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# From Our EDITOR

COUNTRY MAY BE A  
CLASSIC STYLE, BUT IT'S  
ALSO A CONTEMPORARY ONE.

**THE CHIC, CREATIVE INTERIORS IN THIS ISSUE** aren't mired in the past. And they certainly aren't limited to rural routes. The beauty of it is, country decorating is all over the map—literally and decoratively.

In this issue we take you east to a classic, collected Connecticut house that dates to 1767 but has been brightened and lightened for the way its empty-nester owners want to live now ("Living History," page 112). And we visit the chic simple Vermont home of a young family who believes in the integrity of handmade, nature-driven design ("Farmhouse Fresh," page 70). Before we swing south to Texas to check out a recently built ranch house that's as high-spirited as it is down to earth ("True Grit," page 62), we head west to California to meet a couple who have made one of the earliest homes in Laguna Beach a comfortable one without marring its sturdy barn-inspired bones ("Curious Cottage," page 54). And we're just getting started!

With looks so diverse, what makes them all country? Honest materials. Collections. Resourcefulness. A connectedness to nature. A casual attitude and a personal point of view. These are places that respect the beauty of the past while embracing the livability of the present. Simply put, these are homes built on a sturdy foundation but always facing forward. We hope they inspire you to create a home as unique as you are.

*Samantha*  
SAMANTHA HART, EDITOR

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PHOTOGRAPH © NICOLE FRANZEN FROM CITY FARMHOUSE STYLE: DESIGNS FOR A MODERN COUNTRY LIFE  
BY KIM LEGGETT (ABRAMS)

*Country Home*  
**STYLE MAKERS**

COUNTRY STYLE CONTINUES TO EVOLVE THANKS TO DESIGN INNOVATORS WHO INTERPRET THE TENETS OF THE LOOK IN FRESH, OFTEN SURPRISING, WAYS.

# IN THE CITY WITH *Kim Leggett*

Kim Leggett of City Farmhouse reveals her secrets for using treasures from the past in thoroughly modern ways.



## KIM LEGGETT HAS THE EYE OF

a designer and a super picker—a one-two style combination that has made her a force in forging the farmhouse chic look we love right now. The Tennessee native founded City Farmhouse, a retail store turned pop-up fair and event center near Nashville. The longtime collector and antiques expert shares how to get the look (and the goods!) in a soon-to-be released book, *City Farmhouse Style*. Here's a sneak peek inside its pages along with a few top tips.

- ◆ Decorate with simple goods that reflect a humble lifestyle. Search for furniture pieces with straight lines and surfaces with a warm patina or, better yet, old paint.
- ◆ Work in timeworn textiles that are faded, crumpled, wrinkled, and frayed. French grain sacks, ticking, and old linen add charm and stories of past lives.
- ◆ Use objects with style and purpose; choose pieces that display well when not in use and, likewise, are useful when not on display.
- ◆ No farmhouse, whether authentic or modern, would be complete without a farm table.



### 1. OPEN CHARMS

Open shelves are a farmhouse favorite because they are both practical and good-looking: They keep dishes and utensils in reach and show off their everyday charm. The good news is you can get the look with simple brackets, shelves, and classic collections such as white earthenware and copper.

### 2. SIMPLE STAPLES

Graphic and nostalgic, classic pie tins fit right into country settings. In the 1950s, these aluminum tins were returnable and bakeries reused them, unlike the disposable variety we know today. Treasure-hunt for examples with great logos, like this “New England Flaky Crust Pie” tin.

### 3. UPLIFTING IDEAS

Whether you're in a city loft or a Colonial in the country, a staircase is a natural place to make a visual statement. Create your own stylish stairway by staining it an unusual color. Or consider painting on a faux runner or covering the risers in wallpaper for an equally showstopping effect.

PHOTOGRAPHS 1, 3, 4 © ALISSA SAYLOR, FROM CITY FARMHOUSE STYLE: DESIGNS FOR A MODERN COUNTRY LIFE BY KIM LEGGETT (ABRAMS); PORTRAIT BY SHANNON JENKINS.

PHOTOGRAPH © NICOLE FRANZEN FROM CITY FARMHOUSE STYLE: DESIGNS FOR A MODERN COUNTRY LIFE BY KIM LEGGETT (ABRAMS)



2

“THE BEAUTY OF FARMHOUSE STYLE IS THAT IT RECOGNIZES NO BOUNDARIES. IT EMBRACES AN ECLECTIC MIX OF PERIODS AND AESTHETICS.” —KIM LEGGETT



## City Farmhouse Style

TOP ANTIQUES DEALER AND DESIGNER Kim Leggett leads a tour of chic country digs she discovers in cities, on rural routes, and in suburbs across the country. Along the way she shares tips for collecting, displaying, and enjoying the current farmhouse look. **Published by Abrams Books: New York, NY; September 2017; \$35; [abramsbooks.com](http://abramsbooks.com)**



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### 4. BARE BEAUTY

A minimalist approach to collecting and decorating is a hallmark of the modern farmhouse look. This focal-point wall is spare but soulful with its grouping of amateur portraits, a practical antique cupboard, and natural accents.



## AT HOME WITH *Liz Fourez*

Moving to her husband's family farm in Indiana inspired a blog, a book, and lots of DIY projects for style expert Liz Fourez.

**WHEN YOU HAVE A KNACK** for photography, a love of hands-on home decorating, and an innate sense of style, starting a blog seems like an obvious choice. Liz Fourez has those chops, but they didn't all come together until she met and married her husband, Jeremy, and they moved to his 1940s, fourth-generation farm, complete with a small farmhouse in need of some updating.

Chronicling the home's modern country refresh on her website, *Love Grows Wild*, Liz snagged the attention of hundreds of fans also looking for ways to simplify their homes—and their lives—with stylish ideas that, true to authentic

country roots, are often born of necessity.

In her new book, *A Touch of Farmhouse Charm*, Liz has gathered the hows and whys of projects that range from complex (think power tools) to utterly simple. They all reflect the hallmarks of Liz's modern farmhouse style:

- ◆ Natural wood tones that connect the home to the outdoors.
- ◆ Soft neutral colors to create a sense of calm and openness.
- ◆ Antiques and flea market finds combined with new pieces for style that looks evolved over time.
- ◆ A blend of modern amenities with elements that take you back to a simpler time.

### 1. LIGHT TOUCH

Once an unfinished attic space, Liz's master bedroom is now a light, airy retreat thanks to white wood plank walls and a faux wood beam used to mount sheer bed curtains. The sheers create a cozy nook for a simple iron bed frame and white bedding.

### 2. DINING WELL

When they couldn't find a simple farmhouse table that would fit their small dining space, Liz and her family made one, along with a bench that slides under it when not in use. An iron chandelier swoops in for drama; two linen slipper chairs add softness and elegance.

### 3. EASY ART

Inspired by vintage botanicals, Liz created her own version by pressing fern clippings from her garden into simple black frames. "It's a great way to bring a touch of nature into your home," Liz says, "and fill a blank wall without expensive art."



PHOTOGRAPHS BY LIZ FOUREZ AND EMILY LAYNE REPRINTED BY PERMISSION OF PAGE STREET PUBLISHING CO.



## A Touch of Farmhouse Charm

THE CLEAR HOW-TO and inspiring images in Liz Fourez's book guide you to create your own modern country look. **Published by Page Street Publishing Co.: Salem, MA; 2016; \$21.99;** [pagestreetpublishing.com](http://pagestreetpublishing.com)



# IN THE STUDIO WITH *Kristin Nicholas*

*This artist believes country style is at its richest when colorful, collected, and created by hand.*



**WHEN KRISTIN NICHOLAS** wanted oil paintings for her home and realized they were beyond the reach of her budget, she picked up brushes and taught herself to paint. It's a story that sums up her approach to decorating the 1751 Massachusetts Cape Cod she shares with her family. Peppered with vintage pieces she's revived with color, lampshades she's used as blank canvases for bright designs, and textiles she creates and collects, Kristin's home is an ode to handmade, heartfelt country style. In her book, *Crafting a Colorful Home*, Kristin shares inspiration and hands-on instruction to brighten your worlds. "I hope I take people along on a creative adventure," Kristin says. "You can do so many things with your own hands. It doesn't have to be perfect, just personal."



## 1. BRIGHT SPOTS

Old office chairs Kristin bought for a song become colorful dining chairs when given bright coats of enamel paint. She makes the clever lanterns with embroidery hoops and remnants of her cherished ethnic fabrics. Her folksy animal paintings add to the fun.

## 2. ARTFUL ACCENTS

Walls, lampshades, and most any surface in Kristin's farmhouse are fair game for her artistic talents. Her stylized patterns are inspired by her collections and her home's rich rural landscape.



## *Crafting a Colorful Home*

ADD SPARKS and personality to lackluster rooms with this room-by-room guide to crafts projects, furniture makeovers, and painting techniques.

**Published by Roost Books:**  
Boulder, CO; 2015; \$27.95;  
[roostbooks.com](http://roostbooks.com)



*Cottage  
Charms*



IF YOU PREFER YOUR COUNTRY STYLE SERVED WITH SIDES OF FRESH COLOR, PRETTY PATTERNS, AND A TOUCH OF FRILL, MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE IN THESE CLASSIC COTTAGES. OFTEN GARDEN INSPIRED AND ROMANTICALLY INCLINED, THESE INTERIORS ARE SOFT AND SUNNY BUT NOT CUTESY OR SWEET.





# *Getting* PERSONAL

YEARS OF LOVING LABOR YIELD A CUSTOM-BUILT HOME ON A BAY ON CAPE COD—AND A FAMILY'S UNWAVERING LOYALTY TO IT.

WRITTEN BY SHAILA WUNDERLICH

PHOTOGRAPHED BY KRITSADA

PRODUCED BY KARIN LIDBECK-BRENT



OPPOSITE The covered “farmer’s porch” counts as the family’s most-used outdoor space. “We eat breakfast and lunch out here, watch the sunset, or just sit and read,” says homeowner and designer Sandra Cavallo. THIS PHOTO The new house’s exterior exhibits many of Cape Cod’s characteristic architectural details, including weathered wood shingles, cross-gabled roofs, diamond mullions, and multiple porches.



**E**VERY ONCE IN A WHILE, JUST TO STIR the pot, Sandra and Phillip Cavallo tell their kids they're considering downsizing. Nathalie and Gianni Cavallo, both 20, lived a significant part of their childhoods immersed in the building of the family's Shingle-style home on Massachusetts' Buzzards Bay. They played on Old Silver Beach (basically their front yard) as their parents refinished floors. They retrieved stones of pink granite from the property for the new house's foundation. They tucked salvaged treasures such as a heart-shaped rock and a 2008 quarter (the year they moved in) into the kitchen's mantel and foundation, respectively.

"Don't you dare sell this house," they say to their parents. Now sophomores at Temple University, the siblings relish semester breaks when they can take refuge in the yard's hammock and eat lunch on the gambrel roof outside Gianni's bedroom window. They love sharing the house with friends almost as much. "It's interesting: Not everyone gets this house, but our kids' friends always do," says Sandra, a designer and stylist. "They follow me on Instagram!"



What's not readily apparent about this three-bedroom, cedar-shingled house are the very things the Cavallos put their time, sweat, and muscle into for more than three years. They handpicked unique salvaged details, such as the built-in library case that was custom-cut to fit within upcycled doors and the kitchen's fireplace mantel, which was formerly a plank of white oak leftover from the *USS Constitution*.

Many of the architectural details were salvaged from the property's original structure, a 1905 Victorian cottage that the couple at first planned to live in, but in the end could not save due to its deteriorated condition. Plus, as Sandra says jokingly, "There were squirrels in the attic."

The furnishings and collections are a mix of family heirlooms, local junking treasures, and an impressive assemblage of midcentury modern, European furnishings acquired during the family's early years in Switzerland. The white leather Minotti lounge



and Cassina Bellini dining chairs look remarkably at home mixed in among the vintage wire chandeliers and Early American painted signs. Sandra's secret in mixing eras and styles is simple: "I find that any piece exemplifying excellent design works," she says.

The construction process was deliberately drawn out, as Sandra didn't want to rush. "We interviewed a lot of architects and builders and all of it left me feeling pushed," she says. "So we did the general contracting ourselves. We found a great framer,

**OPPOSITE, ABOVE LEFT** The living room's gray Minotti Pollock sofa is 15 years old and counting. Sandra periodically swaps out its "genius" Velcro-adhered covering. She unearthed the 1950s wedding-tier glass ceiling fixture from a local demolition source. **OPPOSITE, ABOVE RIGHT** Sandra Cavallo welcomes guests to her family's home. **ABOVE** Sandra had their bleached oak-topped, bronze-legged dining table custom-cut to 5 square feet so no family member could claim "head of the table." The silver-plated chandelier is a junk store find, one of many rewired vintage lighting fixtures Sandra considered non-negotiable. **LEFT** The library ceiling height and window trim were modeled on the property's original cottage. The shelves were designed to fit behind four wavy-paned doors Sandra haggled for \$3 each at an antiques shop in Brimfield.



