details” of a project, Fox Hill’s renovation was as much about the siting and landscape as it was about structural repairs and enhancement.

“The views across open meadows overlooking Narragansett Bay to the north were a major consideration,” says the architect, explaining that by opening up the space so that a portion of the suite is two stories high, he was able to add four dramatically overscaled windows to the north elevation. A new, tall bank of windows to the west also provides much needed sunlight as well as summer breezes.

The new master bath was created in a small room of the

adjacent 1810s addition. To create the impression of more space, Upton designed the mahogany vanity, built by a local craftsman, to hover off the wall above a new French limestone floor (also with radiant heating). Similarly, the mirror above the sink appears to float off the glass backsplash. Despite the space limitations of this room, it accommodates an overscaled soaking tub, tucked under attic stairs, and a rain-head shower stall. The clean, modern detailing of the new pieces and fixtures again contrasts with the beautiful texture of the antique ceiling joists and brick chimney.

Phase two of the Fox Hill Farm renovation will see the expansion of the first-floor kitchen out to the north. For now, the house, with its new master suite and infrastructure upgrades, represents the broader interests of the people of Jamestown: to upgrade historic sites, creatively reuse older structures, and effectively manage the open space and natural resources they are so fortunate to have. *NOH*

For resources, see page 70.

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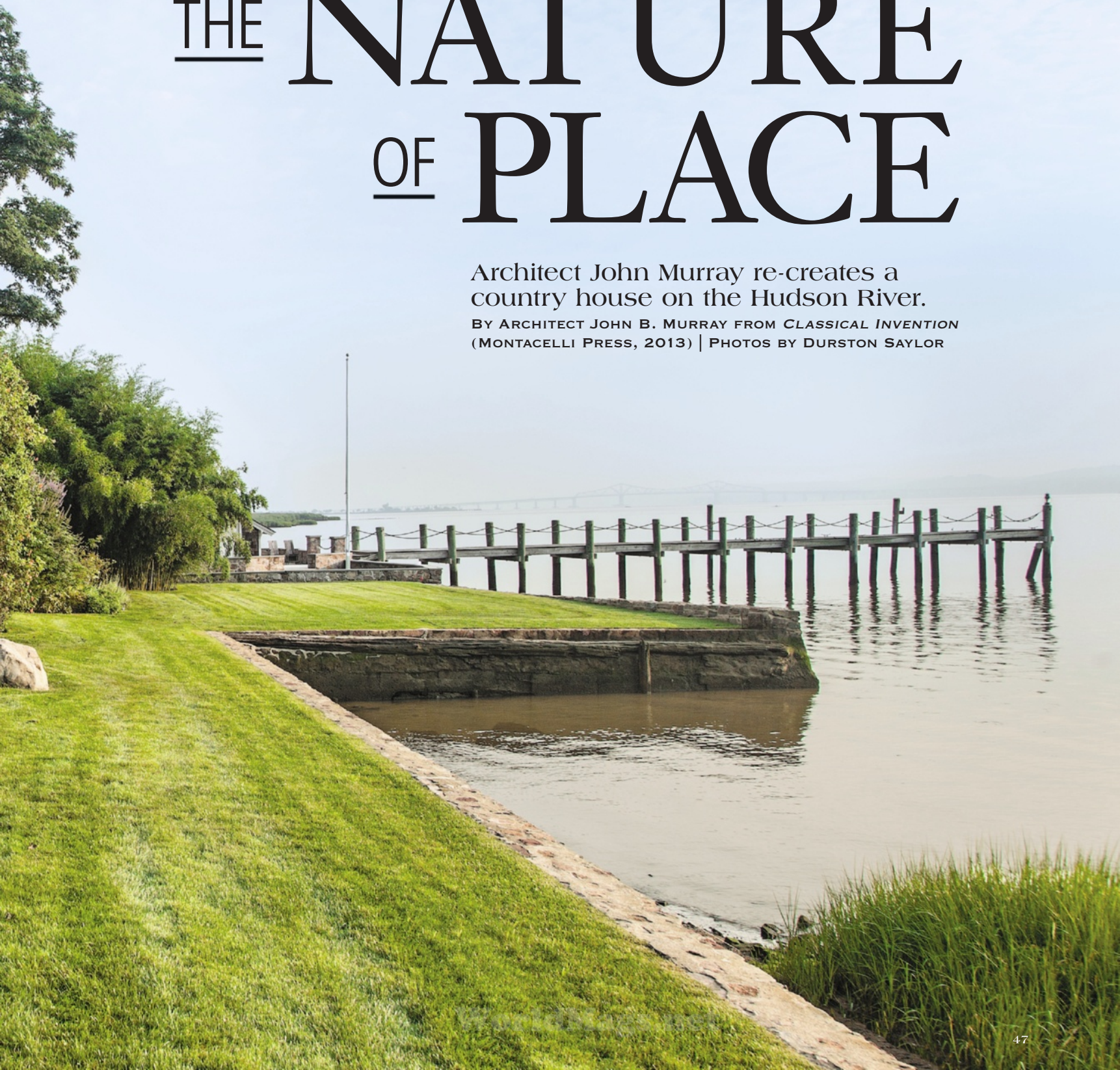
The goal of the renovation was to maximize the house's presence along the river.



