

# New England Home

CELEBRATING FINE DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

MARCH/APRIL 2007

## SPRING COLOR

SIX NEW ENGLAND DESIGNERS  
SHOW HOW RICH, VIBRANT HUES  
CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

## RIGHTING HISTORY

A once-grand old house in Beverly, Massachusetts, gets its dignity back, and its happy owners get a home that satisfies their desire for both everyday ease and understated elegance.

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THE OWNERS DISCOVERED THIS ANTIQUE PORTRAIT OF AN UNKNOWN MAN AT AN ESTATE SALE IN CALIFORNIA. IT IS JUST ONE OF MANY UNIQUE PIECES ADORNING THE LIVING ROOM, THE MORE FORMAL OF THE HOME'S SITTING ROOMS. RIGHT: DESIGNER JODY TRAIL AND HER CLIENT LINDA WILBURN WITH GRACE AND SCOOTER.



## RIGHTING HISTORY

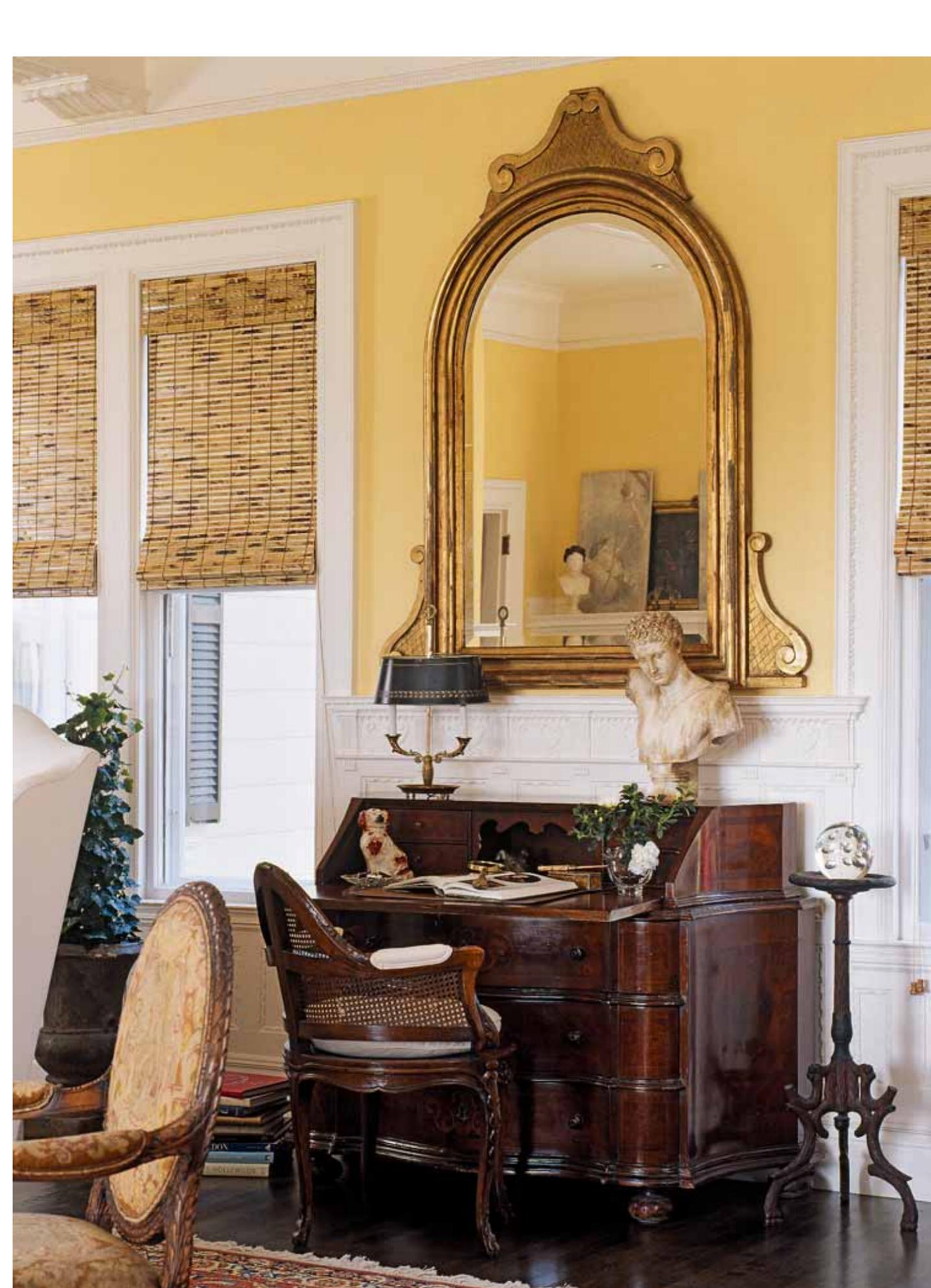
*A once-grand old house in Beverly, Massachusetts, gets its dignity back, and its happy owners get a home that satisfies their desire for both everyday ease and understated elegance.*