**LEFT** Sandra loves her pecky oak cabinets; they remind her of her talented carpenter brother who installed them just before he died. The kitchen's wood ceiling beams were carried over from the cottage. The concrete-topped kitchen island is supported by brass pillars taken from a shuttered movie theater.

**BELOW** Sandra collects old silver with a mellow patina in a nod to Old Silver Beach, which lies just beyond their front yard. She stocks the kitchen pantry with most of her collection, plus other antique entertaining accessories. **OPPOSITE** High-back wicker outdoor chairs were an improvisational add after Sandra's parents visited and loved sitting in the middle of the bustling kitchen hub. The Dutch doors open to views of the Herring River salt marsh. "It's become a favorite cozy spot for our morning cappuccino," Sandra says.

then we would interview someone else for the next piece."

The gang moved in midconstruction, when the walls were still raw drywall and kitchen amenities were nonexistent. "There was plywood on the countertops," Sandra says. "We built a pizza oven so we could eat. It was one step above camping."

Every item was carefully chosen, salvage was architecturally accommodated, and the experience was painstaking and fraught with do-overs. But ultimately, getting so involved in the construction means a custom fit for the Cavallos—a place full of memories, mementos, and personal style. In other words, this is a house that is truly a home. And don't tell the kids, but Sandra and Phillip aren't planning to go anywhere anytime soon. *GH*

**RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 142.**





**THIS PHOTO** Sandra nabbed this old chandelier on its way to the trash. She wrapped it in wire caging she retrieved from the garden in order to beef up its scale and better fill the room. Thanks to the clean lines they share, a modern sofa, farmhouse step-back cupboard, and industrial-style coffee table mix easily.

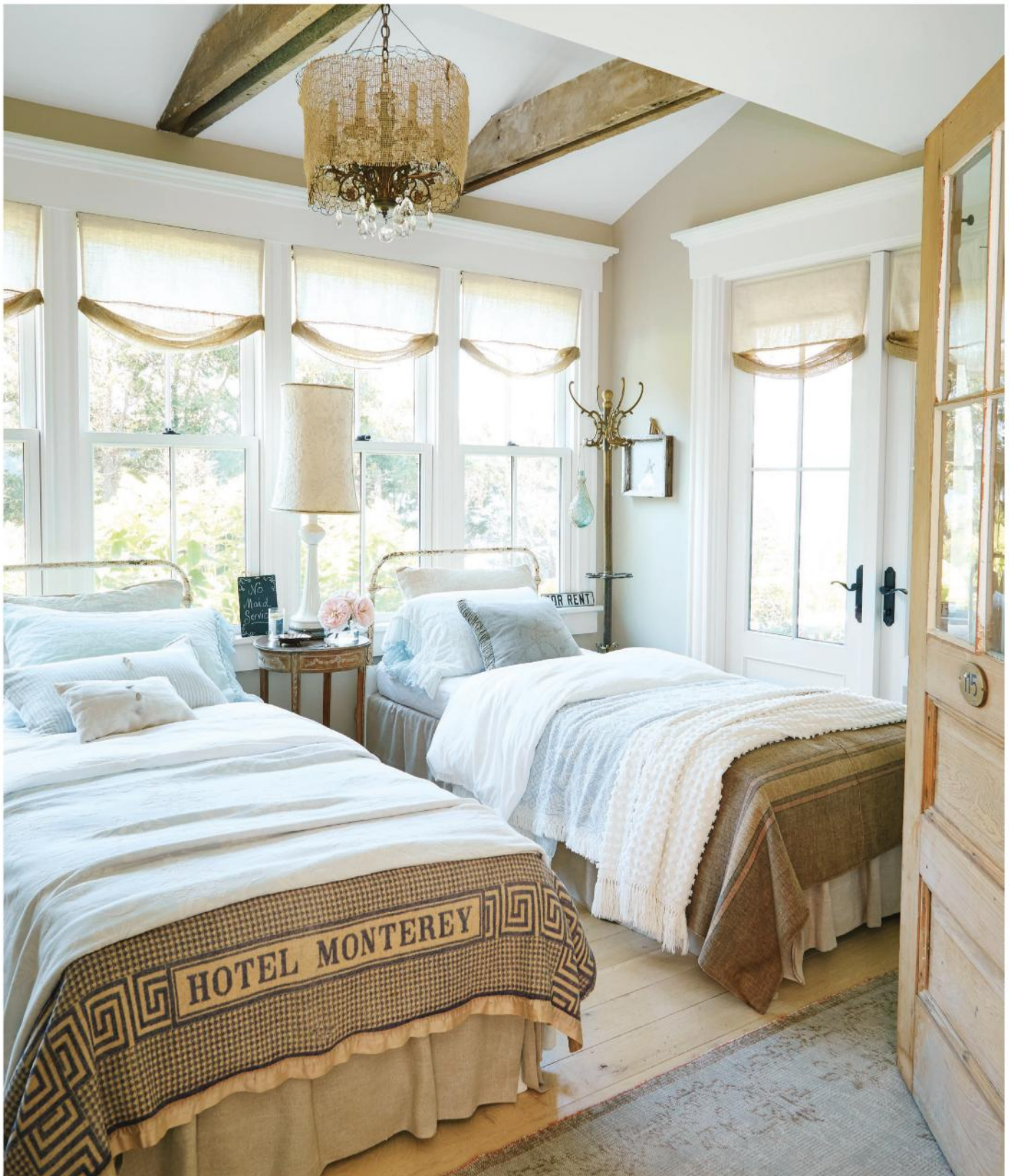




**LEFT** The built-in window seat and wall-mounted end tables are all custom-made of walnut. Sandra loves the “airiness” they bring to that section of the room. A Minotti glass-and-chrome table scoots along the window seat where needed. The knit throw was crocheted by Sandra’s mom when her kids were born.

**BELOW** Vintage apothecary glass and silver cup trophies are among Sandra’s favorite collections due to their sparkle and streamlined shapes.





**ABOVE** Sandra calls this guest bedroom the “sleeping porch” for its multiple banks of windows overlooking the bay. She chose the simple iron headboards because they don’t obstruct the view and uses vintage hotel blankets to enhance the beach-vacation experience for overnight guests. **OPPOSITE** Utility reigns supreme in the kids’ shared bath. The large basin sink and its original fixtures came from a school art room; its mounted hand is a sculpture from artist Harry Allen. The bluestone tile floor is an Ann Sacks product. Sandra says the oversize white Karlsson wall clock (reflected in the mirror) “keeps the kids moving” in the mornings. Trundle drawers tuck neatly under the sink for extra storage.



WASH YOUR HANDS





**LEFT** Second only to closets, “tunnel hallways” are a top dislike of Sandra and Phillip. The couple purposely designed their new home’s hallways extra wide—mini rooms of sort—with framed views on either end. **RIGHT** The vintage nightgown is one of two Sandra found at a thrift shop years ago; she fell in love with the necklines’ hand-scribed signatures: “Mary Reynolds No. 1” and “Mary Reynolds No. 2.” **BELOW LEFT** Gianni’s bedroom overlooks the salt marsh; he loves climbing out its windows to eat or play guitar on the roof. Screen doors from the original cottage were used to front the built-in wardrobe. “We don’t like closets,” Sandra says. “They tend to become black holes.”





“I FIND THAT IF I CONTAIN MY COLLECTIONS BEHIND GLASS IN CUPBOARDS AND CABINETS, I CAN KEEP THE HOUSE VISUALLY CLEAN YET STILL INDULGE MY PASSION.”

— HOMEOWNER SANDRA CAVALLO

**OPPOSITE, BOTTOM RIGHT** The fancy gilded mirror and French dresser are—surprisingly—junk market finds. The tall French doors were handpicked to serve as the master suite’s entry and stripped to match the house’s natural finishes. **ABOVE** Sandra’s late brother brought her the vanity’s walnut countertop from a New York City bar he was restoring. The shelf below the vanity was fashioned from stainless-steel pipe. Sandra made all the oil painting frames from flat wood trim. **RIGHT** The master suite gives way to Phillip’s more modern aesthetic, with its platform bed, sleek walnut room divider, and ephemeral artwork by Connie Noyes above the bed. Yet another small porch off this room overlooks Buzzards Bay and its breathtaking sunsets.



# Treasure TROVE

A SEATTLE SHOP OWNER USES HER DECORATING  
AND COLLECTING SAVVY TO BRING OUT THE  
SPARKLE OF HER MIDCENTURY MODERN RANCH.



WRITTEN BY PAIGE PORTER FISCHER PHOTOGRAPHED BY JOHN GRANEN STYLED BY JANNA LUFKIN

OPPOSITE A Nantucket-inspired garden surrounds Pam Robinson's midcentury modern Pacific Northwest house; she loves the juxtaposition of styles. THIS PHOTO In a light-filled living room corner, a pair of leather club chairs from France flank a vintage ottoman Pam had reupholstered in bold ticking. A collection of antlers from Austria forms a sculptural gallery alongside two prized pieces: an oversize mirror above an antique file cabinet.





**TOP LEFT** Pam relaxes at home in her midcentury modern ranch. **TOP RIGHT** Pam paired two distinctive sofas by upholstering them in vintage French linen. She created pillows out of blue and white fabrics she's been collecting for decades. With its glass insert, a carved wooden coffee table from the '40s serves as a dining table for casual get-togethers. **ABOVE** A hallway becomes a gallery for Pam's vintage paintings and flag art. She scooted together two antique dressers to form a console, on top of which she stacked her favorite books.

**P**AM ROBINSON DESCRIBES HER PERSONAL STYLE in five words: "I buy what I love," says the owner of one of Seattle's most beloved home design stores, Red Ticking. The antiques and vintage textiles aficionado travels the world for pieces that tell stories, outfitting her shop—and her home—with one-of-a-kind treasures that catch her eye and steal her heart.

That's precisely what happened when Pam first laid eyes on the midcentury modern house she has lived in for the last 15 years. "To be honest, I never imagined myself in a modern house," she says. "This one was definitely a diamond in the rough. It was dark, and the interiors were so ugly that I honestly think the place would've frightened many people away. But I looked past its flaws and focused on the positives—like the open floor plan, the huge fireplace, and the outdoor living spaces—and I was sold. I just knew that it was supposed to be my home."

The house, built in 1954 by an understudy of Frank Lloyd Wright, had beautiful bones, which Pam desperately wanted to bring back to life. "I've always been that person who loves the old chair at the flea market that everyone else walks past because it's such an eyesore," she says. "I'm the crazy one who buys it, because I'm determined to breathe new life into it and make it shine again. I've spent my life rescuing old, beautiful furniture and fabric, and I decided it was about time for me to rescue a house."

So she made an offer, got the property, and embarked on a fast, affordable remodel—during the holidays, her busiest retail season of the year. "My store was only two years old and money was tight, so I had to find a way to do it simply and on a strict budget," says Pam, who decided to focus on removing the things that distracted from the home's unique architecture. "I needed to correct some of the unfortunate moments such as the too-tiny kitchen outfitted in pink and black tile, the master bedroom carpeted in AstroTurf. And then I could focus on highlighting the home's most stunning moments—the original cedar ceilings and floors and the seamless transitions between inside and outside."

She tried what seemed like a hundred white paint samples before


**THIS PHOTO** A long white settee, well stocked with pillows from her shop, nestles up to a farmhouse table. Pam revived a pair of old wing-back chairs with one of her favorite vintage tickings. She fell in love with the French chandelier and placed it over the farmhouse table for a touch of old-world glam in the simple space.





**LEFT** Pam fell for this old cabinet from Sweden, once used to store firewood. "Sometimes it's as much about the perfect well-worn color as it is about performing a certain function, and this one had a patina I just couldn't pass up," she says. **BELOW** When Pam bought the house, the back patio was a figure-eight concrete pad, which she promptly had blasted and replaced with traditional square pavers. The furniture and fabrics are vintage. "This space is an easy extension of the house," she says. **OPPOSITE** A remodel of the kitchen included adding white cabinetry and honed black granite countertops. A vintage steel cart acts as an island, and an industrial stool serves as extra seating. Her collection of ironstone punch bowls lines the top of the cabinets.

settling on the perfect shade for her clean slate, C2 Paint's Coconut White. "I'm very much a purist," she says. "I like lots of white. It's nice to have a clean backdrop for all of my collections." Her treasures include ironstone, vintage paintings, reams and reams of old textiles (especially of the French variety), American flags, wooden lamps, and whales in all shapes and sizes.

"I've been collecting antiques since I was a child," she says. "My uncle introduced me to antiques and I haven't ever stopped. Nothing in my house is new, except for my appliances. And nothing in my house matches because, to me, matchy-matchy lacks personality. I think every piece in a house should tell a story, and you just don't find those stories in catalogs. It takes time, and living with empty corners, until you find that one perfect thing that you want to have with you forever because you love it so." 

**RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 142.**





“WHEN I AM OUT SHOPPING, PEOPLE WILL SOMETIMES ASK ME WHAT I’M LOOKING FOR. MY ANSWER IS ALWAYS THE SAME: ‘I HAVE NO IDEA. BUT I’LL KNOW IT WHEN I SEE IT.’”


—HOMEOWNER PAM ROBINSON

**THIS PHOTO** “I want my guests to come in and feel cozy and snug,” says Pam of her guest quarters. An antique armoire houses her stash of vintage textiles, which she often finds her guests “looking at like magazines.” Extra-long “reading” pillows from Red Ticking stand in for a headboard. An ikat remnant from France adds a graphic punch to the foot of the bed; baskets hold surplus linens.



**LEFT** "Fabric is my passion," says Pam, who started stockpiling it years ago on trips to Europe. **BELOW** Pam loves a neutral, serene bedroom. She removed old paneling—and a carpet of artificial turf—to create a soothing backdrop. An old French iron table serves as her nightstand, topped by a vintage wooden lamp. "I have a passion for wooden lamps," she says. "They're terribly hard to find, so when I stumble upon one, I can't pass it up."





Family  
FOCUS

THOUGHTFULLY REBUILT, A MASSACHUSETTS  
SUMMER HOME IS TAILOR-MADE FOR  
THREE GENERATIONS.

WRITTEN BY DEBRA ENGLE PHOTOGRAPHED BY MICHAEL PARTENIO  
PRODUCED BY KARIN LIDBECK-BRENT



**THIS PHOTO** Framed with windows and timbers, the living room picks up natural colors and textures in its woven rug and casual hassock seating. A large coffee table provides plenty of room for board games. The wall of windows and doors, typically open in summertime, connects the room to the outdoors.



**TOP LEFT** A screen porch links living space with the nearby woods and water. **TOP RIGHT** A Western red cedar fence encloses the front courtyard and helps define cutting and vegetable gardens. **ABOVE** Built-in bench seating in the foyer replaces the original chimney. An open staircase and floor plan allow natural light to fill the entire space. **OPPOSITE** A more formal table with a mix of painted chairs give the dining area casual elegance. Classic cottage furniture in updated fabrics and finishes adds comfort and style.

**I**T'S SUMMER ON MARTHA'S VINEYARD, AND THE mild sea air wafts through the windows of the Bernstein family vacation house. Trees are in full canopy, framing spectacular views of the water, and generous porches and decks connect the indoors to the home's lush surroundings.

Built on the foundation of a 1960s Cape Cod that has been in the family for decades, this improved home combines classic cottage style with gracious design details, tailoring the space for three generations to share. Except for a massive chimney in the center of the structure, the original house had few significant features, says lead architect on the project, Matt Cramer of Hutker Architects. "But it had enormous sentimental value to the family."

Since expansion—both in the footprint and the height—was limited by the coastal setting and local building codes, the new home is just slightly bigger than the original, but it maximizes the space with built-in storage, an open floor plan, and multiple dormers. The rebuild took cues from the existing home, including white oak timbers that define the ceilings and transitions from room to room. The chimney, which created a barrier in the original house, has been replaced by a built-in bench and open staircase, creating a feeling of transparency.

To counterbalance the home's pale white palette, rustic touches such as bronzed light fixtures and brushed chrome hardware lend a warm, natural look. The many built-ins—including the kitchen's lower cabinets, bedroom dressers, and crisp cupboards in the upstairs bath—feature furniture-style legs for a sense of sturdiness. White oak floors also tie the rooms together. The reclaimed 8-inch-wide planks were scarred and water-stained, but after being planed and sanded, they provide a mellow, softly weathered look perfect for a vacation home.

To honor the property's roots as part of a neighboring farm, the architects designed spaces to display collectible farm implements and used traditional country materials, such as soapstone for the kitchen counters and fireplace surround. "That material harkens







back to old farmhouses with soapstone sinks,” Cramer says. “We thought it was an appropriate use of that material here.”

Among all the careful design decisions, though, it’s the sensitivity to different generations’ needs that sets this house apart. Fewer steps to the exterior spaces make it easier for the senior Bernsteins to access the lawn and gardens. Deep windows maximize the views and take into account the varying heights of the younger and older family members. And for a teenager who may want time to himself, a second-floor bedroom is a perfect getaway, complete with its own staircase.

“Our home is a family gathering place to relax, reflect, spend time together, and enjoy all the local activities,” Lori Evans Bernstein says. “It makes us feel connected to each other.” For a multigenerational home, that’s the highest compliment of all. ☞

**RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 142.**

**BELOW** Light floods in through the front door and windows, illuminating sea-colored glass accents and handy baskets for storage. **OPPOSITE** Ceiling beams add visual structure and dimension to the kitchen and echo the look of the island. V-groove paneling for the ceiling adds texture and interest. Counter-to-ceiling windows provide expansive views.



“WE LOVE THE FARM IMPLEMENTS  
AND FAMILY PIECES AROUND  
OUR HOUSE. THEY KEEP 30 YEARS  
OF WARMTH, HISTORY, AND  
MEMORIES ALIVE IN OUR HOME.”

—HOMEOWNER LORI EVANS BERNSTEIN



## The Beauty of Built-Ins

*There are many constructive reasons to choose built-ins over freestanding furniture.*

### OPEN FLOOR PLANS:

Flowing interiors have fewer walls for furniture placement. Floor-to-ceiling shelves (both open and closed) make the most of limited walls. Built-ins can also be designed as partial walls that won't seal off spaces.

### STYLE AND STORAGE:

Awkward niches become useful spaces with built-ins. Tucked under stairs or eaves, custom-fit benches, shelves, or cabinetry close the odd-shaped recesses, adding storage and architectural character.

**PRECIOUS INCHES:** Built-ins can be fitted precisely to the space available, such as under high windows. No gaps between walls and furnishings mean seamless style and maximum function in tiny areas.

**DOUBLE DUTY:** A window seat and bureau combination offers storage and a rest spot with a view all in a slice of space. Add furniture-like legs and vintage hardware for charm.



**ABOVE** A built-in dresser and low bookshelves lend character to the first-floor master bedroom and direct attention to the windows, set low to capture the view.

**RIGHT** An upholstered headboard, cozy quilt, woven basket, and wooden side table present a blend of harmonious textures. **LEFT** A second-floor bathroom includes traditional country touches, such as matching sconces and arched detail in a dormer. To take advantage of the view, a window replaces a mirror over the sink. A swing-arm mirror is close at hand, though, for shaving and applying makeup. **OPPOSITE** Designed to match the other built-ins throughout the house, this bedroom "furniture" offers generous storage around the bed.





*Natural Beauties*



FOOD ISN'T THE ONLY ASPECT OF OUR LIFESTYLE GOING ORGANIC THESE DAYS; COUNTRY DECORATING IS ALSO BECOMING MORE EARTHY AND NATURAL. FINISHES OFTEN LEFT UNPOLISHED AND UNPAINTED, UPCYCLED PROJECTS AND ECO-CONSCIOUS EXTRAS MARK ROOMS THAT HAVE A REFRESHING AUTHENTICITY AND A WHOLE LOT OF SOUL.



# *Nature* **MADE**

A REVERENCE FOR ECOLOGY GUIDES THE STYLE OF THIS LAKESIDE HOME, FILLED WITH ORGANIC MATERIALS AND TREASURES FROM A LIFETIME OF NATURE WALKS.



WRITTEN BY SARAH EGGE PHOTOGRAPHED BY LAURA MOSS PRODUCED BY KARIN LIDBECK-BRENT



OPPOSITE On the site of a 1950s lakeside children's camp, the 13-year-old house owned by Joanna and Bill Seitz is intended to bridge time and blend in. The roofline mimics the original bathhouses that once dotted these acres. The shake roof, cedar siding, and stone chimney are local materials allowed to age naturally. THIS PHOTO The screen porch accommodates a crowd. Joanna chose a concrete table that has an antique stone look and these chairs from Belgium. The setting is punctuated by a Murano glass pendant lamp.



## **P**ERCHED HALFWAY DOWN A HILLSIDE

that slopes into North Spectacle Lake in Connecticut, Joanna and Bill Seitz's cedar-shingle house seems to crouch among the native trees and bushes. Windows and French doors open wide to embrace the view, and porches and patios extend rooms to make the garden flowers and grassy lawn and lapping water seem touchable.

"My favorite place in the house is probably the big screen porch," Joanna says. "I love being out there playing with my grandson and feeling the breeze that comes up from the lake." It's fitting that an indoor-outdoor space is where Joanna spends precious time. She has constructed a career out of encouraging clients of her home furnishings store, J. Seitz & Co., to bring the outdoors in. For Joanna, the barriers should be as minimal as possible.

"I've always loved being in the woods, walking, watching the animals and birds, and just being out of doors," she says. "And I love bringing nature inside the house." Vintage taxidermy birds, mounted antlers, paintings depicting jungle scenes, potted plants of all varieties, textiles depicting flora and fauna, even



a lamp base that looks like a twisting snake are all fodder for Joanna's decorating. When she and Bill built this house in 2004 with the help of architect Peter Kurt Woerner, they outlined their passion for nature and requested local materials.

The trio was inspired by the property, which had been a summer camp for kids long ago. Only a couple of bathhouses remained. ("All the other buildings composted themselves," Joanna says with a laugh.) They were able to save one to use as a guesthouse then designed the main house in its image, with twin peaked roofs united by a porch. Granite pieces and mossy stones from the property were unearthed and reused for the pathways, walls, and pool escarpment.

Inside, floors were fashioned from random-width oak boards milled down the road in Cornwall, Connecticut. Joanna had them given a minimal clear coat in a matte finish to allow the wood's innate color and grain to be prominent. For paint colors, Joanna



relied on white, creamy whites, barely tans, and a subtle green-gray the color of the lake water. "I like a more serene palette," she says. "I like browns and greens and the colors of the soil, sky, stones, rocks, and shells."

Decorating inspiration also comes from natural surroundings the couple encounters when they travel. They have a second home in Santa Fe, and they bring back artifacts from their walks there, from Bill's

**OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT** Antique Buddhas mingle with potted plants in front of a contemporary Dutch painting. The table is peroba wood, which Bill and Joanna bought in Brazil along with the large pots. **OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT** Joanna welcomes the frequent visits of her daughter, Amanda, and grandson, Dakota. Amanda also works at the family's retail and interior design company, J. Seitz & Co., choosing the furnishings and fashions that rely on the natural materials Joanna prefers for her decor. **ABOVE** Joanna and Bill had reclaimed chestnut beams installed in the cozy den, where a Belgian linen sofa joins a metal faux bois coffee table, and the curtains depict wild animals. **LEFT** Natural materials mingle in the living room, including the sisal rug, fieldstone hearth, and live-edge teak coffee table. The sofas are covered in Belgian linen, one punctuated by a vintage Kantha cloth from India. On top of a pair of Belgian cupboards, Joanna displays taxidermy birds that decorated her grandfather's sporting goods stores in the 1940s.



“MY STYLE ROOTS ARE IN THE NATURAL WORLD. I TEND TOWARD NATURAL FABRICS, VARIOUS THINGS THAT DEPICT NATURE. ANYTHING MADE OF EARTHY MATERIALS IS INSPIRING.”

—HOMEOWNER JOANNA SEITZ



**ABOVE** Joanna selected paint colors from a neutral palette and had the oak floors given just a clear coat of polyurethane. A new table with clean, classic lines bridges the styles of the modern chairs and antique armoire. The table's top is covered in zinc, which will weather over time.

**OPPOSITE** An antique table made from Brazilian peroba wood is the gather-round spot in the warm and inviting kitchen, where Joanna cooks vegan meals. She props paintings against the backsplash but leaves the windows and their view of the lake clear. A deep apron-front sink and cupboards designed with bun feet lend the kitchen an unfitted look and a charming country feeling.



**LEFT** French doors that reach almost floor-to-ceiling open to a stone patio. Architect Peter Kurt Woerner placed the main living spaces and the master bedroom across the back of the house to enjoy views of the lake. A vintage stool from Asia is a handy table. **BELOW** Twin stools in front of the bathtub are covered in vintage goat hair. Handmade from a natural material, they're just the sort of thing that catches Joanna's eye. **OPPOSITE** A series of mounted antlers, a lamp base depicting a snake, and an overscale print of a raven on the linen pillow form a decorative menagerie in the master bedroom. Joanna dresses the carved mahogany bed with linens picked up on their travels, such as the striped Mexican textile from Santa Fe.

fly-fishing jaunts, and even from frequent visits to Paris, the south of France, Rome, and Venice, where they source items for the store.