THE NATURE OF PLACE

Architect John Murray re-creates a country house on the Hudson River.

BY ARCHITECT JOHN B. MURRAY FROM *CLASSICAL INVENTION*
(MONTACELLI PRESS, 2013) | PHOTOS BY DURSTON SAYLOR





The stair hall steps down into the living room.



“There’s an ideal structural expression for every residence, and the architect’s job is to define it, shape it, and bring it into being.”

How each of us does depends on the particular circumstances, as well as our own aesthetic philosophies. Some of us prefer to enhance the existing essence, quirks and all. Others would rather smooth out the idiosyncrasies, aiming for symmetry and balance. Still others go for the *tabula rasa* approach. For this weekend house, a wonderfully eccentric accretion of a century and more that bellies up to the banks of the Hudson River, the client preferred the first. So did I. Here, that involved rebuilding the entire structure under its existing mansard roof, then cladding it in parging tinted to match the local Palisades stone.

Given the house’s unique proximity to the river, we wanted to make it as extroverted as possible. That we did with new windows that open the house to the river. But we hewed to the house’s rather unusual ground-floor parti, which had the porch connecting the living room and dining room, the kitchen (off-side with a corner work area), one guest bedroom adjacent to the stair hall, and a tall studio.

From the quaint, compressed entry through the new stair hall, the interior opens up into the beamed living space. The position of doors, windows, and fireplace—all are part of the design. The simplicity of the finishes is intrinsic to making the new architecture appear timeless. Painted woods, natural plaster walls, stone floors, and hand-hewn beams with plaster interstices

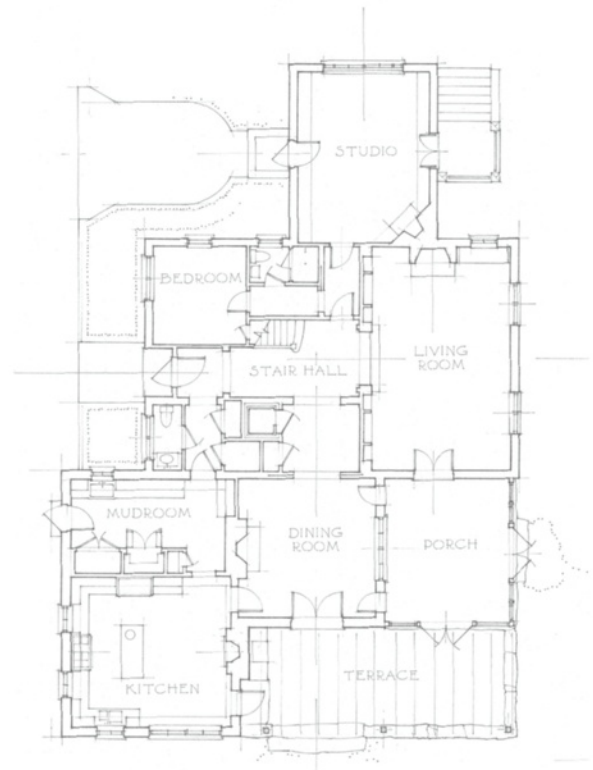
overhead feel solid and organic, and recall the vernacular architecture of the area’s early Dutch settlers. The built-in cabinetry reinforces that effect. The decor, by interior designer Sam Blount, captures the spirit of the house.

The kitchen is at the heart of this house. Framed by windows overlooking the water, it incorporates a generous work area, simple semi-overlay style cabinetry, and a breakfast table by a raised hearth. The shallow firebox brings the fire front and center. Elevating the hearth puts the fireplace right in the sightlines of those in the work area and at the table.

Arrayed off the second floor landing are the master bedroom suite, a guest bedroom, and his study. In a first for us, the master bedroom incorporates Harmon-hinged French doors, flanked by sidelights, that open onto a new deck with magnificent river views. Finely engineered casement windows include pull-down screens. The doors from the master bath provide additional access to the deck.

The porch adjacent to the living room offers a transitional area that opens gracefully to the pergola beyond. There, wisteria now cloaks the stone terrace and creates beautifully dappled shade. The effect? A celebration of nature’s glories, the wonders of place, and of history—root, branch, and all. **NOH**

For resources, see page 70.



Top: The living room's east elevation faces the Hudson. Two added windows, the house's only in-swing casements, created a space for wall art. Above: Simple cabinetry frames out-swinging casement windows.

