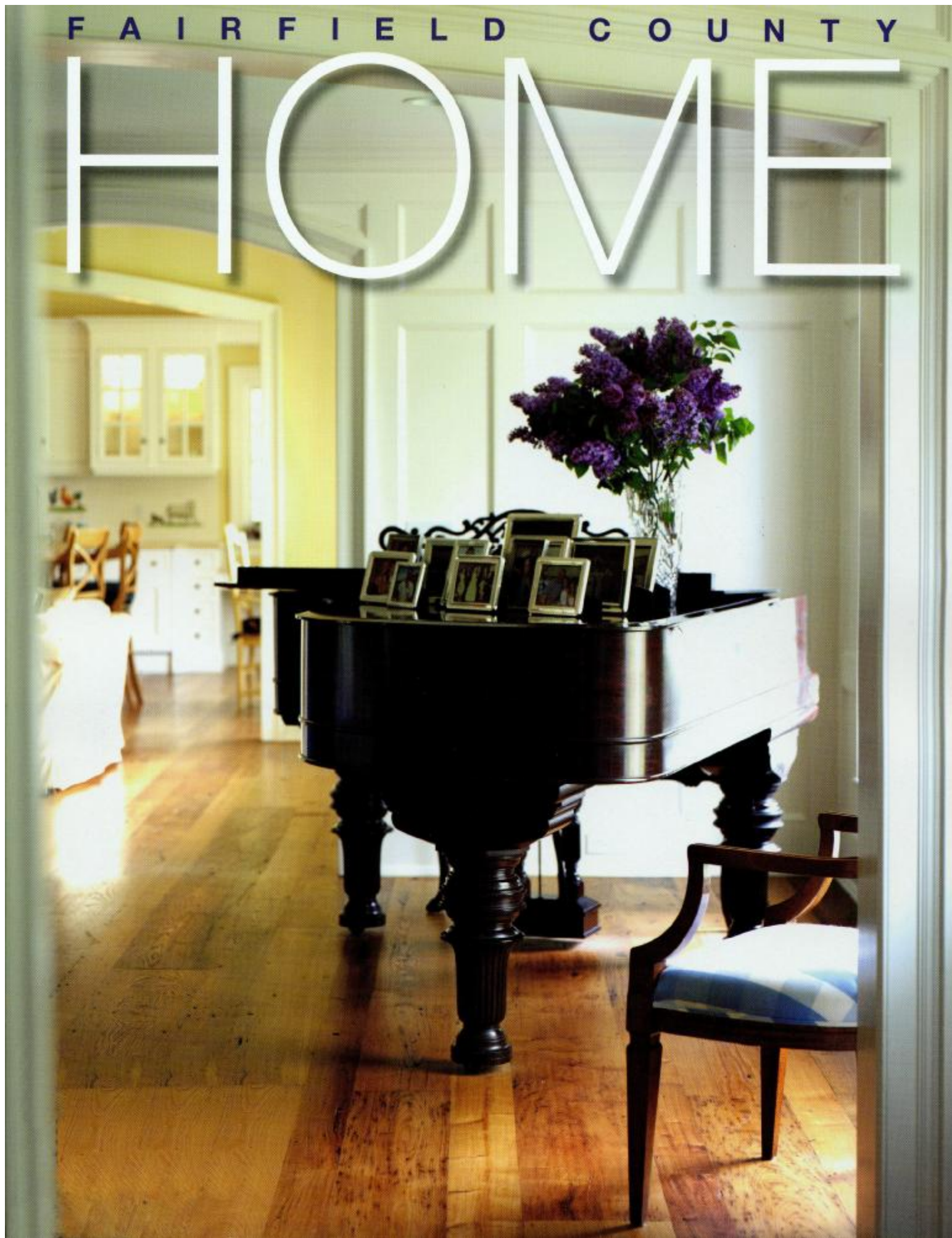
