

HOMES
& GARDENS

ANTHOLOGY



THROUGH
A NEW
LENS

THE ELEGANT DECEPTION OF A MIDWEST MARVEL

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC PIASECKI/OTTO



THERE IS a gently settled air to this rambling, white-painted Ohio ranch. The tumbling rooflines, broad porch, and gabled windows suggest a home that has grown over centuries. But architecture can be deceptive. It may appear to be 19th century, but this semirural homestead, near Cleveland, is a new build, completed in 2021 by Mark Ferguson of New York-based Ferguson & Shamamian Architects.

The owners, two professionals with three children, had never planned to move to a new house – their ideal was a time-worn, ivy-strewn farmhouse, set deep in the undulating, wooded landscape of Virginia. But when this proved hard to find, they shifted their gaze north-westward. What it may lack in rolling hills, this enclave of mature trees and shining lawns makes up for with a spacious, bucolic feel.

The house replaced a robust but unromantic mid-century structure which previously occupied the site. For the architecture, Mark drew on a ‘cloud’ of historical references: ‘It doesn’t refer to one particular building,’ says Mark, who collaborated with interior designer Jennifer Merriman on the project. Some of these came from surveys of historic US homes carried out by the government during the Depression era, a scheme that signaled the rise of interest in conservation. The clients – ‘my research assistants’ – supplied ideas, too, for the windows and chimney stacks. ‘They created their own word pictures, even down to the choice of materials,’ says Mark.

A tree-lined driveway winds its way toward the front door, which opens on to the paneled hallway. A grandfather clock presides like a sentinel and there are bright glimpses of the garden through windows at the other end. The rest of the three-story interior is a mix of the traditional and unorthodox. The self-contained main bedroom suite, for instance, is on the first floor, with four more bedrooms and bathrooms upstairs. Glazing screens the porch in winter but can be opened up for cooling summer breezes.

Instead of the conventional formal living room, a sequence of rooms, each with a contrasting feel and size, was designed for different uses. The most idiosyncratic of these is the tavern, a more salubrious version of the old-school watering hole. Here, light spills over the coffered ceiling and polished floors and

a window seat stretches along one wall. The space was planned for small or large events. You can pull a Windsor chair up to a diminutive table for a snug-like feel, or gather around the larger ones for grander suppers. From the tavern, guests gravitate toward the billiard room lined in plaid, or the equally cozy library, with its double arches and deep, glassy blue walls.

Classical details – the moldings, paneling, and fireplaces – are based on designs Mark found in original 19th-century pattern books. The building and carpentry were done by a firm of Amish craftspeople, using traditional techniques. ‘But nothing is an exact facsimile,’ Mark says. ‘We like to adapt the past to suit the scale and style of the home we’re working on.’

The culinary arrangements are equally personal. There are two kitchens; one, painted deep blue, is for baking, another of the owners’ interests. An arched back door leads to functional rooms including a mudroom, where stable doors open to the yard. An always-there feel stretches to the bunk room under the eaves, with grass-green walls and reading nooks.

The owners’ rural yearnings play out in the decoration, too: ‘nothing too flowery or fussy,’ says Jennifer. ‘It had to be relaxed, but interesting.’ The contrasting textures – grass cloth, gloss paint, and a rural scenic mural add to the atmosphere. In the main bedroom, the four-poster bed is new, but based on a traditional bobbin design. Elsewhere, antique sofas and chairs, from the owners’ collection, have been re-covered in sturdy stripes and linens.

While the main house is new, the long, low barn next door was built in the 19th-century for another Ohio farmstead; the owners spotted it for sale online. The timber structure was carefully dismantled, then its numbered sections were reassembled on site and the surfaces were carefully restored. While researching its history, Mark discovered that the original had pointed, gothic windows. These have been reproduced and reinstated.

Designed for work and meetings, the barn includes a sitting area and a kitchen made from reclaimed timber, with the range painted in a vivid tractor green. From here, you can gaze out on to horses or cows, sheltering in the shade of an oak tree: a pastoral scene that could almost be in Virginia. ♦

KITCHENS The house has two kitchens. The main one features surfaces in book-matched marble and a large island lit by a trio of pendant lights by Ann-Morris Inc, with counter stools from Hickory Chair. The blue-painted kitchen was designed specifically for baking



TAVERN Dining areas include this window nook with antique Windsor chairs around a bespoke table by Parish Co
GARDEN SITTING ROOM This informal seating space is furnished with an ottoman and sofas custom made by Woodrich Furniture, with cushions in Jaipur Stripe by Katie Leede & Company. The lounge chairs are from Aesthetic Decor





LIBRARY The ground floor layout includes this jewel box of a space with walls, woodwork, and fire surround painted in glossy Inchyra Blue by Farrow & Ball, subtly illuminated by Star pendant lights from Visual Comfort & Co



TAVERN Dotted with antique furniture, this area (left and above left) includes seating options for large and small events. The dining chairs are upholstered in green leather by Brunswick & Fils. Wall sconces are by Galerie des Lampes
BILLIARD ROOM Off the tavern, this traditional games room features a deep-buttoned sofa upholstered in Conway fabric by Colefax and Fowler, trimmed with a long Villandry bullion fringe from Houllès



BARN KITCHEN Bright green accents, via the Classic vent hood, range, and fridge in custom color by Big Chill, contrast with the cabinetry in reclaimed wood. The pendant lights are from Visual Comfort & Co

LIVING ROOM The barn was designed as a home office with ample space for meetings. The round table from RH is surrounded by the clients' own sofas and chairs, and the pendants are from Visual Comfort & Co

EXTERIOR The 19th-century building, bought from another farmstead, was reassembled and restored on site