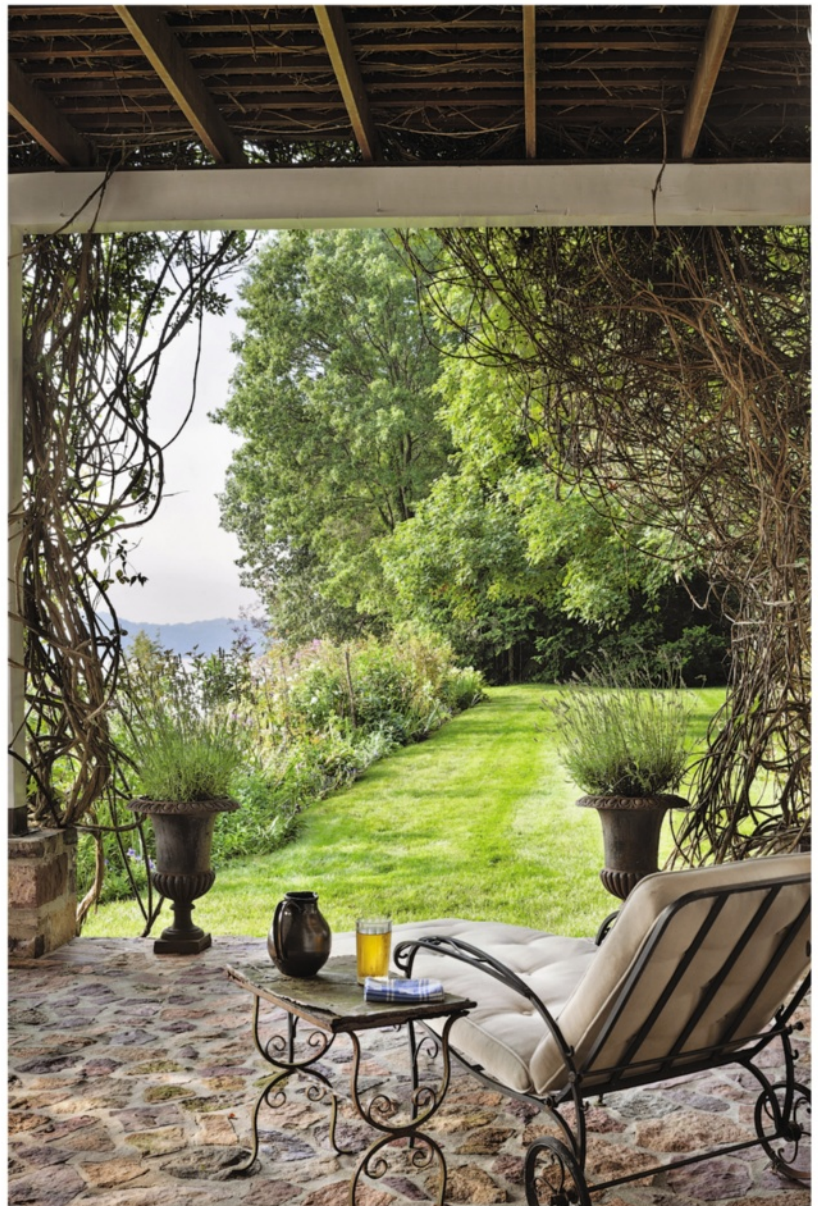
On the living room's north end is a fireplace with a honed slate firebox and antique limestone mantel. Hand-hewn beams accentuate the ceiling.





