

BEFORE AND AFTER

LONG ISLAND LINEAGE

UPDATING A 1905 HOUSE ONCE DECORATED BY ELSIE DE WOLFE



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1912

Architecture by Frank Greenwald, AIA/Interior Design by Richard Keith Langham
Text by Steven M. L. Aronson/Photography by Edward J. North



Some country houses rise from the soil, if they do not positively spring from it, in a nervous grasp toward ‘picturesqueness,’ wrote Royal Cortissoz, the august art and architecture critic, taking care to add: “Harrie T. Lindeberg’s houses seem as it were to rest upon the earth, striking deep roots into it, reposing with an unmistakable serenity upon the appointed place.” How better to describe the low-lying—indeed, ground-hugging—house on Lily Pond Lane in East Hampton, New York, that the McKim, Mead & White-

“Our goal was to update it yet keep its character,” architect Frank Greenwald says of Jon and Corrie Sandelman’s East Hampton, New York, residence, which was designed by Harrie T. Lindeberg in 1905. LEFT: The white stucco-and-curl-cedar-shingled house in 1912.

TOP: “The south façade lacked any large openings,” explains Greenwald. “This, unfortunately, made for some very dark rooms.” ABOVE: “We installed a series of French doors and tore out and re-located the big plantings that blocked everything.”

trained Lindeberg, one of this century’s preeminent domestic architects, designed in 1905? Prettily proportioned and crowned with a roof that gives the romantic appearance of thatch, it has all the informal charm of a cottage, exuding what Lindeberg himself called “that lost quality of restfulness and graciousness.”

It is a house, moreover, with a nonpareil aesthetic and social pedigree. In its early days Elsie de Wolfe, fresh from decorating the garden room of New York’s Colony Club in trelliswork and wicker, made her inim-



itable mark on the house's dining room and loggia. Since 1925 the place was owned by the Lee family, and we can safely assume that a certain Jacqueline Lee Bouvier spent a good deal of time there visiting her maternal grandparents, wafting in and out of doors in some flowered smock dress or little sunsuit.

When Jon Sandelman, a Wall Street executive, and his wife, Corrie, a former fashion editor, purchased this landmark summer house, they did so knowing that, its strong enchantment notwithstanding, it was in need of considerable updating. "We were looking to do less of a renovation than a sympathetic restoration," Jon Sandelman says. "We wanted it to stay a Lindeberg house—that was a very big concern." In the East Hampton-based Frank Greenwald, the Sandelmans found an architect confident enough not to try to put his own stamp on the place. "It's an important house because, among other things, it was unusual—it didn't conform to the Shingle Style that was prevalent at the time," Greenwald explains. "But houses work very differently now, and here was this young New York couple, with two small children, who had a whole new set of life-style requirements."

Foremost among these was to attain greater access to the outside—to the uninterrupted expanse of cool, well-groomed lawn and to the sand dunes and booming breakers not far beyond it. For openers, Greenwald

"The decoration creates a clean and cottagelike atmosphere despite the grand proportions of the rooms," says designer Richard Keith Langham (right). OPPOSITE: *The Greece*, 1880, by Antonio Jacobsen is inset into the living room's Jacobean-style overmantel. Laura Fisher quilt.



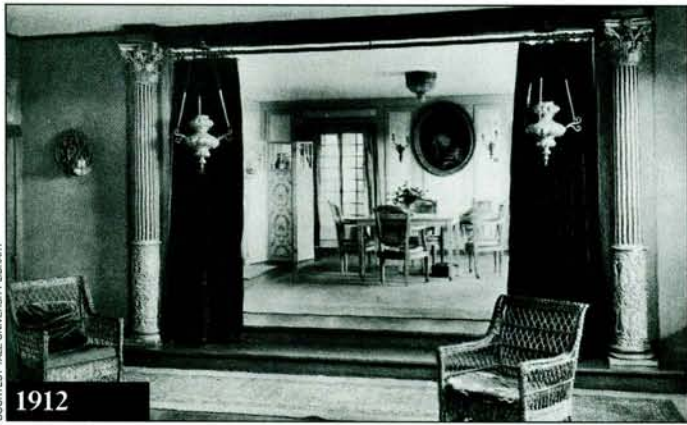
LEFT: "We restored and bleached the oak paneling," notes Greenwald. BELOW: "The back-to-back seating softens the long space," says Langham. Ralph Lauren chairs, foreground. Wicker chair, Newel Art Galleries. Decorators Walk drapery linen. Kravet stripe. Stark carpet.

erected multiple sets of floor-to-ceiling French doors with transoms to suffuse the living room with light. Then he attacked the clump of small sunless rooms that added up to no more than a servants' kitchen; by breaking down walls and then extending the room's footprint to include a gabled breakfast area with triangular clerestory windows, he was able to create a big, light-filled, wainscot-slathered family kitchen.

