



## *history lesson*

HONORING A LAKE FOREST HOME'S 100-YEAR-OLD NARRATIVE, A TALENTED TEAM WORKS TOGETHER TO CREATE A BRIGHT AND AIRY SPACE FOR A YOUNG FAMILY OF FIVE.

WRITTEN BY **KIMBERLY OLSON** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MICHAEL ROBINSON**

**O**n five bucolic acres in Lake Forest sits a historic Italianate home designed by late Chicago architect Eben Ezra Roberts. The home had been owned by just one family for its entire 100-year history, and when the woman of the house decided to sell, a couple with three teenage girls was intrigued. "We got a tip that it was coming on the market, and I drove by it about 60 times," admits the wife. Upon closer inspection, the family became smitten. "It was like walking into the 1920s," says the husband. "It was older and falling apart, but it had this timeless feel that was just extraordinary."

A key selling point was the sprawling grounds, which still held ruins of the home's once lush gardens. "We tried to work the spirit of what originally was there into the new design," says landscape architect Douglas Hoerr, who was brought onboard to create outdoor environments that would complement the architecture. "The house is set up on a central axis, so we honored that setup from the front to the back of the property." The grounds are more formal near the house and gradually become more naturalistic toward the outlying woodlands.

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE** Douglas Hoerr, FASLA, Hoerr Schaudt Landscape Architects  
**ARCHITECTURE** Steve Rugo, AIA, Rugo / Raff Ltd. Architects  
**INTERIOR DESIGN** Athalie Derse, Athalie Derse, Inc.  
**HOME BUILDER** Glenn Heidbreder, Heidbreder Building Group, LLC  
**BEDROOMS** 6 | **BATHROOMS** 6 | **SQUARE FEET** 10,475



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Architect Steve Rugo was hired to do restoration work on the house itself and to adjust the home's layout to suit the owners' modern lifestyle, turning existing divided rooms into one large living space with expansive panoramas. "There was no view to the back of this rather extensive piece of property, so we added two rear extensions that look like glass porches and fit with the vocabulary of the home's original Italianate aesthetic," Rugo says. "It was a process of melding all of those things that a modern family needs, without any one of them overpowering what already exists."

Those two extensions became a sun-flooded sitting room for the kids upstairs and, on the lower level, a more spacious kitchen and a bright family room. Rugo also reoriented the home's staircase to improve flow. As construction began, the team went to great lengths to blend the extension into the existing architecture. Two builders with restoration expertise helped bring Rugo's plans to life: Glenn Heidbreder,



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The light-filled living room of this Lake Forest home features a Holly Hunt sofa and a pair of chairs by Dessin Fournir swathed in Raoul Textiles fabric. *Left:* A French walnut desk from the 1830s and a 19<sup>th</sup>-century stool retaining its original orange velvet cushion stand poised in a corner of the living room.



In the foyer, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century cherry settee, purchased from Richard Norton, offers a stylish resting spot. The settee is covered in Kelly Wearstler's Fern Tree fabric from Schumacher. Carved and gessoed French sconces, circa 1900, found by designer Athalie Derse, flank a painting by Dutch artist Nicolaas Johannes Roosenboom.



Above: Landscape architect Douglas Hoerr used American elms to shade the yard. Right: Antique leather club chairs and a floor lamp from the 1960s, both from Balsamo in New York, offer a comfy reading spot in the library. Far right: The master bedroom's Hollywood Regency vanity provides a touch of glam. The rug is by Stark.





The owners' love of clean lines came into play in the cheerful kitchen, where sleek cabinetry by All Seasons Woodworks in St. Joseph, Michigan, gently melds with white Calacatta marble countertops. A Paul Revere Lantern by Dennis & Leen provides light after nightfall.



A sofa and club chair by Donghia lend a casual sensibility to the porch, part of the home's new extension. The ceramic coffee table from Mecox Gardens injects a playful detail to the space.

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who worked on the first phase of the project, and Dave Wardeberg of Ridgeway Builders was brought in to restore the existing guesthouse and to add a four-car garage. "What we do is like archaeology," says Heidbreder. "You open things up, and you're never quite sure what you'll find. We tried to understand what the original architect's ideas were and stayed in keeping with that." Custom windows, for example, were designed to mimic those on the rest of the house. Through those windows, the homeowners can now sit in the family room and enjoy unobstructed views of the beautiful surroundings.

