



A reproduction iron chandelier lights the dining room. A turned-leg farm table is surrounded by a set of antique painted chairs from Pennsylvania. The cherry corner cupboard, a mid-19th century Quaker piece from Indiana, holds family china and silver pieces.

Even I had second thoughts about this one," recalls builder David Sutphen. The old stone farmhouse in northern Baltimore County was run-down, filthy and overgrown. The stone exterior was covered in a thick stucco-like coating of cement crudely painted to mimic limestone block, windows were covered in plastic, and the only way to get to the front door was a narrow footpath through waist-high weeds. Sutphen, who specializes in historically accurate restorations, knew the only salvageable parts would be those hidden fieldstone walls, the floor joists and the framing. "I can usually look past all the mess," he says. "And I only get nervous when people I work with and respect think I'm crazy." When a landscaper friend visited the hillside and pronounced Sutphen sane, and the bank was willing to lend him the money, he decided to take it on.

With financing secured in the fall of 1997, and with serious buyer's remorse setting in, Sutphen and his crew at Southfen Inc. got busy demolishing all the interior walls, removing the Victorian-style embellishments that a previous owner had tacked on, and clearing rubbish from the site. A month into the project, when Sutphen had only a roof and three wide-open empty floors to show, his real estate agent called. A couple had seen her listing for a stone farmhouse "to be restored," and they wanted to see it.