The entire upper floor—consisting, in typical old Hamptons-cottage style, of



tiny dark bedrooms with connecting doors and with baths down the hall—drastically called for reconfiguring. Greenwald widened the landing and raised its ceiling to make a family room, and at the same time turned two small bedrooms into a corner master bedroom, raising its ceiling to the rafters, too, for a lighter, airier effect. In the process, every hinge, door-knob, baseboard and crown molding was husbanded for reuse or replication. As for shingles, when it came to repairing the Cotswoldian roof, Greenwald had to unearth



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BEFORE



AFTER

OPPOSITE LEFT: The Elsie de Wolfe–designed dining room in 1912. OPPOSITE: “Although we repainted, we left the architecture intact,” says Greenwald. BELOW: Welsh dresser from Kentshire Galleries; Scalamandré slipcover fabrics. Stark carpet.



them from under layers of asphalt—he saved as many as he could, then had additional cedar ones woven, steamed and bent by hand in the style of the original.

“Build simply, whether a cottage or a castle” was one of Lindeberg’s credos, and downstairs the house was refreshingly to the point—in fact, a model of functional clarity. As Greenwald observes, “The one thing Linde-

berg did here that reflects the way people live today was to design the living room and dining room as one huge space, with the dining room raised two steps from the general floor level.”

English oak paneling—this he proceeded to strip, bleach and lime the color of driftwood for a brighter, cleaner, more contemporary feeling. He also laboriously restored the neo-Jacobean plaster strapwork ceiling. The bank of leaded-glass windows was re-located—along with some of the leaded-glass doors and the original double Dutch front door—to a new entrance hall on the west side.

interior designer Richard Keith Langham, who, as it happened, had done work for one of the house’s long-ago and less obscure frequenters, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. “Keith totally rejuvenated the place,” says Corrie Sandelman. “He added life and zest to it.” The furniture the couple had had in their previous, postmodern East Hampton house was rather eclectic; for their new one, they asked



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The architect had found the south-facing living room encumbered not only with the leaded-glass windows and doors he replaced with all those floor-to-ceiling French doors but with lugubrious

The fifteen-by-thirty-foot loggia, long considered one of the prettiest in East Hampton, required extensive repairing—its deck and its ten fluted Doric columns had corroded by dint of age and the sea air. Once the loggia had been rebuilt, Greenwald consulted vintage photographs of the house in order to reconstruct an arbor.

The Sandelmans next turned to New York-based

“The steeply peaked ceiling adds drama to the master bedroom,” Langham points out. Sentimento lacquered table, left, and lamp at right. John Rosselli chest. Ralph Lauren ship model. Laura Fisher quilts. Henry Calvin drapery and bed hanging linens.



Langham to assemble English and American furnishings steeped in a more traditional vein. He responded by, for example, decorating the entrance hall with a pair of turn-of-the-century wicker wing chairs and a table

draped with a nineteenth-century English patchwork quilt that falls just short of the wide-plank remilled Vermont pine flooring. "To me," Langham maintains, "the room is the essence of crisp simplicity."

In the thirty-five-by-twenty-five-foot living room—of which the designer says wistfully, "Sometimes in a room that scale you can feel lonesome, as if you were sitting in a cavern"—he arranged the furniture in two groupings

based on back-to-back sofas: an intimate one near the carved Jacobean-style fireplace and another, more fluid one at the open end of the room. Heavy linen no-color draperies hang from bronze poles and blend in with the



bleached walls. “Corrie wanted a certain sparseness to the house, so there are very few pieces of wood in the room and no furniture or bookcases on the wall opposite all the French doors.” Since she was partial to plaids and stripes,

the two sofas and a club chair sport big-scale wool tartans. (In summer, the sofas and chair as well as a blanket chest are slipcovered in red-and-white cotton ticking.) Another club chair and a tall-back Jacobean wing chair are both

BELOW: The loggia is defined by Doric columns and open-slat decking. Elsie de Wolfe arrayed it with turn-of-the-century wicker. **BOTTOM:** The original wicker was refurbished. Cowtan & Tout blue-and-white checks, plaids and stripes for pillows.



LEFT: “The refreshed loggia looks out to the new bright blue swimming pool and a private garden view,” says Greenwald. “The space can be directly accessed from the kitchen and dining room; it’s used by the family as a summer living room.”



embowered in a hand-blocked linen floral print based on a nineteenth-century English document.

The clients decided to keep the details of the handsome square dining room exactly as Elsie de Wolfe had

left them more than eighty years before. “The only thing we changed was it was cream and we painted it three tones of off-white,” says Langham. “We made the room sort of hold hands

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