Their desire to be immersed in nature is echoed in their travel philosophy: "Bill and I love to walk one end of a city to another to submerge ourselves in the deepest layers of what a culture is all about," Joanna says. They bring treasures back, and whatever doesn't go to the store, Joanna fits in at home. "In the dining room, I have an old South American armoire, a handmade zinc table, modern chairs, and a chandelier designed like twigs," she says. "I just love that mix." ❧

**RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 142.**







**ABOVE** Granite stones from the 25-acre property were cleaned up and reused to pave pathways and patios. Joanna and Bill wanted the swimming pool for family gatherings and to act as a visual link between the house and nearby North Spectacle Lake. **RIGHT** Some of Joanna and Bill's Palissy majolica collection is in the form of plates, which they hang on the wall. "We love the snakes and lizards and natural world depicted in them," Joanna says. **OPPOSITE** An antique swan planter holds court under a wisteria-draped pergola. The stone table and chair set looks like wood.





## Hot Collectible: Palissy Ware

*Colorful, richly detailed majolica is a mainstay in country rooms. But here's a type of majolica that is catching the eye of collectors.*

A FITTING COLLECTION for nature-lovers, the style of majolica pottery Joanna and Bill Seitz are drawn to is named for famed French potter Bernard Palissy, who worked in the 16th century in Paris. Depicting the natural world around him, including crustaceans living in the Seine River, he called the earth-tone pottery "pièces rustiques"—and it inspired a new wave of potters in the 19th century. Although Palissy's pieces are locked away in museums, pottery in his style is attainable. Antique French pieces are the most valuable, costing hundreds of dollars for platters, figurines, and vases. But vintage Portuguese, English, and American pieces are affordable, with some plates costing less than \$100.



» *Curious*  
**COTTAGE**

AFTER FALLING FOR THIS COTTAGE'S UNIQUE CHARMS, ONE COUPLE WENT TO WORK RESTORING IT—AND UNCOVERING ITS INTRIGUING HISTORY.



WRITTEN BY PAIGE PORTER FISCHER

PHOTOGRAPHED BY EDMUND BARR

PRODUCED BY KAREN REINECKE



### IT NEVER HURTS TO ASK, AS THE SAYING GOES. THAT

was certainly the case for Clark and Greg Collins, who were living in a tiny 1930s beach cottage in Laguna Beach, California, with their two young sons when they grew curious about—maybe even coveted—a nearby home. Set in the middle of a 100-year-old eucalyptus grove, the structure had intriguing architecture.

“It was basically a barn at the beach,” says Clark, who owns a design-build firm in this charming coastal town and is passionate about restoring old houses to their original glory. So they picked up the phone one day and called their neighbor. “We just casually asked her if she’d ever be interested in selling it,” Clark says. “And much to our surprise, she answered with a ‘yes.’ We called her at just the right time.”

And just like that, the cottage was theirs. It was built in 1940 by Isaac Jenkinson Frazee, a well-known Southern California artist often called the “Father of Laguna Beach.” The Indiana native designed the home to be anchored by a central barnlike structure that would serve as an art gallery of sorts and a meeting space for his group of plein air artist friends. “We learned that the house had never actually gone on the market since Isaac built it, but had instead changed hands a few times and always privately, in much the same way that we got it—through friends and family,” Clark says. “But that meant that the house most likely never had an inspection—or a reason to be updated.”


Clark, Greg, and their sons, Sawyer, 7, and Jackson, 10, moved into the house and lived with all its quirks and idiosyncrasies for a single calendar year to get to know it better before making any major changes. “Greg was so excited to put a new garbage disposal in the first weekend we were here,” Clark says, “and the moment he turned it on, all the plumbing in the entire house backed up. It was the first sign that the house needed significant updates. The bones were beautiful, but behind all the walls were some serious issues.”

After a year of living with its flaws, the couple knew exactly what they wanted to do with the house. They went to work fixing the basics of plumbing and electrical and doing a few layout improvements, such as relocating the kitchen in order to have it open onto the living spaces

**LEFT** The main living room, with its 17-foot ceilings, was once an art gallery for the original owner, who collected plein air art and exhibited it on the walls of the raftered room. “We pulled out hundreds of nails from the redwood paneling when we were refinishing it,” says current co-owner Clark Collins. An antique Eldredge Extra bike from 1899 now hangs amid the beginnings of the couple’s own plein air painting collection.



and creating a master suite where the original kitchen once existed. The rest of the work was primarily restorative, including removing drywall to uncover the original paneling and restoring the home's antique lighting fixtures. Then they were ready to place their furniture, antiques, and art.

Clark and Greg, lifelong collectors, don't prescribe to a certain style but rather adhere to a mantra of buying only what they really love. They took time to layer their new-old house with pieces from various eras and countries. "We have a curated look that's quite eclectic, but I think that's what gives a home personality," Clark says. "We're not ever going to have a house that's all white-on-white. We're not pristine and formal in the way we live life or entertain. We love the look of an informal house, where every room tells the story of our lives—where we came from, where we traveled. To us, that's what makes a house a home." 

**RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 142.**

**ABOVE** Clark chose simple white cabinets and soapstone counters for the new kitchen, which opens to the formal living room and the informal family room. "Soapstone has been around for more than a hundred years, so it felt right for this house," says Clark, who chose all unlacquered brass for the hardware and hinges.

**OPPOSITE, BOTTOM LEFT** The outdoor dining room is where the family eats many of their meals, thanks to the warm California climate. Here, vintage French café chairs pull up to an antique table. "The doors are almost always open to this space," Clark says, "and the kids just come and go with their friends."



**LEFT** Greg (left) and Clark Collins relax with their canine companion, Kylo, in the foyer of their Laguna Beach cottage. **BELOW** Floor-to-ceiling bookshelves flank the massive arched window at one end of the main living room. Antique Sarab rugs warm the light-filled space, and exposed-wood chairs and a vintage, green mohair George Smith sofa add comfort and character.





**ABOVE** A living room nook showcases one of the couple's prized possessions—a portrait of the home's original owner, Isaac Jenkinson Frazee (by artist Joseph Kleitsch). **RIGHT** Clark designed this daybed for the quirky "loft" space above the living room. Drawers hold their sons' games and toys. **FAR RIGHT** The couple wanted a relaxed vibe in the family room, which they added just off the kitchen, so they paired an old leather chair and ottoman from George Smith with a comfortable linen sofa. They matched paneling and Douglas fir floors to the cottage's original architecture.





“WE LIKE ROOMS THAT  
FEEL INFORMAL BUT NOT  
CLUTTERED—BREATHING  
ROOM IS ALWAYS NICE.”

—HOMEOWNER CLARK COLLINS



THIS PHOTO “I love a layered look everywhere in a house, but it really creates coziness in a bedroom,” says Clark, who used an antique Sarab rug to blanket hardwood floors. On the bed, a blue coverlet and green throw add rich color to the otherwise muted space. He added texture with bamboo shades and a touch of frilly greenery.



**LEFT** The couple kept the original claw-foot tub in their master bath, pairing it with a mahogany vanity and a marble top by Walker Zanger. **BELOW** The architecture does the talking in the boys' rooms, with board-and-batten paneling, raftered ceilings, and vintage light fixtures. The couple retained and refurbished the character-rich original lighting throughout the house.



# True GRIT

A SPIRITED BLEND OF OUTLAW ATTITUDE AND BIG-FAMILY  
STYLE DECLARE THIS HILL COUNTRY RANCH A REAL TEXAN.



WRITTEN BY MALLORY ABREU PHOTOGRAPHED BY NATHAN SCHRODER STYLED BY DONNA TALLEY

OPPOSITE A limestone fireplace in the sunroom rises to meet exposed beams made from reclaimed railroad trestles. The trestles were originally buried in a salt lake in Utah, giving the wood a driftwood-gray patina. THIS PHOTO An industrial staircase leads residents to a loft area, complete with a writer's nook and views.





**TOP LEFT** Collections of bird nests scattered about are namesake reminders of the El Nido ranch. **TOP RIGHT** The ranch is organized like a compound, where each branch of the family has its own suite. The central courtyard is easily accessible from all parts of the residence. **ABOVE** A mix of sturdy textiles—leather, sisal, woven rugs—adds interest and durability to the ranch's main living area. **OPPOSITE** Accessories and pattern are kept to a minimum here in favor of natural materials. A wall of undressed windows invites in Hill Country views.

**N**ESTLED BENEATH JUNIPER TREES ON THE EDGE of Hill Country, a sprawling ranch commands the mountainside. Constructed of native stone and raw posts, this family compound seems to be an extension of nature itself, albeit with plenty of well-designed nurture thrown in.

The home is called “El Nido,” a Spanish phrase meaning “the nest.” And that’s exactly what this ranch is—a place where three generations can all converge to form one colorful, dynamic household. “This is a family with big personalities,” architect David Stocker says. “Quirky things were a plus for them, and this was a ranch project so it could be completely different.”

Coming up the road, you might be startled to see what looks like a rogue pair of legs. No need to fear—this jean-clad cactus planter is just one of the many playful features that gives the ranch its buoyant character. Other elements are quintessentially American, such as the cedar rocking chairs sheltered under a rusty metal roof. Venture inside and the balancing act between the classic and the unconventional continues. The bedrooms feature playful and personal collections. In the main living area, tall stone fireplaces at either end of the soaring space are built using old-world masonry techniques. They give the space permanence and serve as a focal point for clutches of traditional leather furniture.

The hearth-centered space also helps tie the home together visually. “It’s right on the edge of the bluffs, so I’m connecting with the view,” Stocker says. “On the other side of the room, I’m connecting with the courtyard. The breeze is coming in, feeding that sense of comfort.” The organization of the ranch’s common areas recalls an old Western way station—that spot where, a century ago, a cowboy might stop along his way for a drink at a rustic watering hole or where a family might stay for a couple days while moving out West. Cowhide bar chairs reminiscent of saloons and antique boots and skulls give the home an authentically Texan personality. “There are all these reminders of what the heart of Texas is and what makes Texas interesting,” Stocker says. “Cowboys always had a quirkiness to them that’s really pinpointed here.”





**LEFT** Reed blinds filter light into a warm kitchen space. Knotty wood cabinetry and a farmhouse sink bring in rustic elements to balance the sleek stainless-steel appliances and Carrara marble counters and backsplash. Polished and scored concrete flooring is naturally elegant. **BELOW** Expansive windows let plenty of natural light into the dining area. Tall ladder-back chairs are the right scale to counter the high ceilings. **OPPOSITE** Oversize industrial-style lighting pairs well with the hefty cowhide counter chairs and wood range hood. The hood and ceiling are built from the same weathered wood for design flow.

The design of El Nido and its surrounding land centers on this idea of creating moments. A series of meandering stone paths leads out to the woods, for instance, and a small cottage made of salvaged materials is a clubhouse for the grandkids. With 20 acres of land, Stocker wanted to create destinations away from the house that could also inspire exploration along the way. “We worked to hide some things, too,” Stocker says. “There are always these opportunities we take to make neat little places.”

Perhaps the grandest of these spaces is the ranch’s interior courtyard. Bordered by shady porches, it provides an oasis in the heat of the day and a safe, secure area to relax at night. “It’s like a cowboy hat with a big rim on it,” Stocker says. “You grab the brim and you get some shade, and you’re in good shape in Texas.”

RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 142.







**ABOVE LEFT** Slung over a coatrack, cowboy hats that have been collected from Oklahoma to Santa Fe are on display in a living room corner. **ABOVE RIGHT** Near the grandchildren's clubhouse, an outdoor seating area is a go-to spot for watching the Texas sun set over the nearby canyon. **BELOW** The Hardy Boys book series decorates the music room's walls with color and nostalgia. **LEFT** White walls rimmed with brass clavos offer a clean backdrop for personality-packed furniture and collections. Photographs of West Texas are affixed behind glass doors in the upper cabinetry.





“IN TEXAS, COURTYARDS ARE EVERYWHERE. THEY GIVE YOU THIS ORGANIZING ELEMENT WHERE YOU’RE ABLE TO LOOK AT YOUR OWN HOUSE—SOMETHING YOU’VE MADE—AND NOT JUST AT THE VIEW OR THE WOODS.”

—ARCHITECT DAVID STOCKER

**ABOVE LEFT** A four-poster canopy for one of the grandchildren features playful pillows that spell out the ranch’s name. The red, white, and blue decor—accentuated by a star quilt handmade by the girl’s great-grandmother—is an ode to Texas. **ABOVE RIGHT** Each suite in the ranch is decorated with a specific family member in mind, infusing every space with a distinct personality. Designed for the international disc jockey of the clan, this one has a modern Western vibe. **RIGHT** An oval glass door is next to built-in bookshelves in the writer’s nook upstairs. The door has been in the well-traveled family for years, bringing an immediate sense of heritage and memory to each home it occupies. **FAR RIGHT** Ready to fool the eye and coax a smile, this cactus planter is part of the quirky fun here.





» *Farmhouse*  
**FRESH**

TWO MAKERS OF OLD-WORLD POTTERY PUT A SIMPLE SPIN ON STYLE IN THEIR FAMILY'S VERMONT COLONIAL HOME.