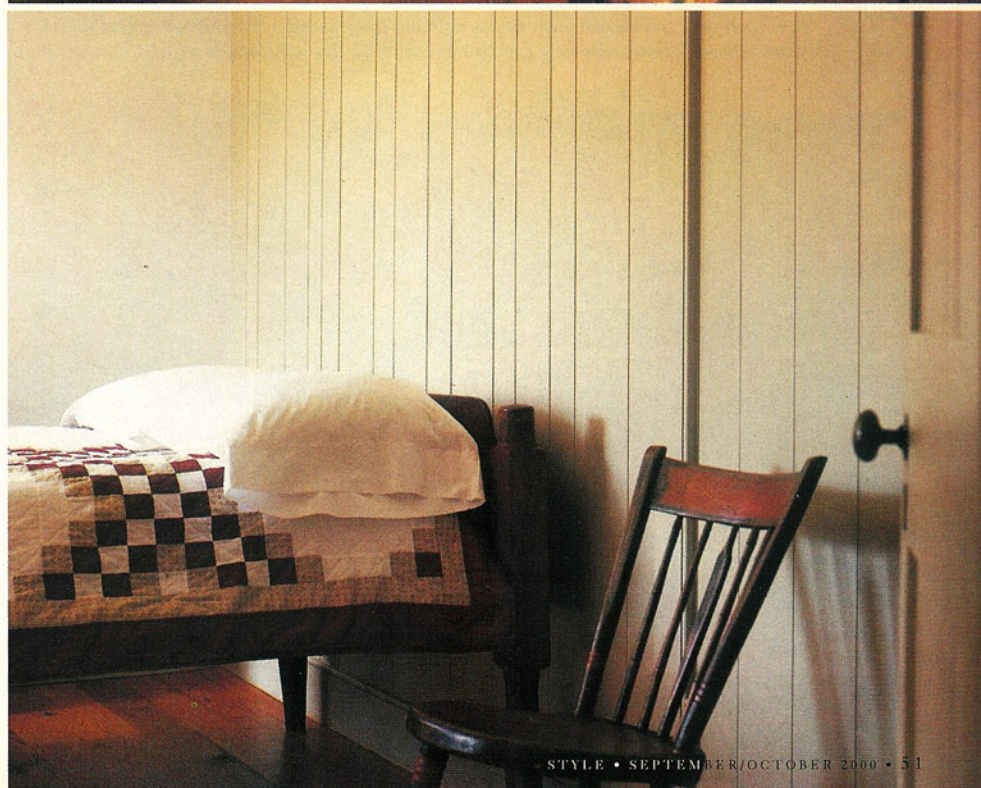
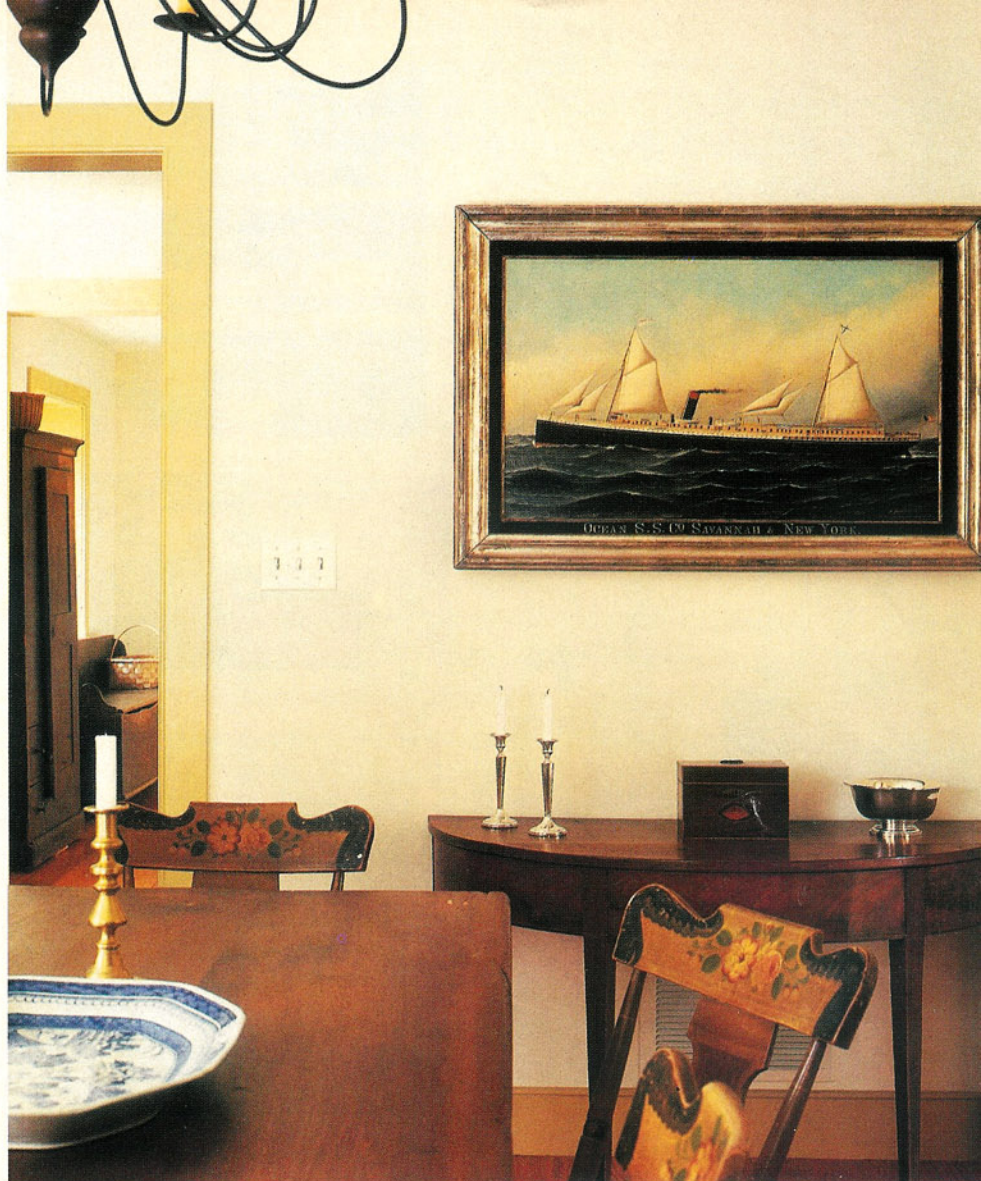
"I told her I wasn't sure I wanted anyone to see it in that state," says Sutphen. "I was afraid it would just put people off if they didn't have the vision."

"Let's use this couple as a barometer," the agent, Joan McClernan, responded. "If they drive up and turn right around and drive away, we'll know you're right."

