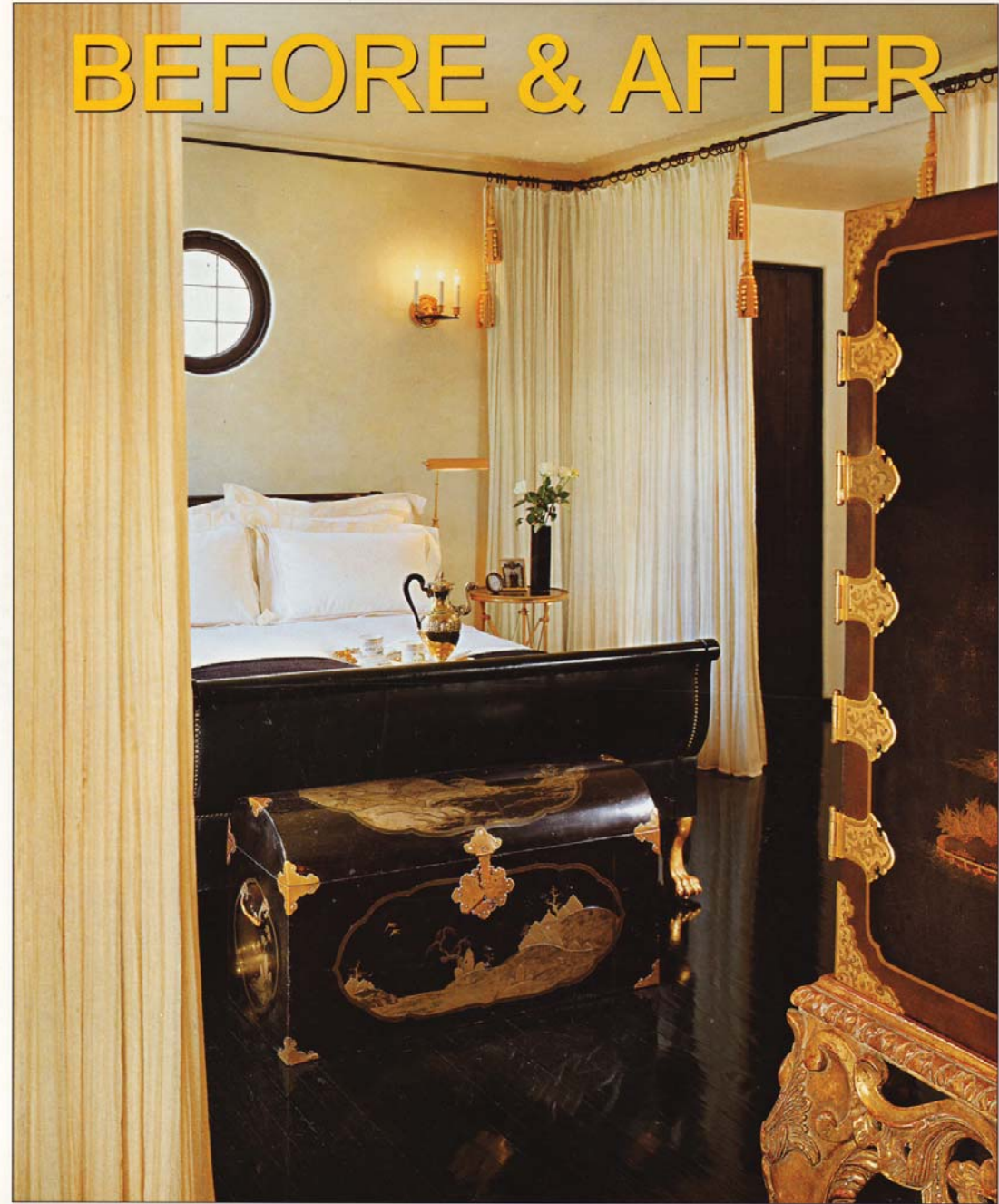


## BEFORE & AFTER



Interior Design by James David Petersen/Text by Steven M.L. Aronson  
After Photography by Durston Saylor

# PAST MADE PRESENT IN VERMONT

IMBUING A RAMBLING FAMILY REFUGE WITH  
TRADITIONAL COMFORTS



BEFORE



AFTER

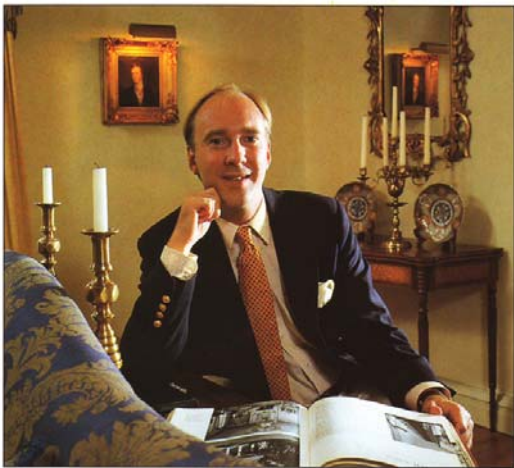
A San Francisco couple—a pioneering Silicon Valley entrepreneur and his psychiatrist wife—rented one summer in the garden of salience that is southern Vermont and then immediately

Designer James D. Petersen renovated a New England Colonial in southern Vermont to form “a unified whole.” LEFT: The house comprises a 1777 main block, a room added in 1885 and a wing from 1928. BELOW: Architect William C. Badger reorganized the fenestrations.

started looking for a house there. “Vermont has the perfect balance: beauty, simplicity and deep-rooted tradition,” explains the wife. To begin with, they purchased a small early-nineteenth-century saltbox—followed a few years later by a white clapboard New England Colonial directly across the street (they decided to keep the saltbox to take a load off the Colonial when their three growing children had friends of their own to stay). “We

Set in the oldest part of the house, the entrance hall features such original details as leaded windows and a fanlight. Petersen stabilized the floors throughout and replaced the 1920s moldings. The Chippendale table is circa 1770. Brunschwig & Fils wallcovering. Stark carpet.