WRITTEN BY PAIGE PORTER FISCHER

PHOTOGRAPHED BY HELEN NORMAN

PRODUCED BY JESSICA THOMAS AND ZOE ZILIAN



## SOMETIMES LIFE IMITATES ART, AND SOMETIMES IT'S

the other way around. For Zoe and James Zilian, their pottery business was a byproduct of a change in lifestyle. The couple first traded city life in Boston for a pastoral one in Vermont, where they fell for a modest-size Colonial ringed with apple trees and blueberry bushes. They took down walls and added plenty of white paint to reinvent it as a sprawling farmhouse—one that matched their dream of living simply, authentically, and rooted in nature. “We thought we hit the lottery when we moved to Woodstock,” James says. “We’d been longing for a slow and simple life, with more inspiring aesthetics.”

James, then the design director for a glass and pottery company, turned the home’s basement into a ceramics workshop—complete with a kiln—where he could use the newfound inspiration to create. “I wanted our girls to have nice bowls for blueberry picking, so I asked James to make a couple,” Zoe says. “I loved them so much, I asked him to make a pitcher.” Mixing bowls and crocks followed. The basement soon grew crowded with James’ stoneware, and it occurred to the couple that the art he was creating for his family life might actually be appealing to other people, too.

“We realized there was a market for heirloom-quality pieces created for everyday use,” says James, who eventually left his day job to start Farmhouse Pottery with Zoe, a trained photographer. She took pictures of the stoneware—known for its milky white glaze that blankets all but a small portion of each piece, where James leaves the natural color of the clay exposed. People began showing up on their doorstep to buy it. “In the early days, people would hear about us and come over for a glass of wine and buy pottery out of our basement,” Zoe says. “But pretty soon we realized we always had strangers shopping in our house, and it was time to expand.”

The Zilians’ flagship store is currently housed in a 30,000-square-foot warehouse, where they create and sell their pottery along with a growing selection of home goods and fashions. These include a dining table to set the pottery on and even some foods to go in it, such as local Vermont honey and syrup. Every item reflects the clean, organic

**LEFT** Mia Zilian has no trouble getting into the swing of country life at her family’s home in Woodstock, Vermont, where weekends are spent gathering berries, taking nature walks, and savoring the artful life her parents, Zoe and James, have created.



aesthetic that's also reflected in their home. "Unsurprisingly, our style is modern farmhouse," says Zoe, who loves the easy care of slipcovered furniture. The slipcovers and most textiles in the home are natural linen, highlighted by maritime colors that remind Zoe of the coast of Maine where she grew up. Accent tables, also in their line, couldn't be simpler—they're hand-hewn of basswood stumps, painted in their signature palette of blue, white, and gray. "We really keep things on the spare side at home and only decorate with things we truly love," she says.

And what they love is nature-inspired and genuine, straightforward and useful—just like the humble, utilitarian beauty of the objects they create. "There's an honesty in simplicity," James says. "In the end, we have a high level of respect for the handmade." ❧

RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 142.

**ABOVE** Furniture with a minimalist, natural bent is now part of the Farmhouse Pottery line, including the dining table in the Zilian home, handcrafted of ash and given a translucent stain to preserve its exquisite graining. The Parsons-style chairs wear chic simple linen coverings. **OPPOSITE, BOTTOM LEFT** James leaves a few of his own vases unglazed because he loves the natural colors of the clay.



**LEFT** Zoe and James Zilian make meal prep a family affair that includes daughters Mia, 9 (seated), and Ava, 7. **BELOW** This sunny sitting area is where the family comes together to read and play games. They plan to raise sheep on their property, but in the meantime these stand-ins, handmade in Patagonia, will do. When not simply looking cute, they offer extra seating and footrests.





On the ground floor, 25 feet of walls came down to open the rooms to each other. The living room was a sea of dark wood paneling before Zoe and James reinvented it with mostly white paint and a few earthy accents. Built-in credenzas showcase several of James' vases and a painting by his brother. The rough-hewn wood accents emphasize the simple, rustic beauty they are naturally drawn to.







**OPPOSITE** In the kitchen, the white palette is broken up by earth-inspired neutrals, such as natural woods and countertops of honed granite. Silhouetted against a focal-point wall finished in chalkboard paint, Farmhouse Pottery's popular serving plates have been dipped in the white glaze the couple calls "Organic Milk." Their Vermont Wood Stumps, used as seating or tables, also got a coat of white paint. **LEFT** The flower and herb garden on the property is as tidy and simple as the interiors. "There is inspiration in just living with nature every day," Zoe says. "It's beautiful and real." **BELOW** A metal bookshelf stacks cookware, cutting boards, and cookbooks.





“IN A TIME WHEN NEARLY EVERYTHING IS THROWAWAY, WE WANTED TO RETURN TO THE IDEA OF HEIRLOOMS AND CREATE HANDMADE PIECES THAT COULD BE USED—AND PASSED DOWN.”

—HOMEOWNER JAMES ZILIAN





**OPPOSITE TOP** Enjoying the natural world is a primary inspiration for the family.

And what could be more enjoyable than a plain, open-air shower? Just ask Mia and Ava.

**OPPOSITE BOTTOM** To give their bathroom a modern farmhouse vibe, the couple topped crisp white wainscoting with walls painted the color of the clay used as a base for their sturdy pottery.

**LEFT** Layers of soft and sumptuous bedding woven of natural textiles create a textural nest. Pottery lamp bases, such as this one that illuminates the bedside, were one of the first pieces in the Farmhouse Pottery line.



*Modern Mixes*



COUNTRY DECORATING MAY BE INFLUENCED BY DECADES LONG PAST, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN IT'S STUCK THERE. THIS PRACTICAL AND PERSONAL APPROACH TO STYLE IS WELL SUITED FOR PIVOTING TO REFLECT CURRENT TASTES AND INTERESTS, AS THESE THOROUGHLY MODERN COUNTRY ROOMS ATTEST.





Open  
**INVITATION**

TO USHER A HISTORIC FARM INTO A NEW CENTURY,  
A DESIGNER POLISHES IT INTO A MODERN RETREAT FOR  
A HOMEOWNER WHO ENVISIONS SHARING ITS BEAUTY.

WRITTEN BY SARAH EGGE PHOTOGRAPHED BY TRIA GIOVAN PRODUCED BY ANNA MOLVIK



**THIS PHOTO** The living room illustrates the bridging of eras homeowner Suni Munshani wanted for the house. To achieve it, designer Kelly Mittleman had the original river rock fireplace cleaned and repointed, and the pine paneling sanded and revarnished. The new coffee table is topped by reclaimed wood. The leather chairs are based on the iconic Barcelona chair by midcentury modern architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.



**M**OST DAYS, THE ASPETUCK RIVER IN Fairfield County, Connecticut, is glassy and calm as it meanders through Suni Munshani's 13-acre property. But after a heavy rain in the summer or snowmelt in the winter, the river dances a jig and kicks up silvery droplets onto the stone berm in front of Suni's guesthouse. He pauses on the bright red footbridge nearby to watch the water, marveling that he can claim the property as his. Sort of.

"Beautiful places are meant to be shared. I consider myself a custodian of this land," says Suni, a tech company executive. "I see this as a public-private property that is going to enhance the region and create a natural habitat." In five years, Suni wants this former horse farm to be a cider mill. He's planting gooseberry bushes and apple orchards, and envisions people wandering through to sample fruit. Currently, he also lets out the house online to guests wanting a meeting spot, vacation, or mental respite.

Formerly the caretaker's cottage, the 1935 house was in disrepair when Suni bought the property in October 2014. Overgrown trees darkened the interior,



and its pine paneling was sooty and brittle. “Brick-pattern contact paper covered the floors. Everything was out of plumb. The kitchen cupboards listed,” says designer Kelly Mittleman, with a small laugh, as she’s the one who itemized the cottage’s many faults when she first saw it in early 2015. But Suni was determined to restore and improve it: “I liked what I saw, and part of the motivation was its charm,” he says.

Mittleman appreciated the cottage’s potential, too, and set about updating the spaces inside. To make its 1,600 square feet feel lighter and brighter, she expanded window openings, removed a wall between the sunroom and living room to let light flood in, raised headers above doorways, and elevated ceilings in the bedrooms into attic space. She added shiplap in the kitchen and faux batten paneling in the bedrooms, then painted all of it a soft white. “In a little jewel box like this, the extra details are fun. I wanted to create interest on the walls,” she says. “And



white unifies surfaces and keeps the rooms feeling fresh and clean.”

Original features got a spiffing up: The river rock fireplace was cleaned and repaired; Mittleman brightened the living room’s paneled ceiling with a pickled finish, and sanded and revarnished the grubby boards on the walls. “The pine paneling was not awesome, but it is a period adornment. Now the knots add flavor, and it’s a nice counterpoint to the modern changes we made,” she says.

**OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT** Expanded casement windows allow light to flood the entry. Designer Kelly Mittleman draped a Pendleton blanket around a simple bench and added a sheepskin throw for coziness. **OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT** Suni Munshani, a software company executive, is shepherding Nyala Farm into a new life and purpose. He uses the former caretaker’s cottage for meditation and yoga, and as a vacation rental. **ABOVE** By opening up a wall into a tiny bedroom, Mittleman created an intimate TV nook, “so you’re not assaulted by a big screen in the living area.” To create textural interest, she found a metal coffee table with a top made of old tire rubber and framed burlap flour sacks from France. **LEFT** Reproduction wishbone-style chairs around a glass-topped walnut table join vivid paintings by artists Nina Mera and Alex Itin (in hallway). Mittleman used clean-lined, contemporary furnishings to offset the quaint architecture.



**ABOVE** Wicker armchairs surround a fire pit on the new patio overlooking the river and bridge. Architect Mark Finlay, who advised Suni on the renovation decisions, says the house's position close to the river is key. "There are otters and trout that live in the river. It's wonderful," he says. **LEFT** Marble counters and shiplap walls are a classic combination. Mittleman departed from her white color scheme with the green painted cabinets (Olive by Farrow & Ball). "I'm a big fan of white, but seeing colorful kitchen cabinets is a fresh surprise," she says. **BELOW** With hospitality in mind, Mittleman carved a bar area out of a nook beside the built-in fridge in the kitchen.

For furnishings, she installed midcentury modern reproductions, such as Hans Wegner-style wishbone dining chairs, as well as cottagey hallmarks like Pendleton blankets. Paintings from Suni's contemporary art collection add color to the walls.

Suni and his family live in the house next door. Every day that he's not traveling for work, he crosses the bridge to "Nyala Farm," the property's original name. He knows well his crossing conjures the metaphor of a new owner who connects the property's past to its future. "I had no preconceived notions I would be lucky enough to acquire this property," he says. "With the river going through, it's quite charming and exciting." ❧

RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 142.



**THIS PHOTO** The nostalgic feel of the kitchen comes from Shaker-style cabinets. The upper cabinets sit on the counter, creating the look of a breakfront. Instead of a built-in island, an 1850s pine table is an eating or prep spot. "That table is so practical. It's an ode to the farm," Mittleman says.



“I ALWAYS USE VINTAGE FABRICS AS  
PILLOW COVERS. THEY’RE UNIQUE. IT’S  
LIKE PUTTING ON A REALLY COOL SHIRT  
WITH YOUR FAVORITE PAIR OF JEANS.”

—DESIGNER KELLY MITTLEMAN



## Master the Mix

*Eclectic interiors are personal and dynamic. They can be tough to pull off, but here are some tips.*

**GO EASY ON COLOR AND PATTERN:** When mixing design styles, stick to a unified palette without busy pattern for a clean, pulled-together look. This home relies on a nature-based palette to join disparate styles.

**CHOOSE SIMPLE LINES:** Although from different eras, the furniture pieces here have clean forms in common. Natural materials—leather, cotton velvet, dark wood, and metals—also make style marriages work.

**STRIKE A BALANCE:** Mixing delicate pieces with hefty ones can throw a room awkwardly off balance. Choose items that have a similar visual weight.

**CUT THE CLUTTER:** Contrast is the design principle that gives a room energy and interest. But too many contrasting elements can create a hodgepodge. Make it easier on yourself—and your eyes—by limiting the amount of furnishings in a room.



**ABOVE** Shiplap walls and an old-fashioned-style marble sink on chrome legs create a nostalgic feel in the guest bath. **RIGHT** To reference the steel farm implements that she encountered on her first visit to the cottage, Mittleman designed this steel-and-glass shower door “to be fun,” she says. “However, it required three guys to bring it in.” The floor is Belgian bluestone tile, which Mittleman marked with wide grout lines. **LEFT** The floating sink surround in the master bath is made with Nero Mist granite. **OPPOSITE** Mittleman dressed the velvet-upholstered bed in a blend of new and vintage textiles, including linen flour sacks and old tapestry.