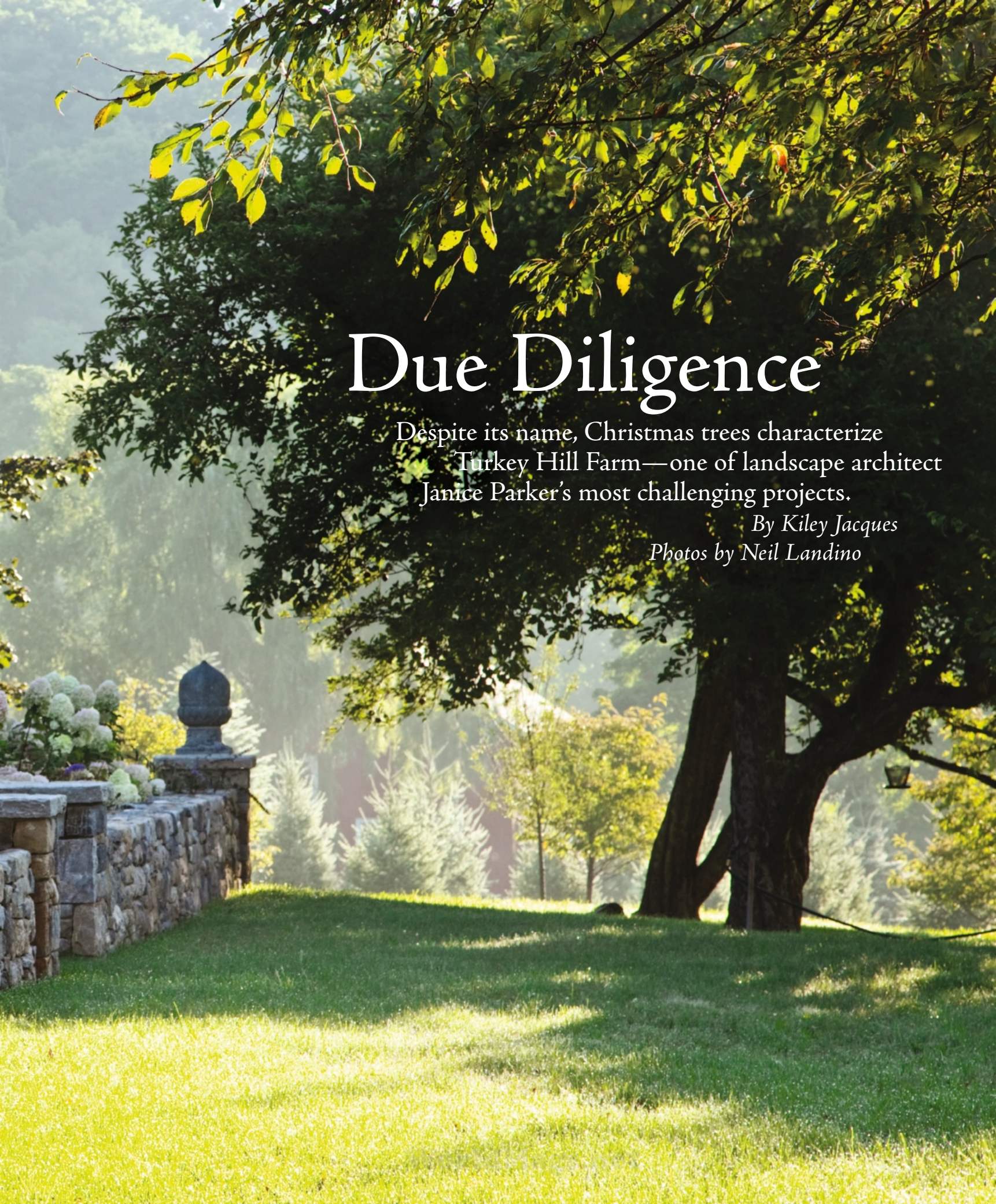


“The porch opens gracefully onto the pergola.”



Designed for year-round use, the porch accommodates screens. French doors lead out to a pergola.





Due Diligence

Despite its name, Christmas trees characterize Turkey Hill Farm—one of landscape architect Janice Parker's most challenging projects.

By Kiley Jacques

Photos by Neil Landino



A solitary red barn defines
the scope of the property.



Janice Parker's botanic beginnings

are evident in the care she's taken to rescue and reuse more than 400 conifers on Turkey Hill Farm—once a 47-acre working Christmas tree farm. “I started as a horticulturist,” says the landscape architect at the helm of Janice Parker Landscape Design. “It’s a personal journey,” she says. “You have to work for years among plants to really understand them and use them correctly and effectively.” It’s this commitment to plant health care that is at the root of Turkey Hill Farm’s success.

Charmingly situated in the rural village of Millbrook, New York, the tree farm-turned-contemporary-homestead remains true to the property’s agrarian past. “It was very bleak,” says Parker of her initial impression of the property. “There was a sad story there. You could just feel it.”

That may have been the case back in 2006 when Parker first set sight on what was to become one of the most challenging projects of her career, but today, it is teeming with life. And the Christmas trees still stand.

“[The homeowners] had stars in their eyes about what they wanted to do,” says Parker. They dreamed of vegetable and cutting gardens, grass-filled meadows, outdoor spaces for entertaining—including a terrace and a pool, an area for raising bees, fruit orchards, and a possible tennis court.

With those things in mind, Parker formed a plan. It wasn’t to be an “arrogant, off-the-wall, arbitrary design” that didn’t make any sense for the property, she says. Rather than clear cut the land and begin anew, Parker gave life to the property’s historical context. “I felt this great sense of responsibility that there was all this agriculture there and many horticultural products on site,” she says. “We wanted to use those Christmas trees.”

During the site analysis, she and her team discovered an abandoned barn, a degraded second house that had once housed migrant workers, a hardwood nursery, a major water source used by area nurserymen, and an overgrown cemetery. Additionally, the 19th-century Greek Revival main house was in need of restoration. “I was really intrigued by the land,” says Parker. Civil engineering, soil science, horticulture, agronomy, and geology were major considerations, as was the historic significance and use of the land.