"I wanted to give my clients a haven," says Petersen (above). **BELOW:** The living room had dark floors and white walls. **RIGHT:** A. B. Shute's circa 1860 river scene joins

an American camelback settee and a circa 1790 English tea table. Old World Weavers slipper chair and settee fabrics. Brunschwig & Fils yellow linen damask.



BEFORE

call them the Little House and the Big House," she says. The Big House is anything but misnamed: Sequestered on seven acres behind a distinctive scalloped picket fence and holding down a full corner of the village's main street, it boasts something on the order of thirty rooms. The main block of the house was built in 1777 as a tavern and comprises what is now the entrance hall, living room, library and a passel of guest bedrooms; a big dining room was added in 1885 and a kitchen-and-servants' wing in 1928.

That today the house looks practically seamless is an achievement commensurate with the scope of the couple's endeavor. After shortening up the foundations, putting on a new slate-shingle roof, repointing all the chimneys and exterior masonry and—with the help of local architect William C. Badger—reconciling the second-story casement windows to conform aesthetically to the original double-hung six-over-six first-floor windows, they were ready to commit themselves to the heart of the matter. "We weren't



AFTER



AFTER



BEFORE

ABOVE: The dining room, added in 1885. LEFT: Murals hand-painted by the Elisa Stencil Studio evoke 18th-century wallpaper rooms in the Northeast. Petersen lowered the chair rail to lend a sense of height to the 7'11" ceiling. The mahogany table is circa 1810. Stark sisal carpet.

tails that were true to the period and that had already stood the test of time."

The couple turned to interior designer James D. Petersen, who, after years of working for Mark Hampton, had opened an office of his own in Manhattan. "This house was the genuine article and even of some historic importance," he observes. "Throughout the project I was inspired by the simply extraordinary events that had occurred in the region at the time the main part of the house was built—the Green Mountain Boys who were thinking in terms of 'another beautiful destination' or 'a second home,'" the wife says. "It was the very essence of home that we wanted people to experience when they came here. We felt we were creating a homestead for ourselves. And of course we were trying to create something enduring with the decorating too—we needed the materials and colors to last, because I certainly didn't want to have to do this again," she laughs. "To me, 'enduring' meant design elements that I wouldn't get tired of and architectural de-

sign elements that were true to the period and that had already stood the test of time."

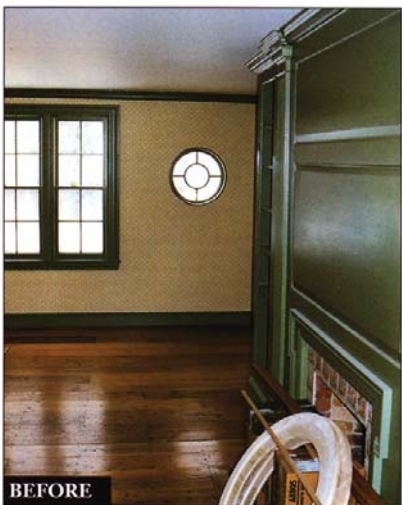
BELOW: A covered porch once ran 50 feet along the garden façade. FOLLOWING PAGES: Petersen enclosed the porch and created a garden entrance, while extending the kitchen and family room. Circa 1825 Hitchcock chairs surround a circa 1830 chestnut harvest table in the kitchen.



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**LEFT:** A servant's entrance and mudroom were merged into the family room. **BELOW:** Amid the mix of furnishings are circa 1870s American mahogany chairs. Decorators Walk chair and drapery print. Schumacher ottoman fabric. Scalamandré wallcovering. Elizabeth Eakins rug.

based less than a mile away helped capture Fort Ticonderoga. My marching orders from the clients were to enhance the existing character and feeling of the house."

To impose order on the somewhat chaotic 1928 wing, the designer annexed all of an awkwardly long porch and enclosed it with three symmetrical sets of French doors (and beyond them, spanning their width, a terrace of Ver-

mont Danby marble). The space thus gained was partitioned out to make a larger family room and a bigger kitchen as well as a new entrance hall/mudroom on the garden façade. Just overhead, he tore out a row of small guest bedrooms and a bath in order to develop a more commodious master suite, complete with his-and-her dressing rooms. At the same time he put in five additional baths.

Since the plan called for the first floor to be kept visually open for parties and general circulation, Petersen designed—to run counter to an existing enfilade with an east-west axis—an enfilade unfolding in a north-south

direction from the dining room through the mudroom and the kitchen and terminating at a pair of French doors at the far end of the family room. He also replaced the 1920s stock moldings in the house with attenuated Federal-style ones that had greater projection than height, playing down the low Colonial ceilings. Petersen employed yet another clever optical effect by installing lower-than-usual chair rails.

As soon as the interior detailing had been completed, all the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tables, chairs, secretaries, landscape paintings and porcelain that the clients had painstakingly col-

lected—many of them with the help of a San Francisco antiques dealer friend, Howard Settle—could be conveyed from California to the more fitting milieu of Vermont. Those antiques would presently be supplemented by others acquired with specific rooms in mind.

What basically remained for the designer to do was to strike the right balance be-

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**RIGHT:** Petersen transformed a row of unusually shaped bedrooms in the 1928 block into the master suite. **BELOW:** A circa 1760 New England highboy and a George III side chair are among the antiques in the master bedroom. The canopy print is from Whittaker & Woods.