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CONSTRUCTION: SILVA BROTHERS CONSTRUCTION



Just as some people are instinctively drawn to their soul mates, Linda Wilburn gets a feeling about houses. It's a gut reaction, one that delivers a verdict of good, bad or indifferent as soon as she walks through a front door. It has helped her and her husband, Tom, select seven perfectly comfortable homes during their marriage. But when they walked into the eighth—a two-story, nineteenth-century house on an oceanfront lot in Beverly—she knew they had stumbled across something truly special. | “From the very first time, it just felt good,” Linda says. “This house had every feature that we liked. We loved the tall ceilings, all this incredible molding, the wonderful fireplaces and the back porch to sit on and look out over the water.” | For all that was just right about the home, there also was a lot that needed fixing. The 1880 house had been neglected through the years, resulting in sagging walls, rotting floors

THE LIVING ROOM'S BUILT-IN BOOKSHELVES HAD TO BE REMOVED WHEN CONTRACTORS REFRAMED THE ENTIRE FIRST FLOOR, BUT THEIR ORNATE MOLDINGS WERE CAREFULLY PRESERVED. RIGHT: TRAIL INCLUDED A DESK AMONG THE LIVING ROOM FURNISHINGS FOR A CASUAL TOUCH.



## The interior design suits the home's elegance, while reflecting the couple's relaxed lifestyle.

and overall disrepair. Tom and Linda wanted to nurse it around to its former grandeur. "We didn't want to change the house," Tom says. "We just wanted to get it back the way it was originally and have it last for another 100 years or so."

They enlisted Silva Brothers Construction of Lexington, Massachusetts, to help meet that challenge. Contractor Charlie Silva and his crew handled all of the home's structural renovations, which, thanks to a garden planted against the house by a previous owner, turned out to be extensive. "The garden put dirt against the wood, and that's what started the deterioration of the whole back of the house," Silva explains. "We had to replace sixty to eighty feet of sill."

Silva Brothers reframed the entire first floor and part of the second. They also installed new heating and air conditioning systems and plumbing and rewired the entire house.

Today the eleven-room house barely shows signs of its dramatic rehabilitation. Silva Brothers installed modern systems, such as radiant heat, that could be hidden within the structure of the house. The crew restored existing woodwork and preserved many original fixtures, including the claw-foot tub in the master bath. Now, stepping into the house is like going back to an earlier era, without giving up the comforts of the present.

**S**udbury-based designer Jody Trail worked with the Wilburns to create an interior that suits the home's elegance while reflecting the couple's relaxed lifestyle. The living room, for example, feels comfortable and inviting even with its ornate moldings and wainscoting, stately fireplace and antique furnishings. Here, a window seat between two original built-in bookshelves has become one of Linda's favorite spots to curl up with a book and her dogs, Grace and Scooter.

Linda says she deliberately avoided an overly formal



look. "I didn't want that because it isn't us," she explains. "There isn't anywhere you can go in the house where you can't sit down and put your feet up on something. And there's nothing the dogs can't get on."

"Even if there was, they'd get on it anyway," she adds with a laugh.

Having helped the couple decorate three other houses, Trail knew that hand-painted furniture, custom pieces and collectibles—such as the Staffordshire dogs that guard several rooms—would be on the Wilburns' menu of furnishings. "They have a wonderful eye for unusual pieces," Trail says. "You see everything from seashells to birdcages to unusual artwork. Some pieces don't even say who the artist is, but each has an unusual statement."