A series of irrigation canals was found running through the entire property. Marked by row after row of unkempt





Parker incorporated a pool complete with pergola and outdoor dining area.

and crowded Douglas fir, blue spruce, and Norway spruce, the canals initially posed an obstacle, but were ultimately managed as a wetland. Existing white pines, large maples, locusts, and apple trees proved worthy and informed the overall design. Once trees deemed valuable were pruned back to health, Parker developed arcs and layouts that made both symmetrical and agricultural sense. “A farmer’s view of the land is never wrong; it’s actually quite beautiful,” she says. “They are growing the right plant in the right place in the right soil in the right orientation so things will grow and thrive. It was already in play there.” She, therefore, employed New England’s agricultural model of rowing things out.

Sourcing a small tree spade and a three-man crew, Parker set about rescuing, transplanting, and repurposing more than 480 conifers. As with most landscape designs, architecture, construction circulation, utilities, and geothermal wells presented challenges. But none were as looming as the Christmas tree crop. “Making sure the trees were protected and viable for the long term was part of the challenge,” says Parker. “It’s always a balancing act.” Moving the trees economically was also challenging. “I felt that it needed to cost significantly less to move them than to buy them,” she says.

“We tried to keep everything connected,” says Parker of the resulting design. From the unfinished cedar pergola draped in wisteria that frames the pool area to the dining terrace edged in blue stone to the two hedged lawn rooms and line of ‘Miss Kim’ lilacs in front of the fruit orchard, Turkey Hill Farm is about connections. Row upon row of trees define the property,

while elements like an iron trellis-topped urn planter centered in a room hemmed with cut fieldstone walls give it character.

Trick walls behind hedgerows and a second level of hedge in the center of one of the lawn rooms add mystery, while vegetable and cutting gardens form a strong center axis. “I think the overall surprise is when you walk into either one of the hedge rooms and find that pergola garden.”

Large locust trees give presence to part of the pool area, and simple stone dust paths with grass joints lend the landscape a friendly, easy feel. “We got the effect of a really terrific design,” says Parker, “but we were able to use [on-site] natural resources. I thought it was a nice marriage.”

Parker and her team are still involved in the project today and visit the property regularly to keep abreast of its maintenance and long-term care. “Our eye has to be involved,” she says. “I don’t really have a choice. We have respect for what we have done.”

The first phase of the project took 14 months to complete, but there is much more to come. Last year, a garage replaced a derelict guesthouse, and granite spheres atop plinths were situated near the pool area for sculptural effect. Old stone slabs have since been salvaged and used to make stairs running between the two hedge rooms. Phases two and three will look more extensively at accessibility.

The homeowners are very hands-on and continue to develop the property. They use the place heavily and are revitalizing the ecosystem—they keep bees and have active birdhouses. “They continue to discover more and more things