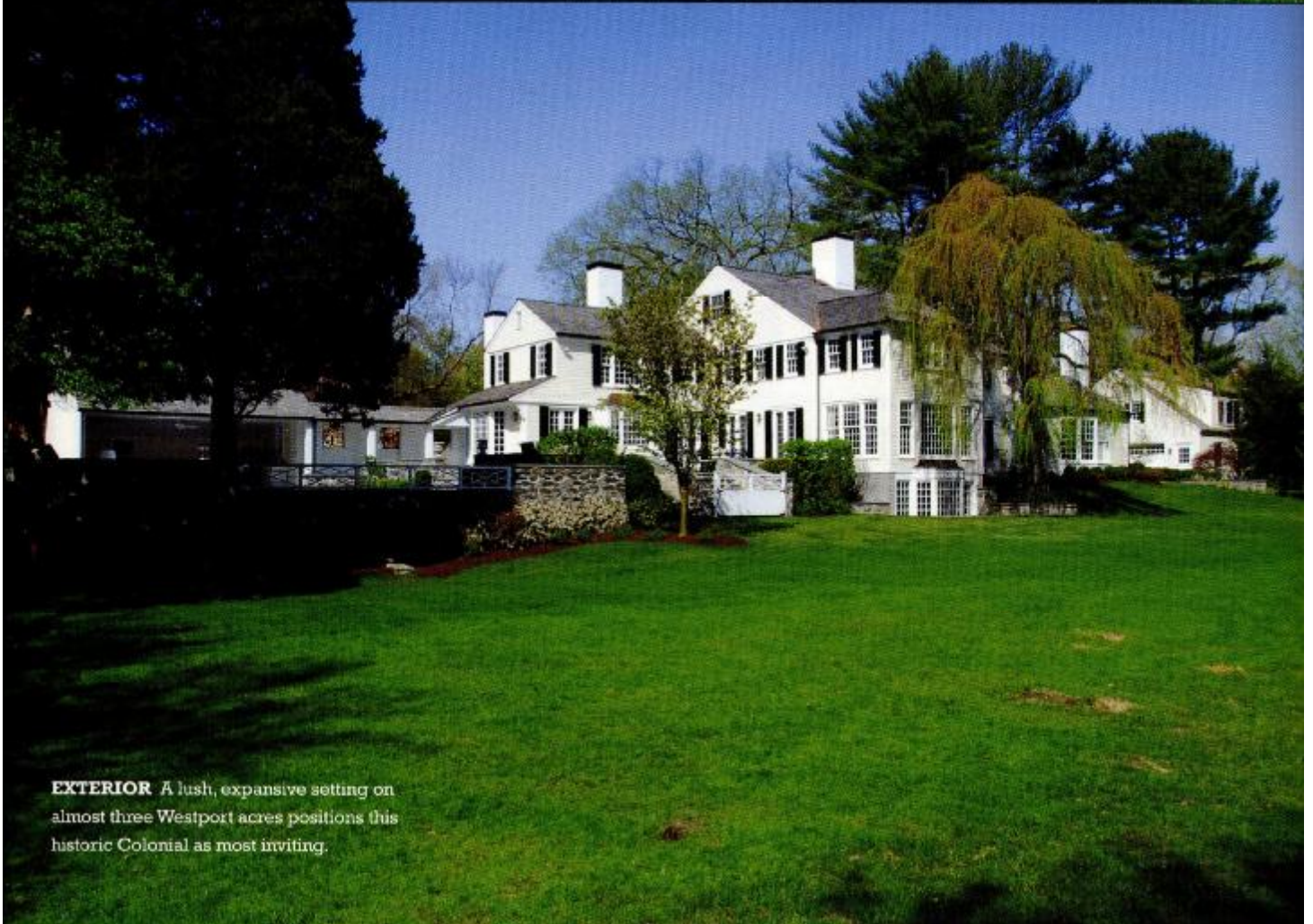