*Eclectic*  
**NEST**

AN INTERIOR DESIGNER GIVES AN 18TH-CENTURY FARMHOUSE ON THE VERGE OF COLLAPSE A NEW LIFE, WITH HELP FROM ITS OLD BONES.

WRITTEN BY MALLORY ABREU PHOTOGRAPHED BY FRANCIS DZIKOWSKI/OTTO

**OPPOSITE** Homeowners Ira Sher and Lithe Sebesta sit in front of the chalkboard wall in their living area with their wire-haired dachshund, Phoebe.  
**THIS PHOTO** Lithe found the fireplace mantel at the Brimfield Antique Show in Massachusetts. She had no idea if it would work in the space, but she brought it home and it fit perfectly. Turquoise glass from Puebla, Mexico, and a glove hand model from a Parisian flea market tell of Lithe's travels.





**E**VERY EVENING IN JULY AND AUGUST, Lithe Sebesta heads out to her backyard swimming pond for her own personal fireworks show. No thunderous cracks or smoky trails appear as dusk settles, but the summertime sky shakes all the same as hundreds of bullfrogs bellow from the surrounding reeds. By nightfall, nature's tiny pyrotechnicians, a myriad of fireflies, are hard at work performing acrobatics over the glassy black water, each light gleaming for a heartbeat, and then gone.

That watering hole was enough to make Lithe fall instantly in love with the Stuyvesant, New York, property when she first stumbled upon it in the late summer of 2012. The main feature, however—an 18th-century farmhouse with a caving roof and partially dirt floors—was in complete disrepair. “The only thing that worked in the place was that incredible swimming pond out back,” she says. “The family had been in distress, and the house had been let go over the past 25 years.”

Weighing the odds, Lithe decided to go ahead and purchase the property. An interior designer by trade and a lover of objects with history, she set



about taking the house apart piece by piece. Using those parts, she rebuilt the home with a more stable construction, making modifications along the way.

“We raised the ceilings and aligned the doorways to better connect the rooms and increase circulation,” Lithe says. “The thing I feel was most successful is that we actually managed to maintain the intimacy of a farmhouse—a home with distinct rooms and the feeling of having slowly been added to—while still adapting it to modern life.”

The renovation ended up making the house a perfect fit for Lithe; her partner, novelist Ira Sher; and her two stepchildren. “We can all feel collectively warm and together, but there is a great feeling of privacy,” Lithe says.

The home captures what she refers to as “ramble,” the notion of discovering new moments around every corner. “I try to create an atmosphere that doesn’t demand your attention in all areas,” she says. “So that, just like there’s a natural highlight to every day and encounter, each room has that kind of sweet spot that allows everything else to fall into place.”



Now the interior boasts a warm, neutral palette supplemented by reclaimed wood accents and natural patina. Planks originally used as roof sheathing panel the ceilings and cleverly disguise new structural steel beams. Other surfaces are equally attended to—a playful chalkboard-paint wall in the living area keeps a running list of groceries, design sketches, and elementary school math times tables on display. The rest of the walls have a natural lime veneer that continues the chalky wall finish while adding luminosity and movement to an otherwise muted backdrop. Lithe aimed to keep finishes simple to allow

**OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT** The farmhouse’s old mudroom had dirt floors when Lithe bought the property. Now, it’s her favorite nook in the house, showcasing a bird collage above a square window and a painting by an Italian fresco painter who was selling work out of the back of a truck. **OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT** A wool rug that Lithe found in Marrakech adorns the library floor. **ABOVE** Phoebe sits on a piano bench that Lithe had custom-made. The antique piano was once a rehearsal piano for a Greek Orthodox choir. To update the piece, she traded out the piano’s fussy Queen Anne legs with simple white posts. **LEFT** Lithe and Ira are voracious readers, often reading a volume in tandem. The library is a quiet retreat where the couple houses their collections and relaxes together.

color to pop, including electric pink chairs in the master bedroom and shelves upon shelves of books in the library. “I love strong colors; pinks and purples and some turquoises,” she says.

Although the home fit well for a time, Lithe is, in her words, a “hyper-nester,” making a house her home for a short while until she’s ready for a new adventure. She sold the property along with a large portion of its furnishings to songwriter and guitarist Aaron Dessner of the indie rock band, The National. Even with the old farmhouse fixed up, it’s still the backyard swimming pond that draws new owners in: Dessner recently built a recording studio down by the pond’s bank. A chord strikes from inside, and the bullfrogs take their cue, beginning a chorus that will resound deep into the night. ❧

**RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 142.**

**BELOW** The dining room ceiling is made from the farmhouse’s original roof sheathing. The main beam that runs across the center of the room is actually steel, clad in the same reclaimed wood sheathing. **OPPOSITE** The kitchen was the oldest room in the farmhouse. Lithe traded her friend a bed for two kitchen chairs a couple of years ago.





**THIS PHOTO** Lithe bought a huge roll of this vintage rag rug from John Derian to use in a client's house and saved some for herself. Now it makes the perfect staircase runner. To open up the home's floor plan while maintaining separate rooms, she removed wall space under the stairway, so the living and dining rooms on either side of the stairwell relate to each other more directly.





**LEFT** A trio of doors in the master bedroom were a flea market find and add a natural patina to the space. The upper doors are fashioned from more of the original home's reclaimed planks.

**ABOVE** This bath's rosy sink top was spotted in Kingston, New York, where Lithe stopped to see one of her favorite collectors, "Stan the Junkman." A rug from Istanbul warms the floor. **BELOW** The master bedroom features many of Lithe's experiments, including bedside tables she designed with a carpenter friend. The tables are attached to the bed frame and can swing forward while one is having a cup of coffee or swing out to display flowers.





ABOVE LEFT The master bath's playful disco-ball sconces spruce up traditional white wall paneling and an elegant floor-mount sink. ABOVE Lithe designed this prototype for a desk with Steffen Hyder—the same carpenter who helped her design the piano bench on page 93. The design of the legs was inspired by the sculptor Brancusi. LEFT A French artist treated the ceiling in Lithe's stepson's bedroom, using the same warm finish in the master bedroom. BELOW The guest bedroom's quilt boasts pops of yellow and blue that emphasize color in the bedside lamps and the artwork.



**ABOVE** Hyder also helped Lithe bring this creation to life—an incomplete prototype of a shelving system. It is designed with a lattice base that utilizes the same weight-bearing screws used for indoor rock-climbing walls. The screws can be used to hang shelves, knickknacks, or artwork, and can be easily reconfigured whenever the owner pleases. **RIGHT** A dock in the backyard swimming pond is perfect for relaxing near wildlife on a summer night or taking a refreshing dive during the dog days of the season.



## Artistic Inspiration

*Homeowner and designer Lithe Sebesta shares her favorite inspirations for her chic, personal style.*

**VIRGINIA WOOLF:** “She’s an interior designer of words; her atmospheres are so particular. Her sister’s home is a famously continuous reference in her works. It has a loose but considered atmosphere. Every surface has been touched by the people who live there, and that’s a huge reference for me.”

**CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN BY FRANK B. GILBRETH JR. AND ERNESTINE GILBRETH CAREY:** “This book inspired the chalkboard wall idea, from the idea of how they hang astrological charts and informative visuals all over the walls of their house so the kids are always learning. I love the idea that you read your environment all the time, and it can actually be nourishing—you’re looking at something beautiful or something interesting, and you’re absorbing that.”

# *Past* FORWARD

A PRISTINE COLONIAL SALTBOX GETS A  
RESPECTFULLY MODERN UPDATE JUST IN  
TIME TO INDULGE GUESTS.



WRITTEN BY SHAILA WUNDERLICH PHOTOGRAPHED BY TRIA GIOVAN PRODUCED BY ANNA MOLVIK



OPPOSITE Cathy Young's Colonial saltbox sits just as it did when it was built in 1726, with the exception of the "new" kitchen addition on the left, incorporated sometime in the late 1800s. THIS PHOTO Texture abounds in the calf-hair-covered slipper chairs draped in sheepskin wool throws and vintage wool pillows. The table and bronze desk lamp hail from New York's famous Hammertown Barn.



## HERE ARE OLD HOUSES. AND THEN THERE ARE

houses in which renovations made in 1881 are considered the “new addition.” That’s how Cathy Young talks about her 1726 Connecticut saltbox, which she bought in 2011 to serve as a guesthouse for her parents during their frequent visits from Florida. Cathy and her husband, Greg, dubbed the four-bedroom Colonial “Nash House” after the military captain who built it. “He most likely passed away before the Revolutionary War began,” Cathy says, “so we think he must have been British.”

In a rush to ready the house, Cathy gave designer Kelly Mittleman six weeks to outfit its interior. Fortunately, the property required little renovation—a new half-bath downstairs and a kitchen layout tweaking would do the trick. Punching through walls to access plumbing, the family discovered five 18th-century shoes stowed purposefully beneath the plaster. “They were individual leather shoes—not pairs,” Cathy says. Apparently an ancient English custom, “concealed shoes” were meant to both herald fertility and ward off evil. “We intend to put them back,” she says. “Future owners will either be intrigued or terrified!”

As for the interior design, Cathy’s guidelines were few. They included a preference for gray, a passion for texture, and a limited budget. “I’m all for handing it over to a designer,” she says. “I know what I like when I see it, but I have no idea how to get there.” Mittleman’s minimalist style and eye for form were the perfect match for Nash House’s confined rooms and strong Colonial bones. “I’m a massive fan of Colonial architecture, and this one—with its low, beamed ceilings and fireplaces and nooks—is unadulterated and unspoiled,” Mittleman says. “The way it sits on the property, it gets great light through every window.”

Cathy’s loose reins afforded Mittleman the freedom to source furnishings from a mix of local antiques shops and new online retail resources—a strategy that came in handy given the tight time frame and her own style philosophy. “I was very happy not to have to stick to the time period,” Mittleman says. “You don’t need butter churners and washing boards to make it feel right.”

**TOP LEFT** The Shaker simplicity of the antique bench and wood-bin lid she hung on the wall as art appealed to designer Kelly Mittleman. “It looks like a button displayed this way,” she says. The wool textile is a new Pendleton blanket. **ABOVE LEFT** New cross-back chairs from Restoration Hardware surround a circa-1850 table found in the big barn. The metal cylinder pendant (also from Restoration Hardware) was just the right height to suit the house’s low ceilings. **LEFT** Kelly Mittleman of Kelly and Co. Design had an instant affinity for this historic home and says, “I had a romance with this house from the start. I totally injected myself into it.” **OPPOSITE** In the dining room, floor-to-ceiling shelves provide an intriguing backdrop and ample display for books, collectibles, and natural treasures.





S STEAM & HOT  
WATER HEATING



**THIS PHOTO** The pickled barnwood ceiling beams and wide-planked hickory floors and mantel are all original to the property. Mittleman gave the floors a mellower matte stain to help “lift the eye” in the house’s small rooms. The house’s single central chimney opens into three fireplaces: one in the den (shown here), dining room, and living room.



**LEFT** Modern quartz countertops and simple cabinetry bring the kitchen up to date. Newspapers dated to 1881 buried beneath the kitchen wall led the Youngs to think this space was a later addition. “It may have been a summer kitchen at first,” Cathy says. **BELOW** The hefty scale of a new Restoration Hardware baker’s rack fills the kitchen wall with a built-in quality. Shelves are filled with a mix of vintage ironstone, everyday white dishware from HomeGoods, and other items. **OPPOSITE** Mittleman designed this black banquette for maximum seating in the tight kitchen. Its cushions are upholstered in ticking-stripe; the pillows are in vintage grain sack. A new white lacquer pedestal table from Rove Concepts rounds out the look.

By sticking to clean silhouettes in most seating choices, the designer was able to weave in straightforward 1800s tables, benches, and desks with seamless effect. New and old fabrics coexist in woven textures and subtle hues. Keeping compositions simple, bordering on sparse, was key. “If there is one thing I learned from Kelly and from this house, it’s that you don’t need a lot,” Cathy says. “You need a few simple, hardy pieces. The rest is nonsense.”

The finished look is comfortable, approachable, and totally appropriate. It hints at the house’s time period without giving over to it completely. Cathy is pleased. “I’m one of eight children, so my parents do have options when it comes to places to stay,” she says. “They love coming here now.”

RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 142.



“PEOPLE DON’T LOOK THE SAME TODAY AS THEY DID IN THE 1700S. THEY WERE MUCH SHORTER, MUCH SMALLER, AND FEET WERE TINIER. THIS HOUSE WAS BUILT FOR THEM.”

—HOMEOWNER CATHY YOUNG



**THIS PHOTO** The new upholstered bed was too wide to navigate the staircase's Colonial-era dimensions, so Mittleman dragged it to the barn and had its frame sawed in half. She reattached and re-covered it once it was safely situated at the top of the stairs. In a hushed neutral palette, patterned textiles on the bed and floor lend structure and interest to the room but keep the overall look clean.