"WE GOT TO THE SITE AND KNEW THIS was it," says the female half of the intre-
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Above right, in the dining room, an 1890 painting by Antonio Jacobsen depicts the *Kansas City*, a steamship from the Ocean Steam Ship fleet. The demilune table beneath it is actually the end of an antique Hepplewhite table found in Chester County, Pa.

Right, an upstairs bedroom, with its beaded-board paneling and quilt-covered 19th century rope bed, epitomizes the owners' uncluttered aesthetic.



An Honest House

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pid couple who not only didn't turn around, but got out of the car to walk around and discuss ideas with the builder. Soon afterward, they would see Sutphen's architectural drawings and a small model.

"We knew it would need an inside-out, top-to-bottom restoration, but it had good lines and quality features, like the gorgeous quoins," adds the husband, referring to the large decorative stones at the four corners. "That means the guy who built the house didn't mean for it to be torn down."

It has proven impossible to date the house with certainty, although bronze numerals embedded in the cement stucco read 1854. "This was probably not the first house on the site," says the husband, a former attorney and an avid student of art and architecture. "The original may have dated to 1854, but we've heard the road had to be moved for the railroad, so the first house may have been dismantled and moved."

The couple brought with them a deep appreciation for old houses. Early in their 32-year marriage, they had taught in a Quaker boarding school outside Philadelphia and had grown to appreciate the simple stone houses in that area. For the past 17 years they had lived in an 18th century log house nearby. They agreed totally with Sutphen's approach to the house—keep it authentic, keep it simple. And they appreciated his loving attention to detail. "There are not a lot of builders who would have taken the time David has on this project," says the husband. "It's a dream for all three of us."

Sutphen agrees. "The husband actually faxed me a note saying he wanted the highest quality material and workmanship. Everything I would have done for this house on my own, they wanted for themselves."

Sutphen's plans used the stone foundations of an old springhouse close to the main house as the footprint for a new utility room, and linked it to the house with a two-story addition holding a new kitchen on the first floor and a master bedroom on the second. For the brickwork, Sutphen and the clients chose two varieties of red brick—Williamsburg and Scotch Tradition—and mixed them to suggest the subtle color variations of handmade bricks used in the mid-19th century. Pennsylvania-based mason Elmer Sueck laid the brick in an English bond pattern, which called for a row of headers every

seventh course of brick, and added jack arches over windows and doors. Sueck and his helpers filled in the openings left by relocated windows and doors so seamlessly that the untrained eye can hardly discern where changes were made.

Original materials were used wherever possible. The unhewn log joists found beneath the basement flooring were milled into lumber that became chestnut cabinets for the kitchen and red oak flooring for an attic sewing room. The main floors in the house, although not drawn from the property, were made from restoration grade, virgin-growth heart pine that was milled from salvaged beams.

For the architectural detailing of the interior, Sutphen chose beaded edge poplar, using it for deep window casings, wall paneling, moldings and trim. And for the finishing touches, the husband tracked down a source for original 19th century hardware such as cast iron box locks and strap hinges.

The result is just what they had all hoped for—a house with a clean and honest aesthetic. The choice of furnishings shows the same disciplined restraint that guided the construction. "We want the house to speak for itself," says the wife, who chose historic patterns for the upholstery in mostly geometric prints—checks, stripes and plaids—to mix with their collection of late 18th to mid-19th century American country antiques.

"It's been so satisfying to take a neglected place with so much potential and so much history and be able to restore it and live in it," says the husband. "We feel very fortunate. Throughout the restoration, we kept asking ourselves, 'Are we getting too carried away?' The answer was always, 'No.'" □

R E S O U R C E S

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Reproduction 18th century lighting The Tin Bin, Neffsville, Pa., 717-569-6210. www.thetinbin.com

Masonry Elmer Sueck, Airville, Pa., 717-862-3486.

Millwork O'Connor Millwork, New Park, Pa., 717-382-4139

Antique hardware Ed Donaldson, Carlisle, Pa., 717-249-3624, www.eddonaldson.com

Landscaping Scott Neal and Chris Warne, Northbrook Landscaping, White Hall, 410-343-0100

Plants Fieldstone Nursery, Parkton, 410-357-5114