F A I R F I E L D C O U N T Y

H O M E





EXTERIOR A lush, expansive setting on almost three Westport acres positions this historic Colonial as most inviting.

Classic Redux



A renovation of an historic 1930s house originally designed by renowned architect Cameron Clark is a study of gracious yet practical sensibility. The 8,122-sq.-ft. home sits on almost three bucolic acres in Westport, juxtaposed for spectacular river views. The thoughtful, exquisitely detailed work of Mark P. Finlay Architects AIA provided the perfect match for this complicated renovation.

Crucial to every Finlay project is to go back in time and consider the original architectural vision.

Finlay's foremost objective while designing the home was to figure out what the original architect would have done if Clark himself was updating this classic reproduction Colonial for an active family lifestyle. Digging into the home's history proved fruitful, with such local treasure troves as the Fairfield Historical Society close at hand, whose well-documented resource files often include original drawings.

"The house possessed a great feel, a great spirit," remarks Finlay. Of course, it was extremely important

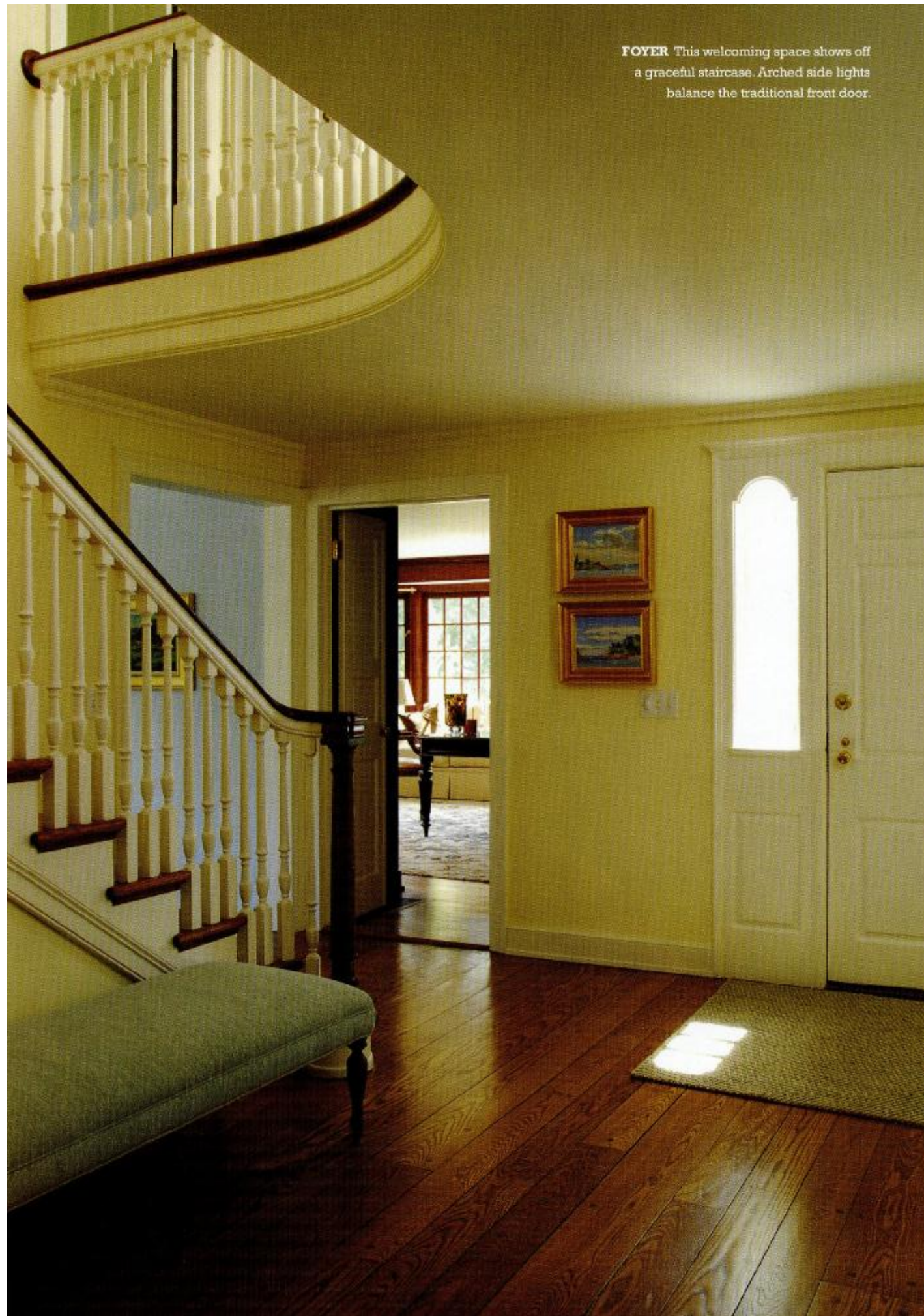
*Fine detail
reclaims
Colonial charm*

to keep in mind the owners' current needs as well. Finlay had always loved this particular house, although he was not enchanted with some of the modifications cobbled onto it over the years. Most pleased with the opportunity to bring back its original character, he "...got the chance to fix it!" The library, for example, included a graceless window which Finlay replaced with a brilliant bay. A complementary

traditional fireplace was surrounded with select black marble. Original cherry paneling painstakingly was matched for perfect patina. While 70 percent of the paneling is new, it is so meticulously color-matched by Pennington Painting and Restoration of Fairfield that one would never guess it is not original to the room.