**LEFT** A weathered four-drawer dresser and chunky wood-frame mirror tuck neatly inside this bedroom's existing wood framing. "The drawers work great, too," Mittleman says. "Proof that just because something's old doesn't mean it can't function." **ABOVE** The deconstructed finish, linen fabric, and caning detail of this Lillian August wing-back chair balance its new pedigree. The floor lamp is one of many modern lighting examples in the house. **BELOW** The new twin bed in the under-the-eaves bedroom features Colonial-era spooling with the bedding brightened by a vintage Kantha quilt. The desk was pulled from the property's original barn.





*Classic Comforts*



ALTHOUGH TRADITIONAL COUNTRY INTERIORS STAY TRUE TO THEIR STYLE ROOTS, TODAY'S CLASSIC HOMES FEATURE CLEANER, BRIGHTER DECORATING APPROACHES THAN IN DAYS PAST. COLLECTIBLES AND FAMILIAR FURNISHINGS STILL PLAY LEADING ROLES IN THE LOOK, BUT THEY ARE CURATED FOR THE SIMPLER WAY WE WANT TO LIVE TODAY.





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*Living*  
**HISTORY**

THIS 1767 CONNECTICUT FARMHOUSE TAKES THE PASSING OF  
TIME IN STRIDE THANKS TO THE CARE OF ITS OWNERS.

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WRITTEN BY SARAH EGGE PHOTOGRAPHED BY MICHAEL PARTENIO PRODUCED BY STACY KUNSTEL



**OPPOSITE** Extending from one side (left) of Nora and Rick Murphy's saltbox is the master suite addition, formed from a reclaimed chicken coop and its original cupola. **THIS PHOTO** A 10-foot French table does double duty most days as Nora's work surface. "I love to spread out there and enjoy the fabulous light," she says. It's joined by reproduction Windsor chairs and an 18th-century European wood mural. She balances their dark tones with plenty of light ones—the metal chandelier even got a coat of chalk paint to brighten it.



## JUST BEFORE DAWN ON A CHILLY

September morning, two trailers and a pickup truck formed an unusual parade as they headed toward Nora and Rick Murphy's house in Newtown, Connecticut. One trailer carried the crusty shell of an 1859 chicken coop; the second carried its roof. The pickup carried the coop's cupola, peeking pertly out of the bed like a keen-eyed rooster. When the caravan arrived at the Murphy house, Nora was delighted. Her Google search of "dismantled antique buildings" had yielded this treasure, which would become the next improvement of their 1767 saltbox.

Although their home had been expanded and updated over the decades, it still had only three tiny original bedrooms—one without heat. "Rick's knuckles would scrape the ceiling when he took off his T-shirt," Nora says. "We wanted a master bedroom, but we didn't want new construction."

The chicken coop was their clever solution. When they first saw the building, however, it was a mess. "It had a dirt floor, busted windows, and rotted siding. I thought, 'Oh my, it's beautiful!'" she says with a laugh. Today, anchored to the side of the house, the

structure is an airy space with white shiplap walls, exposed original beams, loads of restored windows, and a luxurious bathroom.

This merging of humble and highbrow is Nora's signature style, and one she highlights in issues of her online magazine, *Nora Murphy Country House*. Born and raised in Connecticut, she says the Yankee region inspires her. "The lifestyle is laid-back and comfortable, but there's an elegance to it—not because of fancy things, just things that are well chosen."

To Nora's way of thinking, the more scuffed, worn, utilitarian, and unique an item is, the more beauty it has. She showcases nearly illegible, weathered signs as art and dinged copper watering cans as sculpture. A corner cupboard brims with wasp nests, twigs, sea stars, and driftwood picked up during family walks.

Tucked into the woods and just a short drive from Long Island Sound, the house's surroundings are an undercurrent for Nora's interior style. Framed bird prints, seashells, potted trees, and cut flowers abound.



"Gardening is so important here. It's not showy; it's more about the act of doing it," she says. The fruits of her labors animate the grounds from early peonies through late rhododendrons. She brings the bounty indoors as well, where she and Rick cook with the vegetables and herbs, and lavender branches spill out of a harvest basket on the wall. A neutral palette and pure white walls showcase the colors from the gardens and visually open up the small rooms. The coat of paint is fairly new, applied a couple of years ago when son Conor was heading to college and Nora had the urge to refresh.

**OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT** A charcoal step-back cupboard hides modern electronics in the TV nook. Slipcovers update wing chairs the family has had for years. "The denim makes them practical," she says, "but the white makes them sophisticated." **OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT** Nora Murphy is happiest in her garden in the summer months. "There's an incredible spirit of summer that I love," she says. **ABOVE** Nora calls this smaller dining room, which is part of the original house, "the summer room" and has filled the cabinet above the mantel with a collection of bleached coral and seashells. The table is an antique Irish farm table. **LEFT** Formerly a dining room, this sunny space—with a fireplace that was once used for cooking—was shifted into what Nora calls "the family hub." She prefers fewer, impactful pieces in furnishings and accessories.



**LEFT** An antique barn-red shelf from Pennsylvania holds a collection of new mismatched white dinnerware Nora picks up at discount housewares stores.

**ABOVE** "I love the scale and graphic nature of this hand-lettered, old sign," says Nora, who found it at the Elephant's Trunk Flea Market in New Milford, Connecticut.

**BELOW** Part of an addition to the house, this hallway is dubbed "the gallery." Nora uses the space to showcase rotating displays of seasonal flowers and utilitarian collectibles. **OPPOSITE** The kitchen, which is a recent addition, blends with the house thanks to salvaged ceiling beams from the property's barn. To give the 1970s golden-oak floor an aged look, Nora had it painted in a checkerboard motif and lets foot traffic naturally wear the paint away.

"I started to feel differently about our home and the way we were using it. We painted every wall, moved every stick of furniture, and edited up a storm," she says. "I sold things I didn't need anymore and used Annie Sloan chalk paint to give some things a new look."

The house's ability to embrace change pleases Nora, who loves shifting things around to reflect the seasons. For the winter months, she adds a boxwood wreath to bleached antlers hanging in the TV room. In the summer, a beloved print of crabs comes out of storage. "I feel like the house will continually evolve," she says. "I hope it does because I don't like anything static. It's never too late to reinvent your house." ❧

RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 142.









**ABOVE** Formerly orange, the 1800s dry sink was treated to a coat of French Canvas by Benjamin Moore before Nora had it fitted with two new sinks and plumbing. She chose unfinished brass faucets, which will tarnish naturally over time. The steel mirror frame was once a window casement from the Flatiron Building in Manhattan. "I saved for a year to buy that mirror because I knew it was the perfect thing," Nora says. **OPPOSITE** In a completely refurbished 19th-century chicken coop, the master bedroom is serene and inviting. Chunky proportions modernize the look of the poster bed from Ethan Allen, where Nora advises as creative director. She combines new and vintage linens to dress it. Above it, she mounted antique bird engravings from Paris.




→ *Colonial*  
**COMFORT**

A LOVER OF EARLY NEW ENGLAND ARCHITECTURE FINDS THE HOUSE OF HIS DREAMS HIDING DOWN THE STREET—AND MAKES IT A REALITY.

WRITTEN BY SHAILA WUNDERLICH

PHOTOGRAPHED BY TRIA GIOVAN

PRODUCED BY ANNA MOLVIK



**R**OB COBURN DIDN'T HAVE HIGH HOPES FOR THE property his real estate agent was showing him that day in 2009. The abandoned old house had always seemed a bit Addams Family-ish, with its gloomy facade, sprawling acreage, and forest of trees and growth that nearly swallowed the house from view. But it was just a short walk up the street from his own Southampton, New York, house, he says, "and, truthfully, I was curious to see inside."

One step into the foyer, with its steep, winding staircase, and a quick pan around the squared-off rooms and their rough-hewn ceiling beams and centrally located fireplaces, Rob realized this place was going to be nothing like he imagined. What he had here was a genuine, centuries-old, post-and-beam Colonial. "It was definitely an aha moment," says Rob, whose love of Colonial architecture dates to his childhood summers spent visiting his great aunt's 1714 saltbox. At the time, in a Colonial of his own and entertaining his nieces and nephews, he was on the hunt for a bigger house to accommodate their growing numbers and frequent visits.

Two weeks later, the house was his. Six months later, renovations began to bring the 1742 house into the 21st century and into compliance with the village's strict architectural code. Along with plumbing and electrical updates, the existing kitchen (a 19th-century add-on) had to be removed and replaced with a two-story addition that included a new kitchen, seating area, office, and master suite. The 2,500-square-foot addition almost doubled the size of the house.

The bathrooms required sprucing up, as did the random-width white pine floors and chestnut and red oak ceiling beams. A local carpenter spent four months sanding, scrubbing, and refinishing the abundance of beams to their current warm, mellow patina. Rob considers these early renovations "musts." The second round, which kicked off 10 years later, was more elective in nature. "I had made some mistakes the first time through," Rob says. "Certain rooms, especially the living and piano rooms, weren't being used and were dying off as a result."

Husband Averitt Buttry was in residence at this point, and his newcomer eyes offered a fresh take on what the house needed. "The

**LEFT** A large windstorm in Alaska led to the increased availability of yellow cedar wood, used to craft the shingles on the house's exterior. Many houses of this time period were clad in Atlantic white cedar, an over-harvested, hard-to-find tree. Both cedars weather to the pale gray shade associated with New England's coastal Colonials.



living room was long and narrow with multiple entries and exits,” Averitt says. “The most we could do was float furniture in the middle of the room, which accommodated only eight or nine guests, tops.”

Step one was to flip the locations of the dining and living rooms so that a long harvest dining table was the more appropriate anchor in the center of the narrow room. Next they widened the passage between the dining and piano areas to encourage room-to-room flow. “One of the simplest and most effective things we did was put jute area rugs in almost every room,” Rob says. “It tied it all together.”

Finally, fresh coats of soft, pale colors on the walls and new upholstered headboards in the bedrooms provided the perfect amount of comfort and polish. “Yes, this is a historical house,” Rob says. “But at the end of the day we have to live here, too.”

RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 142.

**ABOVE** The dining room is the largest room in the original floor plan. Homeowner Rob Coburn initially used the space as the house’s living room, but its narrow dimensions and multiple doors and entryways made it difficult to furnish. **OPPOSITE, BOTTOM LEFT** Rob Coburn (left), Averitt Buttry, and dog Pippi Longstocking relax on the deck of their renovated Georgian-style house in Southampton, New York.



**LEFT** Rob suspects this library might have been originally used as a greenhouse or nursery by an earlier homeowner who ran a nursery business from the property. The bookshelves were incorporated during the 2009 renovations and given a faux bois paint finish.

**BELOW** The 1927 Steinway was a gift to Rob's great-grandmother from her parents. The midcentury modern chairs were lacquered and reupholstered in a khaki twill.







THIS PHOTO Artist Lorraine Volz spent months painting the scenic murals on walls in the living and piano rooms. Each wall represents coastal and farm landscapes surrounding the house. The midcentury British leather sofa was purchased online in a Christie's Interiors auction. The coffee table and mohair chairs are reproductions; the curvy wood stools were made in the 1960s from the rope guides on an old ship.



**ABOVE** Light paint colors and surfaces keep the north-facing kitchen from getting too dark through New England's gloomy winter months. Rob initially envisioned a dark soapstone for his apron-front farm sink, but after seeing how beautiful the island's Indiana limestone looked, he decided to carry that material over to the sink. **RIGHT** The "L" created by the junction of the original house with the addition provided a perfect private nook to install a patio. The teak furnishings stand up to year-round weathering. **OPPOSITE** Rob and Averitt re-covered their barstools in a rose suede for a pop of color in the neutral kitchen.





## Party Planning

*Although charming, the small rooms of traditional Colonial architecture can crimp entertaining. Veteran hosts Rob Coburn and Averitt Buttry keep the party going with these tips.*

**SPREAD THE MENU:** Serve hors d'oeuvres in the kitchen, dinner in the dining room, and dessert on the patio to prevent stagnant flow.

**CONSIDER THE BAR A BEACON:** People tend to congregate around the bar, so station yours accordingly. Two bars in separate rooms help, as does placing one of them in a tight area to encourage in-and-out movement.

**PUT GUESTS TO WORK:** Rob says, "Especially for casual get-togethers, we will have one or two friends at the bar making drinks and another couple in the kitchen helping prepare dinner."

**USE YOUR LIGHTING:** Rob and Averitt have dimmers on all lights and adjust them according to where they want guests to go. "We can feature certain rooms, which serves as a sort of visual cue," Rob says.

**JUST JUTE IT:** Rob was visiting an old, small London hotel when he noticed how their use of jute rugs throughout seemed to open the floor plan and provide visual continuity—along with party-proof durability. "I came home and ordered them for the whole house," he says.