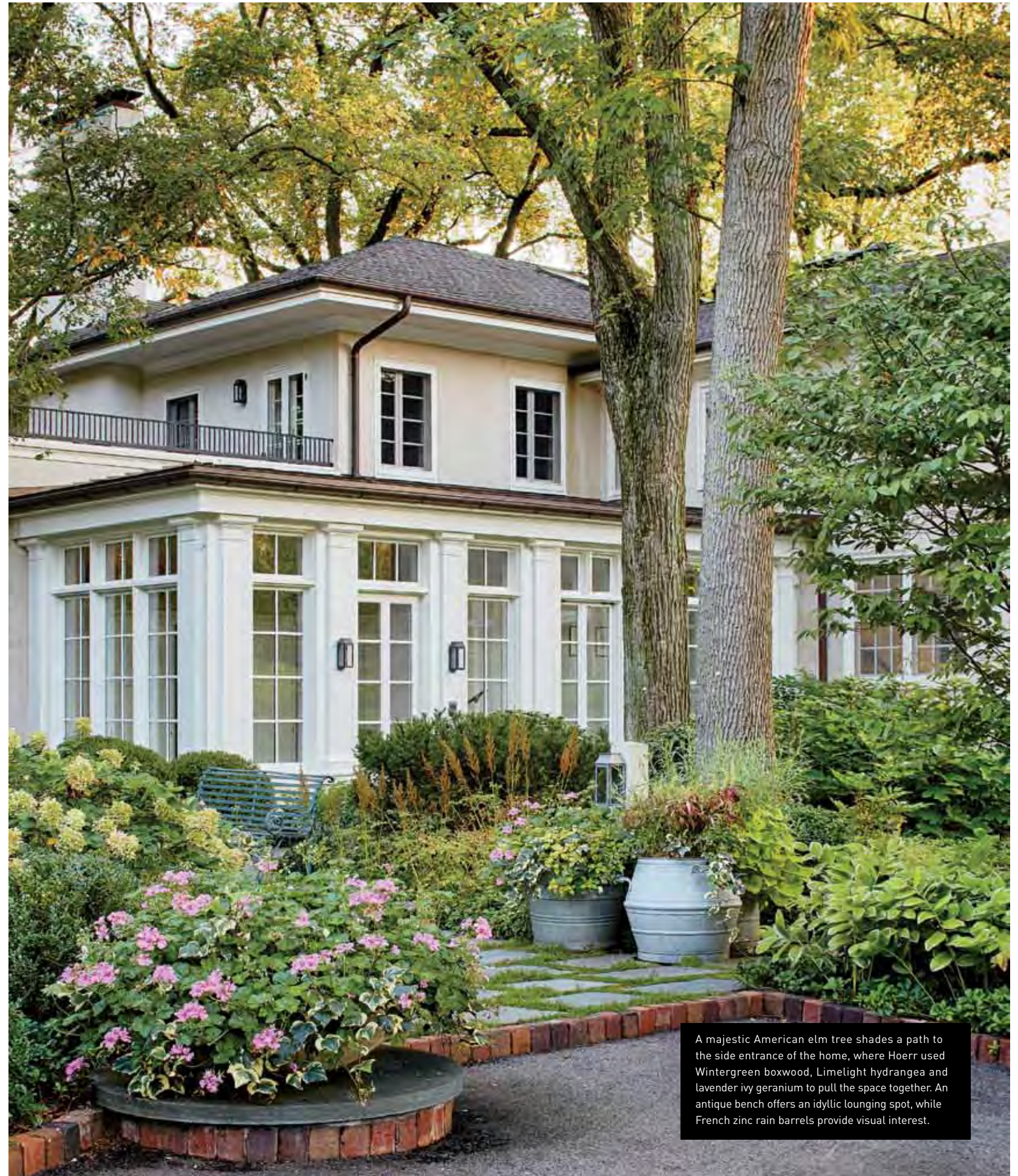
Inside, designer Athalie Derse helped the couple strike a balance between old-world charm and contemporary living, incorporating modern pieces with clean lines and touches of color to keep the rooms feeling fresh.



The wood-block print wallpaper in the dining room, imported from England in the 1930s, was carefully restored. The mahogany table, from the 1920s, and the eight Quigley-stamped Regency-style chairs—with their original hide covers—are from Richard Norton, as is the Baltic chandelier, circa 1825.



*Right:* Stone pavers leading to the pool pass rows of Annabelle hydrangea installed by Mariani Landscape. *Far right:* Rosa New Dawn vines climb over a wooden arbor, surrounded by Limelight hydrangea and Wintergreen boxwood plants. *Below:* A long Cornus mas hedge separates the immediate backyard from the pool area.



A majestic American elm tree shades a path to the side entrance of the home, where Hoerr used Wintergreen boxwood, Limelight hydrangea and lavender ivy geranium to pull the space together. An antique bench offers an idyllic lounging spot, while French zinc rain barrels provide visual interest.

*“It was a process of melding all that a modern family needs, without any one of them overpowering what already exists.”*



The master's tufted platform bed is covered in Rogers & Goffigon fabric. Nightstands sport lamps from Christopher Spitzmiller in New York. *Right:* The chic master bath features flooring with mosaic tile details by Waterworks. sconces by 20<sup>th</sup> Century Lighting add to the streamlined aesthetic.



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She then added fun fabrics and fine antiques throughout to create interest. “Antiques tell a story, and they’re often like beautiful pieces of sculpture,” she says. “Most came from Richard Norton, a longtime Chicago antiques dealer in Lake Forest who was familiar with the home.” In addition, Derse collaborated on the restoration of the home alongside Rugo.

The history of the home itself is indeed alive and well, with the previous owner playing a continuing role. “She still stops by to check up on the house,” says the husband “We feel a little like stewards. This house came before us, and we have to respect it and pass it on to somebody else who will respect it as well.” **L**