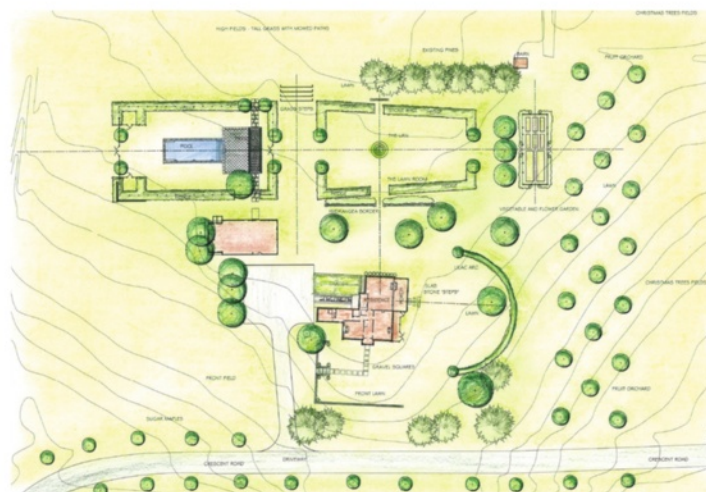


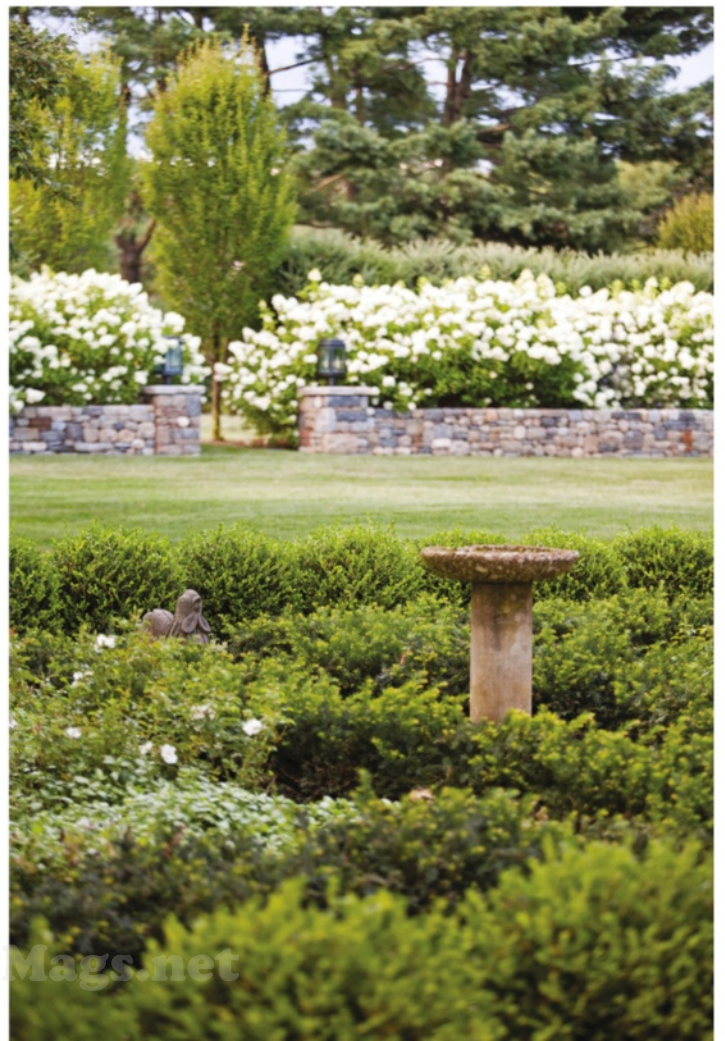
Parker includes structural elements in the garden in the way of fencing, urns, walls, and fountains.

that they love about their garden,” says Parker. “To have clients [with] vision and to have those natural resources to work with just filled us with gratitude.”

Inspired by gardens belonging to the era between 1905 and 1920, Parker followed the example of landscape gardener Beatrix Farrand, author of *Plant Book*, which details her horticultural intentions and long-term maintenance regime for historic Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C. From its genesis, Parker included her preservation plans for Turkey Hill Farm. Initiated in 2006, it is now a well-established, dearly loved, and impeccably maintained property. “Go big or go home,” says Parker of its future development. “Whatever you do, do it.” ^{NOH}

For resources, see page 70.





greener PASTURES

Designer Rafe Churchill's new old farmhouse in northwest Connecticut reduces its carbon footprint.

BY STEPHEN T. SPEWOCK

PHOTOS BY JOHN GRUEN



A screened porch provides a pleasant area to enjoy the outdoors nine months of the year. Opposite: Rafe Churchill welcomed the challenge of building a new old house run without fossil fuels.





WHEN ARCHITECT RAFE CHURCHILL FIRST MET HIS CLIENTS AT A PARTY AND THEY STARTED DESCRIBING A GREEN HOUSE PROJECT IDEA, HE HAD MIXED EMOTIONS.

“I initially walked away because I didn’t feel anyone could be that serious about such an undertaking,” Churchill recalls. It wasn’t that his and his brother Seth’s third-generation family-owned company couldn’t handle the task; it was more about whether or not the client really understood the magnitude of what they were proposing: building an authentic new old farmhouse with all the modern amenities in a remote rural area with renewable energy systems.

“We spend a lot of time up front ensuring the impending work is exactly what the client really wants—both for the short and long term.” In this particular case, the client’s persistence brought Churchill back to the design table. “Ultimately, we realize that the work we do is only as good as our clients,” he observes. “Despite the complexities of this project, we felt the client fully understood all the inherent difficulties, which made it easier to accept the challenge.”

Mellow shades of mustard on the cabinets make the kitchen cheerful. The soapstone sink and counters are reminiscent of the past. Opposite: Light wood flooring and crown molding accent the simple yet spacious dining room.



Painted paneled walls with bookcases surround a brick fireplace complemented by early American-style chairs.





BREAKING GROUND

The property is 125 acres of some of the most beautifully diverse countryside found in New England: rolling hills, open fields, wooded borders, rocky outcroppings, rippling streams, a pond or two—a veritable four-season sanctuary appreciated by humans and wildlife alike. Even though the build site is on the portion of the property closest to the main road, the acreage is set back a ways. “You only see the very top of the house at a distance when you turn into the driveway,” describes Churchill. “Then, as you drive through a rising meadow, the entire structure slowly reveals itself.”

There, sitting atop a hill overlooking a pond, stands a 4,500-square-foot new old farmhouse complete with modern amenities, four bedrooms, two and a half bathrooms, and a cozy bunkroom in the attic. The final floor plan was predicated on a traditional rendering of a center-hall Colonial. But to make the outlying rooms feel less isolated, the design team made the center area a bit more circular. “The clients wanted it a little more open, so we tweaked it a bit,” says Churchill.

DOWN TO BUSINESS

Designing this more circular center-hall house presented some real challenges, particularly when it came to incorporating both solar and geothermal renewable energy systems. These systems drove radiant heat throughout the entire house and utilized filtered rainwater to supply gray-water plumbing, landscape irrigation, and a swimming pool complete with outdoor shower. “Installing all these systems into a new old Colonial house took some real doing,” confides Churchill. “Yet the hardest part was actually determining how to hide all the various gauges, controls, and sensors that came with each system.”

