

SPRING

A S P I R E DESIGN AND HOME

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RUSTIC GLAM



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CAKES

archetypes

handpick their favorite rustic pieces

PAST AND PRESENT

*Architect John B. Murray
fashions modern complements
to an historic home*

TEXT **THOMAS CONNORS**
PHOTOGRAPHY **ERIC ROTH AND BRUCE BUCK**

It's easy to swoon over a vintage property with good bones. But old-house envy can quickly fade when we stop to consider the flesh and blood of daily living. Tiny bathrooms, closed-off kitchens and shallow closets don't quite cut it today. Sitting pretty on 120 acres and an hour from Manhattan, this Greek Revival home – once owned by Franklin Roosevelt's Secretary of the Navy and Defense, James Forrestal – was sadly out-of-shape when New York architect John B. Murray took it on. "Everything about it was pretty rugged," he recalls, "but the worst of it was a huge addition on the back which had no relationship to the house whatsoever."

Charged with transforming the house into a weekend-ready getaway, Murray not only restored the home's period detail (including the handsome columns of the façade), but doubled its size with a sympathetic addition comprising kitchen, breakfast room, family room, mud room and bedrooms. In scale and layout, the adjacent kitchen and family room reflect a contemporary sense of flow and roominess, but here as elsewhere, Murray appointed these spaces with architectural details that echo the

restrained vocabulary of the Greek Revival style. "It's important in this kind of work to know what *not* to do," explains Murray. "You don't want to overplay things, but rather, maintain a consistent character throughout."

Murray's keen sense of aesthetic proportion even extends to the bathrooms, which while handsome, are far from spa-like. The master bathroom has a clawfoot tub, shower stall, pedestal sink and a toilet. "It's about as period as you can get without it being a 19th-century outhouse," Murray remarks good-naturedly.

Murray did take a slight stylistic detour when it came to the dining room. "In studying this room, we realized that it was probably the original core of the house before they built the Greek Revival version," explains Murray. "So we wanted to create an 18th-century narrative by parging the walls, adding scalloped board wainscot and introducing hand-hewn timbers." Distinctly different from the pared-back profile of the rest of the house, this conceit artfully honors the evolution of the home over time. And now, Murray's own work is a part of that history.



South elevation



All photographs on this page by Eric Roth





West elevation



Eric Roth



Eric Roth



Eric Roth



Eric Roth



Eric Roth



Bruce Buck



Pool House 352 square feet

Pergola 519 square feet

Southern New England Pool House

ARCHITECTURE: John B. Murray Architect, New York, NY
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE: Oehme, Van Sweden & Associates, Washington, DC

Emerging from this bucolic landscape – a vast tract of land in Southern New England – is a pool and pool house that, although new, feels absolutely timeless.

“We positioned the pool on a high part of the pasture area and enclosed it with a paddock fence,” declares architect John Murray. Though modest in size, the structure – with its exterior beadboard cladding and hand-split cedar roof shakes – echoes the early American sensibility of the other 18th- and 19th-century buildings on the property, while the organic shape of the pool blends in with the landscape, which includes regional plantings, rolling fields and a nearby pond.

“There was a desire by the client and we always try to promote the use of native plant materials as much as possible,” explains landscape architect Eric Groft, naming little bluestem, black-eyed Susans, delphiniums and verbena. By implementing them in an abstracted way, such as planting thyme between the granite patio pavers, “there is a seamless transition from the manmade elements to the natural elements beyond the pool,” Groft adds.

A “ha-ha” wall also helps blend the manmade with the natural. Murray and Groft worked together to grade a portion of the pool area down so the terraced patio meets the top of the ha-ha wall, a recessed structure that complies with pool safety codes and allows an unobstructed view of the pond.

As for the pool house, “There’s a very simplistic feel where you open up these monumental sliding barn doors,” shares Murray. Inside, you’ll find a water closet, a changing room and a small kitchen. Outside, a pergola filters sunlight and a fieldstone chimney provides ventilation for the barbecue, while around the back is an outdoor shower.

“There’s restraint to this pool house,” concludes Murray. “There’s a paring back.” Timeless and perfectly suited to the landscape, the arrangement is everything it needs to be and nothing more.

TEXT **COURTNEY GOODRICH**
PHOTOGRAPHY **DURSTON SAYLOR**