The grandness of the house, with its ten- and eleven-foot ceilings, allows for large-scale pieces, such as the living



LEFT: THE C2 COLOR VROOM BRINGS DEPTH TO A SMALL POWDER ROOM. THIS PAGE: THE DINING CHAIRS WERE PAINTED BY ESSEX, MASSACHUSETTS, ARTIST MARTHA BANNON. THE ANTIQUE MIRROR AND CHANDELIER ARE FROM NEIL DEVLIN ANTIQUES IN SUDBURY, MASSACHUSETTS, ONE OF LINDA'S FAVORITE PLACES TO SHOP.



When they walked into the nineteenth-century house on an oceanfront lot, they knew that they had walked into something truly special.



LEFT: THE GRANDNESS OF THE HOUSE ALLOWS FOR THE USE OF OVERSCALE PIECES, LIKE THE ANTIQUE LIBRARY TABLE AND MIRROR IN THE FOYER. THIS PAGE: THE HOMEOWNER FOUND THE PAINTING OF A FARMER, BY AN UNKNOWN RUSSIAN ARTIST, AT A GALLERY IN SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO.

TOM WILBURN DESIGNED THE CABINETS IN THEIR COUNTRY-STYLE KITCHEN ONLINE THROUGH NEW HAMPSHIRE-BASED CROWN POINT CABINETRY. RIGHT: CAREFULLY SELECTED FURNISHINGS AND COLORS, LIKE THE PRATT AND LAMBERT KODIAK GRAY IN THE MASTER BATH, HELP TO BRING THE OUTSIDE ENVIRONMENT IN.



## Linda deliberately avoided an overly formal look. “I didn’t want that because it isn’t us.”

room’s vintage white sofas and an over-size antique Venetian glass chandelier. Walls of pale yellow and draperies of broad-striped yellow and white silk provide a quiet backdrop for the mix of fabrics, patterns and materials Trail brought to the room.

The designer’s work on the living room won her a Luxury Living Award in 2006, and the room’s atmosphere of casual elegance permeates the entire house. A neutral palette supplemented with yellows, blues and reds helps bring the outside environment indoors. In the downstairs library/media room, for example, midnight blue walls provide a complementary frame for the picturesque neighborhood view out the large, front-facing windows. And the reddish tone in the adjacent powder room—a C2 color called Vroom—accents the natural colors just outside.

**T**he country-style kitchen/family room is, with its comfortable, red-patterned couches, a more casual lounging area than the living room. But the antique wooden end tables and unique collectibles, like the aged mirror above the fireplace, still reflect the owners’ sophistication and love for all things old. During the renovation process, the Wilburns updated the kitchen with a new stove and granite countertops. But when it came to the painted wood cabinetry, which Tom designed online through the New Hampshire-based company Crown Point Cabinetry, they wanted to stay true to the period. “It has some wavy glass in it like the old glass was,” Tom explains. “The way it was built and designed, it’s probably not unlike what they used in 1880.”

Upstairs, the design is simple and uncluttered. Trail used light, airy colors and antique furnishings in the guest bedrooms, letting the views from generous windows speak for themselves. Only in the master bedroom does a darker, chocolate-color paint appear, creating a delicious contrast to white furnishings and cabinetry.



The designer believes this home is still very much a work in progress. “Linda will always be changing,” Trail says. Her client would hardly disagree. As she’s gotten to know her home better, Linda has already repainted the dining room, once a deep red, in a warmer color by C2 called Palomino. And every couple of days or so, an object may shift from one room to another as the Wilburns get a feel for how they want to live.

In the downstairs hall, just outside the powder room, sits one decoration the owners can’t move. It’s a brightly colored “rug,” painted on the floor by an artist friend of a previous owner, who loved the actual rug so much, she wanted it to last forever. Now, thanks to the new structure supporting it and the Wilburns’ devotion to the past, she might just get her wish. **NEH**

**NOTE** For more about *New England Home*, visit [www.nehomemag.com](http://www.nehomemag.com).