**ABOVE** Rob had searched high and low for a 5x10-foot vintage woven rug with touches of orange. He found “the” one after strolling into a going-out-of-business auction of a Manhattan carpentry house. “It was the last item of the day; the only ones bidding on it were me and actress Dianne Wiest,” Rob says. **OPPOSITE** The wrought-iron bed and curvy-pedastaled, satinwood and ebony side tables are new pieces made to look period-appropriate. The upholstered chair is a hand-me-down from Rob’s mother, who received it in college from her aunt. Its 1975 pale green velvet covering held up beautifully through the years. “It still looks new,” Rob says.

**RIGHT** The expansive upstairs master suite was added during the 2009 two-story renovation. A new Pendleton blanket covers a bed custom-designed by Manhattan interior designer Kyle Wells.

**BELOW** In the sitting area at the foot of the bed, reclaimed white pine barnwood creates a warm, casual fireplace wall. Beneath the built-in window seat is storage for firewood.

**OPPOSITE** The stand-alone pool house was once used as a storage shed. Rob installed the pool when he bought the house.





“WE LIVE IN THIS HOUSE,  
WE OWN IT, IT’S OURS.  
BUT WE ALSO FEEL LIKE ITS  
STEWARDS. GOD WILLING,  
IT WILL EXIST ANOTHER 200  
YEARS AFTER WE’RE GONE.  
THAT’S THE REASON WE  
WANTED TO DO IT RIGHT.”

—HOMEOWNER ROB COBURN



*Set in*  
**STONE**

A HISTORIC MARYLAND STONE HOME GETS A  
21ST-CENTURY MAKEOVER WHILE RETAINING  
PLENTY OF FARMHOUSE CHARM.

WRITTEN BY DEBRA ENGLE PHOTOGRAPHED BY HELEN NORMAN PRODUCED BY JANNA LUFKIN



OPPOSITE A Meg Page original painting hangs above a favorite jelly cupboard and a collection of homeowner Helen Norman's treasured pottery, including pour bowls and antique crocks. THIS PHOTO Found in the basement of the original house, a soapstone sink is ideal for indoor gardening. The green vintage rack holds Helen's collection of flower frogs and other potting paraphernalia.



**H**ELEN NORMAN ALWAYS WANTED TO live in a stone house. Growing up in a home from the 1700s surrounded by farm country, she had long dreamed of finding her own historic place and a few rural acres—ideally, it would be a neat little home on a manageable property.

That was before 130 acres became available next to her brother's farm. Helen, a photographer, and her husband, Mark Elmore, loved the beauty of the land, complete with the requisite stone house and its own small village of outbuildings. But there was one problem—the house was falling down.

Still in its original condition, the 1850s house had no kitchen and no real bathroom—not the best scenario for a couple with a toddler and another baby on the way. But Helen and Mark bought it anyway, envisioning what it could be rather than what it was.

The original 1,100-square-foot house came with some good news, including pine floors that sprang to life when refinished and windows recessed in curved plaster, a feature Helen has never seen elsewhere. After making the home livable, the couple decided



to add on, enlarging the tiny space for their two growing boys.

By the time they started the addition, they'd bought 120 tons of fieldstone from a local resident to use for the foundation. An exact match to the house, it creates a seamless transition from old to new. "The original house is small," Helen says, "but we wanted it to be a hero, with the addition telescoping out from it."

More than doubling the size of the house meant making strategic decisions. The couple removed staircases from the living room, replacing them with built-in shelves and cabinets neighboring the fireplace. They also preserved original stone walls, which lend rich texture and deep warmth to the master bedroom, garden room, and seating area off the kitchen.

To keep the farmhouse light and open, Helen covered furniture and painted most of the rooms in her favorite color, white, then brought in additional



hues with vintage rugs, artwork, fabrics, and pillows from a friend, interior designer Lauren Liess. Even her collections are calming and mostly white, including an extensive one of ironstone.

Grain sacks, cotton duck fabric, and heavy drop cloths cover pillows and chairs, protecting furniture—especially from the couple's dog, Grizzly—and keeping the overall feeling of the house casual. "My total fabric cost for the whole house was probably \$125," Helen says. "I'd rather buy a great painting than spend a lot of money on upholstery fabric."

Helen carries that practical attitude into her garden room, a favorite spot where she can fulfill her love of

**OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT** Cushions on an old iron daybed and painted wrought-iron chairs create a comfy sitting area on the front porch. Curtains define the space and shade the morning sun. **OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT** Sited on a hillside, the stone house came with outbuildings, including a barn and smokehouse. **ABOVE** The current dining room served as the home's original kitchen and includes a fireplace and built-ins. China from Helen's mom inspired the French blue of the cupboard doors. A modern chandelier lends an industrial touch over an 18th-century refectory table. **LEFT** The living room offers comfy respite with slipcovered furniture and a needlepoint rug bound in velvet. "I like the back and forth of a formal rug with grain sack pillows," Helen says.



growing things all year round. The results show up throughout the house in small topiaries and fresh pots of herbs. “I like a touch of something living in every room,” she says.

Unquestionably, Helen and Mark brought back life and dignity to their falling down old home. “It’s hard to find farms where all the buildings haven’t been sided in vinyl or aluminum,” Helen says. But despite the condition of the house when they first saw it, they were happy they focused on its potential. “We didn’t have to undo bad things,” she says. “We just had to put it back together.”

RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 142.

**ABOVE** Open shelving and a custom-built island give the hardworking kitchen vintage character. **OPPOSITE, BOTTOM LEFT** In an eating area off the kitchen, Meg Page’s watercolor renditions of Helen’s heirloom peonies create the illusion of extra windows. A wing chair slipcovered in Belgian linen adds comfort and a soft silhouette to the dining table, preventing the grouping from becoming too stark and spindly.



**LEFT** Distressed brass faucets and hoses create a sculptural quality for the double sink. "We eat a lot of spinach," Helen says, "and you need a double sink to wash it." **BELOW** Open shelves hold items that Helen uses on a regular basis. "If I had things closed in cupboards, I wouldn't be able to find anything," she says. Simple shelf brackets were built on site. Kitchen counters are made from honed Carrara marble.



“MY FAVORITE COLOR HAS ALWAYS BEEN WHITE. I LIKE BRIGHT WALL COLOR AT OTHER PEOPLE’S HOUSES, BUT I WOULD WAKE UP IN THE MORNING AND HATE IT IN MY OWN HOUSE.”

—HOMEOWNER HELEN NORMAN





**LEFT** Splashes of blue and layers of bedding on a stately four-poster give the master bedroom a regal touch. Nature-inspired prints and patterns are at home in the farm setting. **BELOW** Helen hired an upholsterer to cover an heirloom sofa in heavy drop cloth fabric. A hoop needle and heavy thread were used to sew the fabric directly over the previous upholstery. An exterior stone wall from the original house now adds a focal point interior wall to the master bedroom addition. An antique grain sack with surprisingly elegant typography makes an artful, textural wall hanging.



**RIGHT** A love of nature inspired the choice of foliage motifs in the guest room's prints and bedspread. The green stool at the foot of the bed adds a pop of fern-fresh color. **BELOW RIGHT** Carrara marble countertops for the master bath's twin sinks inspired the smoky blue wall color. Vintage-style beaded board and painted wood floors create cottage charm. **BELOW LEFT** An awkward space where a staircase used to be becomes a tucked-in desk with storage underneath.





**ABOVE** Helen layers Oriental rugs over inexpensive sisal to add texture to the room. Nubby textiles contrast with the cool metallic stool and zinc tabletop. **ABOVE RIGHT** A claw-foot tub with nickel-plated feet required extra structural reinforcement to handle the weight. A Carrara marble shelf for toiletries turns the cozy alcove into a perfect spot for soaking. **RIGHT** Detailed millwork matches the home's original trim. Helen stripped and waxed the deep pine windowsills, which provide natural display space for her topiaries.



## Collecting Ironstone

*White ironstone is loved by collectors, like Helen Norman, for its quiet charm and American history.*

**WHAT IT IS:** An earthenware with a hard glaze that was imported from England to the New World in the mid-1800s. Called the “poor man’s porcelain,” it was durable, affordable, and plentiful for rural and frontier folks.

**WHY COLLECT IT:** White ironstone is a classic collectible that is seeing a resurgence as it becomes, in collector speak, “shopped out.” Many plain-design and slightly damaged pieces can be found for less than \$50; pristine examples of unusual items and designs are priced at more than \$100.

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** The best place to find ironstone at affordable price points is a rural or small town auction. Considered everyday ware, these are likely well-used pieces, but fine cracks in the glazing or a few chips only add to the appeal to buyers who appreciate patina.

**HOW TO DISPLAY IT:** Mass your pieces on open shelving or in cupboards, as Helen does. Simple and white, the ironstone won’t add visual clutter—just charm and history.



GET THE LOOK



# RESOURCES

CONTACT THESE DESIGN PROFESSIONALS FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR SERVICES OR PRODUCTS.

## GETTING PERSONAL

PAGES 14–25

To learn more about Sandra Cavallo's style, visit *Old Silver Shed* on Instagram at #oldsilvershed and by email: [sandramcavallo@gmail.com](mailto:sandramcavallo@gmail.com).

## TREASURE TROVE

PAGES 26–33

Visit Pam Robinson's shop, *Red Ticking*, 2802 E. Madison St., Seattle, WA 98112; 206/322-9890; or online at [redticking.com](http://redticking.com).

## FAMILY FOCUS

PAGES 34–41

**Architecture:** Matt Cramer, Hutker Architects, 79 Beach Rd., P.O. Box 2347, Vineyard Haven, MA 02568; 508/693-3344; [hutkerarchitects.com](http://hutkerarchitects.com).

## NATURE MADE

PAGES 44–53

Visit Joanna Seitz's store and interior design service at *J. Seitz & Company*, 9 E. Shore Rd., New Preston, CT 06777; 860/868-0119; or online at [jseitz.com](http://jseitz.com).

**Architecture:** Peter Kurt Woerner, 44 Kendall St., New Haven, CT 06512; 203/466-1923.

## CURIOUS COTTAGE

PAGES 54–61

**Design/Build:** Clark Collins, Collins Design & Development, 1999 S. Coast Hwy., Suite 1, Laguna Beach, CA 92651; 949/494-5255; [clark@collinsone.net](mailto:clark@collinsone.net).

## TRUE GRIT

PAGES 62–69

**Architecture:** David Stocker, Stocker Hoestery Montenegro Architects, 4514 Travis St., Suite 302, Dallas, TX 75205; 214/252-3830; [shmarchitects.com](http://shmarchitects.com).

## FARMHOUSE FRESH

PAGES 70–79

Visit *Farmhouse Pottery*, 1837 W. Woodstock Rd. (Rte. 4), Woodstock, VT 05091; 802/774-8373; or online at [farmhousepottery.com](http://farmhousepottery.com).

## OPEN INVITATION

PAGES 82–89

**Interior design:** Kelly Mittleman, Kelly and Co. Design, Redding, Connecticut; 203/247-3951; [kellyandcodesign.com](http://kellyandcodesign.com).

**Architecture:** Mark Finlay, Mark P. Finlay Architects, 96 Old Post Rd., Suite 200, Southport, CT 06890; 203/254-2388; [markfinlay.com](http://markfinlay.com).



## ECLECTIC NEST

PAGES 90–99

**Interior design:** Lithe Sebesta, Lithe Sebesta Decor + Design, New York City; 917/693-9901; [lithebesta.com](http://lithebesta.com).

**Custom woodworking** in collaboration with homeowner: Steffen Hyder; [steffenhyder.com](http://steffenhyder.com).

**Welding** in collaboration with homeowner: Jeffrey Budd, Budd Built Iron Works, 1400, Stop 8, State Rte. 23, Hillsdale, NY 12529; 518/325-3912; [buddbuiltironworks.com](http://buddbuiltironworks.com).

## PAST FORWARD

PAGES 100–109

**Interior design:** Kelly Mittleman, Kelly and Co. Design, Redding, Connecticut; 203/247-3951; [kellyandcodesign.com](http://kellyandcodesign.com).

## LIVING HISTORY

PAGES 112–119

*Read Nora Murphy's online magazine and blog and watch instructional videos of her creations on her website, Nora Murphy Country House, at [noramurphycountryhouse.com](http://noramurphycountryhouse.com).*

## COLONIAL COMFORT

PAGES 120–131

**Renovation architecture:** Dudley Cannada, Washington, D.C.; 202/333-2727; [cannadades@aol.com](mailto:cannadades@aol.com).

## SET IN STONE

PAGES 132–141

**Kitchen island design:** Hoffman & Woodward, 412 W. King St., East Berlin, PA 17316; 717/259-7676; [hoffmanwoodward.com](http://hoffmanwoodward.com).

**Interior design** in collaboration with homeowner: Lauren Liess, Lauren Liess & Co., Washington, DC; 571/926-7825; [laurenliess.com](http://laurenliess.com).



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FINDING BEAUTY IN  
THE HUMBLEST THINGS  
MAKES HOME HAPPY  
AND LIFE LOVELY.”

—LOUISA MAY ALCOTT



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