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DESIGNER JANET SIMON MAKES A SPLENDID



HOUSE FEEL LIKE HOME



Opposite and right: A palette of moss green, gold, chocolate, and paprika warms the library. Fabric for draperies is by Lee Jofa; the desk lamp is by Lars Bolander.

Below: Janet and J. Peter Simon's 1933 neo-Georgian home on Hidden Pond Farm in New Jersey.

Left: The farm's resident pony.

Preceding pages: The bright foyer features a Damoka rug. ■ The library welcomes pets as well as people. The sofa is by Ernest Studio Inc.



Set

aside your stereotypes. Janet Simon is not the typical Jersey girl—though she'll tell it like it is. Her hair's not big. Her dress is classic. She's the consummate hostess. And her house, situated in New Jersey's Morris County, is the epitome of good taste. The area the Simon family has called home for more than 20 years offers unspoiled countryside—rolling hills dotted with lakes and rivers—just 30 miles northwest of New York City. Here, beautiful estates might fool you into thinking you've traveled through time and space—perhaps to England

in the 1930s. Hidden Pond Farm—the house this interior designer shares with husband J. Peter Simon, their four children (almost grown up now), as many dogs as kids, and a pony—is that kind of place.

The neo-Georgian residence was built between 1927 and 1933 for Thomas M. Debevoise, a prominent attorney and personal counsel to John D. Rockefeller Jr. Debevoise commissioned architects Delano & Aldrich to design what was to be his family's summer retreat. The home's gracious proportions and historicism are hallmarks of these distinguished early-20th-century architects.



Right: The living room owes its serenity to soft blues and creams. Among the many fine details is the custom shell embroidery on the Penn & Fletcher draperies that flank a mirror by R Squared. An area rug by Tai Ping Carpets anchors the sitting area. The ceiling is painted Farrow & Ball's "Pink Ground."
Below: This secretary is one of the Simons' much-cherished and much-used antiques.



Janet and Peter bought the house 19 years ago from the estate of Thomas's son, Eli Whitney Debevoise (named for his great-great-grandfather, inventor of the cotton gin). "The house was wonderfully untouched," Janet recalls. "The grounds were completely overgrown, like Sleeping Beauty's castle. We had to hack through thorny branches to get to the front door."

Peter saw the place first and knew his wife would be smitten. "I took one look, and I was gone," she admits. "It didn't frighten me, which it should have. I couldn't wait to start restoring it." The house had been vacant for 30 years, but it now

passed from one steward to the next. "My first commitment was to keep its integrity intact," she adds.

And there was plenty to do before the house would suit the needs of the Simon family. "There was a servants' wing!" Janet exclaims. So she reconfigured the tiny staff bedrooms, added bathrooms, and created a layout that would accommodate their young children. (Peter Jr., who was 5 at the time, is now 24; Emily is 22; and Timmy is 20. Cameron, their youngest at 16, was born after the rest of the brood was firmly ensconced in the home.) Janet also created an expansive master suite that



JANET SIMON
OUR DESIGNER SAYS

Janet Simon insists on quality, no matter the context. Whether decorating or entertaining, it's the details that count. "Keep it simple, but do it right," she says, and she translates that mantra into doing the right things for others. In addition to her residential work for well-heeled clients, Janet contributes her time and skills to pro-bono projects, most recently a mind-body room for the cancer center of Morristown Memorial Hospital. Named for Janet's sister, Lynda M. Franklin, who died of ovarian cancer, the space is designed to soothe and uplift patients who gather there for meditation, massage, and yoga.



Opposite: Formal without being stuffy, the dining room features Bergamo fabric on the chairs, Lee Jofa fabric for the draperies, and a Charlotte Moss table lamp. **Top left and right:** Light streams into the sunporch, made cheery by floral patterns in pinks and greens. The enclosed room mirrors the nearby breakfast room with a curved exterior wall. **Right:** For the gardenlike breakfast room, drapery fabric was chosen from the Kelly Wearstler collection. Fabric on the slipcovered chair cushions is by Rose Cumming. **Left:** A winding staircase is original.

remains one of her favorite places. "My kids and their friends come in and chat with me here," she says with a laugh. "Probably because I go to bed so early!"