Brand-new high performance windows through the house achieve state-of-the-art R-value while reflecting appropriate style with their pane sizes and muntin bar widths, framing "killer views of the river." Clark's and Finlay's architectural practices are not dissimilar. Both are adaptive and chameleon-like in that they assuage

FOYER This welcoming space shows off a graceful staircase. Arched side lights balance the traditional front door.





client needs and create an exacting program accordingly. By removing awkward elements and pulling off incongruent pieces, Finlay remains faithful to Clark's initial vision.

The homeowners were familiar with renovation and design, having re-designed houses before. Veteran understanding proved welcome, particularly as challenges arose with wetlands issues. Finlay's firm, extremely well-versed in the nuances of permit and zoning processes, enacted smooth solutions. Clearly the firm and its clients work very closely together. On this project, many materials were selected by the homeowner, whose exceptional taste directed the project. Carefully, Finlay made each identified need a part of a very personalized program.

"The plan is everything!" Finlay says often.

Every step of a successful renovation relates back to its original plan. Flow and function are integrally related. Each traffic pattern is evaluated in terms of realistic family lifestyle particular to the clients themselves. Finlay opened up the floor plan and created loops. The physicality of the space unfolds organically now to support rational traffic. Loops run from family room to kitchen to mudroom. A side entry was corrected by augmenting its presence because it is the entryway most often used. The covered portico and flagstone/bluestone/slate steps add weight, providing a clear sense of direction.

The active family lifestyle, including four boys, suggested clever solutions for activity-specific spaces. The lower level now features a fully functional play room as well as a dedicated music room, which is acoustically outfitted for best purpose. With both guitars and drums practiced frequently, the quality sound-proofing is smart.

The home is wonderfully outfitted for entertaining. Probably its biggest change overall is the masterfully designed kitchen with ideal flow patterns. Before, the kitchen was a dead-end room. Now, it opens front to back and has become literally 'Control Central.' In front of

ABOVE The outdoors is brought inside through the featured bay window and elegant yet practical French doors.

THIS PAGE Multi-paned double hung windows frame river views. Careful attention to crown molding, chair rail, wainscoting and baseboard trim completes the room's millwork, in keeping with historic style.



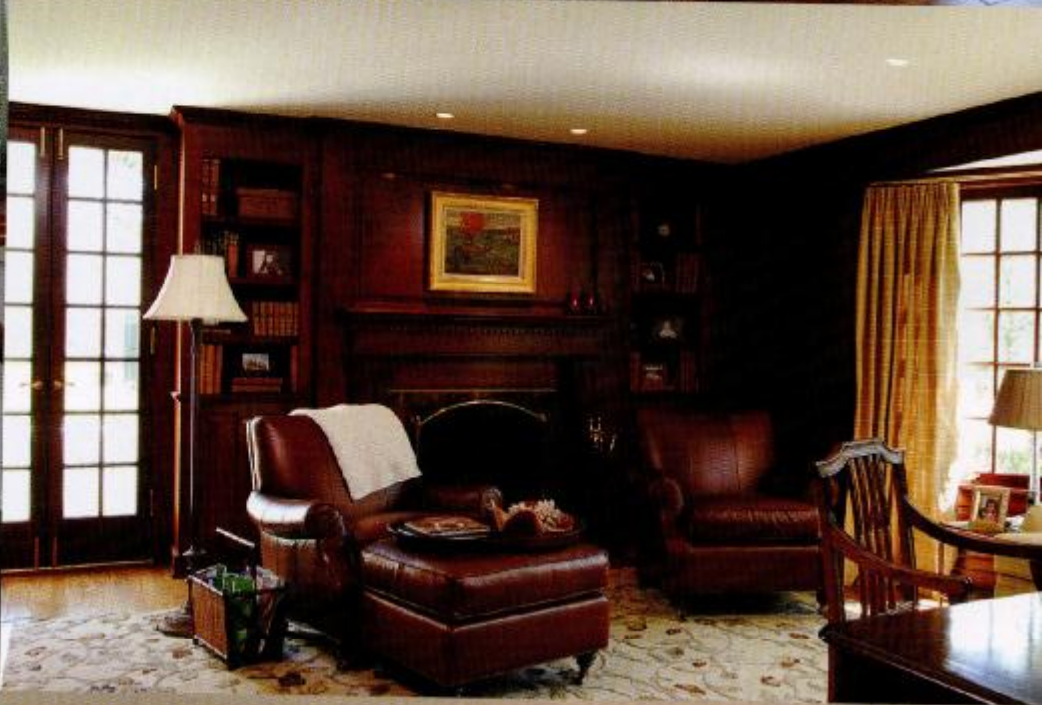
the house is the driveway; its rear overlooks the river; the side view adjacency is its mudroom entrance. This all becomes a linked transparent space. Simple kitchen décor incorporates Calcutta gold granite countertops and backsplash. The cherry-topped island and painted cabinetry are properly scaled for low ceiling heights.

