

## Instant charmer

The show follows along as a couple's quest for quality leads them to a factory-built home

BY JILL CONNORS

➔ **BILL AND APRIL HARB** used to escape their cramped condo in the city by going for hikes or walks along the beach on Boston's North Shore. It was on one of those forays three years ago that they fell for a four-acre wooded property for sale just outside the center of Essex, Massachusetts. "We loved the mature trees, the privacy, everything—so we jumped at the chance," recalls Bill.

They'd need to build a house, of course. Problem was, says April, "We were turned off by the lack of character of most new homes." Then one day they found their dream home in a very unexpected place: a catalog. "I did an online search for 'Greek Revival farmhouse' and found a house that looked so good, we couldn't believe it wasn't old," she says.

The farmhouse was actually Federal style, a model built by Connor Homes at its factory in Middlebury, Vermont. Connor's approach to prefab is called panelization: Highly detailed shop drawings guide the precise measuring and cutting of nearly all the wood—from floor joists to rafters—and craftsmen build doors, windows, entire staircases, and wall sections with all the window and door openings in place. Then all the parts are labeled, bundled, and trucked to the site to be assembled in a specific order by a local builder.

### MODERN METHODS, CLASSIC DETAILS

Contractor Erik Kaminski's crew lands a fully built cupola on the roof of the garage, where it will let light into an upstairs guest suite.

AFTER: The period-style farmhouse that homeowners April and Bill Harb chose for their lot in Essex, Mass., is the first model Connor Homes offered.