While the house's floor plan is rational, it also offers a sense of discovery. "That's created by the transitional spaces," Janet explains. "There are a couple of rooms directly off the main hallway, but most aren't." Adding character is a little round foyer leading to the library. A small square space gives some air between the breakfast room and the front stairs. And an oval back hall contains the back stairs up to the second floor.

To return the house's interior to its former glory, plasterwork was restored and the existing wood floors hand-finished and waxed. Janet, a designer by trade, got busy with the decoration, which continues to undergo constant refreshment. "It has evolved," she says in an understatement. "In the beginning, we had lots of swags and chintz." Since then, she has lightened up.

The living and dining rooms are rendered in a palette of soft blues and creams, grounded with gleaming wood furniture and golden accents. While formal, the two spaces are treated without kid gloves. Janet approaches her whole house with the same élan.







Opposite: Helping the family stay organized is a mudroom outfitted with Brunswick & Fils wallpaper. **Above:** Small lime-green tables from Lexington Gardens garnish the terrace. The tablecloth is by Dransfield & Ross.

Top right: The bright kitchen's cabinetry and reclaimed terra-cotta flooring are from Smallbone of Devizes; the sleek wall ovens are Gaggenau.

Right: The kitchen dining area features whimsical animal-embroidered host-chair fabric by Brunswick & Fils and hanging lights by Vaughan Designs.



The more casual breakfast room and sunporch are peppy and inviting. A bold mix of botanical prints and graphic patterns adds pizzazz to a cheerful green-and-white scheme in the former. The sunporch is still enveloped in the charm of chintz on walls and furniture, with side chairs in red-and-white candy stripes as the perfect foil. That's one room Janet hasn't changed, but in the new context, it feels fresher and more lively than ever.

These four rooms—breakfast, living, and dining rooms plus the sunporch, all with French doors that open to the terrace—combine to form the house's most elegant living spaces.

The wood-paneled library is appropriately clad in warm tones—but even here Janet manages to lighten her rich palette of reds, greens, and brown with little hits of pink and vivid orange.

At the back of the house, a section was extended for a kitchen with an eating area that connects to a terrace—and to a mudroom. (Janet is incredibly organized. In addition to the mudroom, she created “outgoing” closets for dry-cleaning, packages, tote bags, and more. “Who wants to see that stuff?” she asks. “Not me.”)

Three new outbuildings/garages match the color and pattern of the house bricks—even to the grout. As in traditional





Opposite: A timelessly pretty sitting room features watercolors by Stephen Freeburg. The bench is from Second Life Interiors and Upholstery, with fabric by Travers. **Left:** The charming master bedroom has bed curtains by Chelsea Editions and linens by Leron. The bedside tray table is from Charlotte Moss, and the medallion-patterned area rug is by Patterson, Flynn & Martin. **Top:** Cowtan & Tout's floral wallpaper sets the palette for another airy bedroom. **Right:** Fit for a princess is Hôtel silver from Bergdorf Goodman and china from Ralph Lauren Home.



English country houses, the facade you first see as you come up the sweeping drive has been as carefully designed as the main entrance.

The Simons worked with landscape architect Deborah Nevins to restore terraces and gardens, framing views and devising intimate outdoor spaces. Come spring, the rehabilitated 50-year-old peony walk enthralls with its ephemeral charm, and the six-acre pumpkin patch offers a special delight in autumn.

Janet, herself, is never happier than when she's entertaining—setting a beautiful table, bringing people together.

"The great thing about a big house is that everyone fits," she says. "There's always space for family and friends." She might have 40 people singing Christmas carols at the piano, 22 for dinner in the dining room, or an intimate summer lunch on the terrace—each event done with meticulous attention to detail, from custom-made linens to the perfect crème anglaise. "Any excuse will do for a party," she says. But with a home as lovely as Hidden Pond Farm, she doesn't need any excuse at all. ■

Design consultant: Ralph Harvard **Landscape architect:** Deborah Nevins
For more information, see sources on page 172