Antique oak flooring complements old fir floors found throughout the formal areas of the house. Finlay often uses reclaimed wood as it has "great character but is tough!" Very deliberate choices were made. The homeowner and architect paid fastidious attention to certain key dimensions as well as the relationships among particular appliances and functions. The Klaffs Farmhouse sink is positioned

with a countertop to its left and a Sub-Zero refrigerator to its right providing ease of function with simple pivots. The west side of the kitchen focuses on cooking while the seated peninsula area might harbor prep tasks.

Multiple actions may take place simultaneously but all flow smoothly in compatible zones, providing excellent circulation patterns. These thoughtful tactics foster sensible options creating a kitchen that is eminently serviceable. So terrific, in fact, that Mark Finlay himself received a "thank you" call from grateful caterers!

More difficult aspects of the renovation included challenges presented by several knee walls found



TOP Light bathes the tray-ceilinged living room with warmth thanks to the bay window.

CENTER Cherry paneling was precisely color-matched. French doors manage indoor-outdoor traffic patterns suitable to active family lifestyle.

BOTTOM Attention to traffic flow, a multi-layered lighting plan, and sensible work stations make this kitchen high-performance.



ABOVE Knee walls presented some challenges to the renovation throughout the master suite, but were re-scaled to meet current needs.

TOP RIGHT Finlay's conscientious planning enhanced the exterior spaces for comfortable use. Flow is smooth for both small and large group poolside entertainment.

RIGHT The European-inspired garden is set off by native stone foundation walls underlying traditional white wood fencing.

throughout the master suite, especially in bathroom and closet areas. Now those spaces are scaled perfectly for the family, incorporating their personal routines and needs. Ultimately, the master bath incorporated separate Klaff's undermount sinks, a nicely sized shower and comfortable bath tub, beautifully articulated with white and cream ceramic tile and glossy hand-honed crema marfil.

A favorite feature of the house at purchase was the pool area. Finlay's purposeful integration of terraces utilizes the space naturally, drawing out comfortable circulation patterns. Entertaining outdoors is a pleasure, with a new beautifully outfitted cabana. With a television mounted above a cozy fireplace and an efficient kitchenette on one side, the space is high-performance. A new chimney anchors the building.

Finlay developed the enclosures for the home's exterior gardens, too. His plan involved retaining walls and all established hardscapes surrounding the pool, encompassing the back deck, terraces, and cabana. He reorganizes space for modern functionality while remaining true to its inherent classicism.

Three years ago Finlay's firm built its own headquarters building in Southport, and boasts thirty-three employees. The firm is currently carrying out projects in Newport, Tucson, Costa Rica, Savannah, Charleston and Aspen.

His firm's passion manifests as energy, managing a variety of different elements while specifically achieving identified goals. Just as with the Westport Colonial, where now when one walks through the home there are no "dead ends." Energy flows freely, smoothly and logically, ultimately providing a sense of underlying comfort to all those in its purview. ■



RESOURCES

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