Special ductwork was custom designed to handle the extensive water and air disbursement and return lines. Vent grilles were reconfigured to handle the abundant volume of air to be conditioned and moved throughout. Even the kitchen’s exhaust and ventilation duct had to be custom built. “Because the entire structure was built out of



structural insulated panels, we had to take great care to maintain a proper air balance in an airtight environment,” says Churchill. “Otherwise the custom fireplace and wood-burning stove would lead to inefficiencies.” Even the ventilation fans in the two and a half bathrooms were tied directly into the HVAC system to support equilibrium.

HEAVY LIFTING

The client requested a geothermal heating and cooling system to help alleviate the long winter months. The enclosed system pumps fluid mixtures vertically downward through 1" polyethylene (HDPE) pipes until the earth begins to heat the fluid, at which point it is returned to the geothermal unit in the

house. The geothermal unit then acts as either furnace or air conditioner by using refrigerant and returned temperature water to heat or cool the air. The air is circulated through standard ductwork, with the results feeling the same as those from any standard forced-air system. But the cost of providing controlled climates can be as much as 50 percent lower than regular HVAC systems, with an average payback on newly installed systems within six to eight years. The real bonus is that once installed, it will run for decades on an infinitely sustainable power source, without degradation to the unit, property, or the environment.

To run the pumps on the geothermal unit—and to provide almost all of

the electricity for the entire property—a vast solar array system was designed and installed on the front side of the main roof. “It will process up to 10 kilowatts of available power,” notes Churchill, “but the entire property averages only six to seven kilowatts of usage.” Despite this positive offset, the house is still plugged into the grid for two basic reasons. First, to take advantage of the net-metering program provided by the local electricity distributor. “If the system provides more energy than needed,” Churchill says, “then the owners are reimbursed with a credit toward next month’s usage, which occurs mostly during the summer’s high sun.” Second, the special ozone-purification filter on the rainwater



The pastel-painted window frames, crown molding, and door frame accent the simplicity of this bedroom.
Left: The geothermal unit does not interfere with the wood-burning stove's capabilities.

swimming pool requires around-the-clock power, so the tie-in to the grid is essential for any solar power underage that may occur from time to time.

The natural rainwater pool is fed by an elaborate storm water collection system that also provides water to the outdoor shower. "There's something very special and unique about swimming in collected rainwater," observes Churchill. "You have this ethereal sensation of swimming in nature, without all the chlorine and chemicals." Additionally, every gray-water fixture throughout the house (specifically, all the bathroom toilets) utilizes the same storm water, creating less of a draw on the immediate water table. Finally, the rest of the storm water is disbursed

throughout the surrounding landscape via an extensive lawn watering system. Any remaining overage goes to a dry well and leaches back into the surrounding water table, naturally.

CRUISE CONTROL

With the major systems configured, calibrated, and concealed, Churchill and his team turned toward the more traditional paths of environmental conscientiousness, such as reclaim and reuse. "We've got reclaimed brick for the flooring in the mudroom," says Churchill. "And the exposed framing is all from local, hand-cut and -sawn hemlock and spruce." Other areas of the house exhibit reuse as well, ranging from antique plumbing and hardware

finds to reclaimed ipe wood—considered by professionals the gold standard for outdoor decking—from the Rockaway Boardwalk in Queens, New York, used for an enclosed farmer's porch, which, according to Churchill, "should last another 100 years."

Started in early 2012, construction was completed in only nine months—a testament to Churchill and his team's determination—and has since been the object of much admiration. "The project has really attracted lots of recent attention," claims Churchill. "We've been further approached by many prospective clients to reattempt the same type of project." **NOH**

For resources, see page 70.

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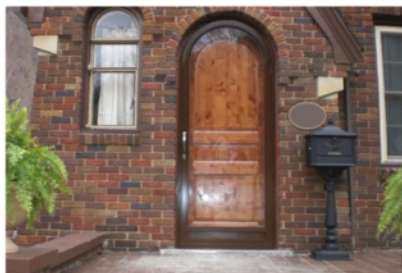


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Rafe Churchill crafts traditional buildings inspired by the historic architecture of New England. Working from a historic house on the village green in Sharon, Connecticut, a talented team of designers guides each project through the entire building process, from preliminary design through construction oversight. The firm is well versed in sustainable building practices and standards—seamlessly combining the latest technologies with traditional building techniques, resulting in buildings that are as beautiful as they are functional.

As a third-generation master builder, Rafe continues a family legacy of traditional craftsmanship and draws upon a broad network of consultants, artisans, and tradesman. In recent years, he has designed and built many of southern New England's finest residential and commercial spaces, including both the first LEED-certified house and the first Net Zero house in western Connecticut. In addition to residential buildings, Rafe's experience includes challenging and unique projects such as building the Salisbury Winter Sports Association's new 65-meter ski jump.

Typically focused exclusively on traditional residential design, Rafe's experience as a master builder is evident with each project. While guided by the aesthetic awareness of a mature designer, he creates historically influenced buildings that respond to both the landscape and the specific needs of each client. The firm aspires to create what has become known as the "new old house"—a building offering modern amenities, but with the scale, proportions, and textures of a historic house.

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To view the Pennywise designs, please visit www.russellversaci.com.

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Specializing in regional vernaculars and ecological construction, Sandra Vitzthum tailors her designs to client and site. She works with each family and contractor personally to create homes that look “as if they have always been there.” Sandra works closely with skilled craftsmen to produce elegant detailing. Her work has been published widely.



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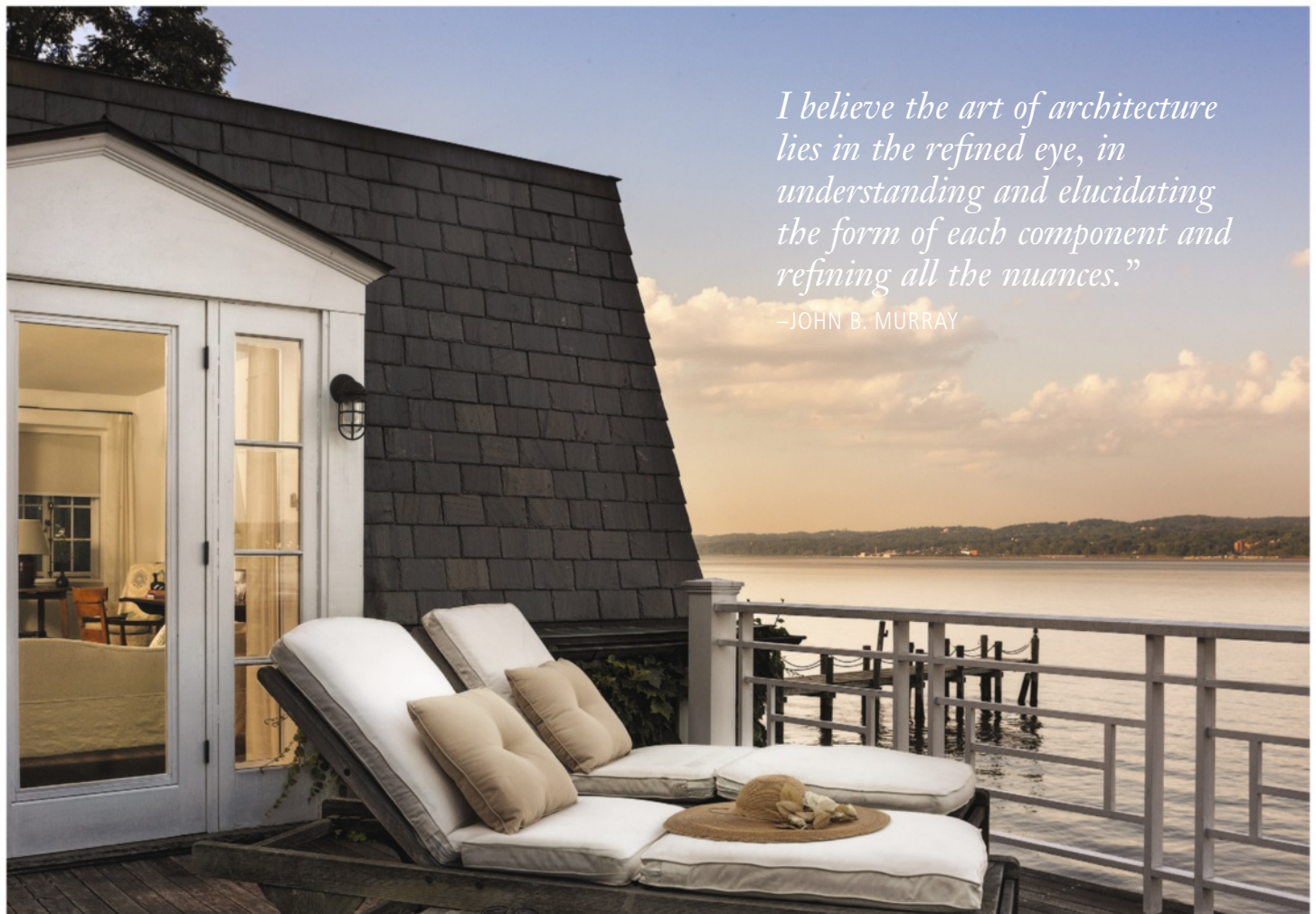


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LAST LOOK



For the country house on the Hudson River, John Murray created a soothing retreat. The master bedroom's Harmon-hinged doors open to the upstairs deck. The mansard roof is in keeping with the massing of the original house.



I believe the art of architecture lies in the refined eye, in understanding and elucidating the form of each component and refining all the nuances."

—JOHN B. MURRAY

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