

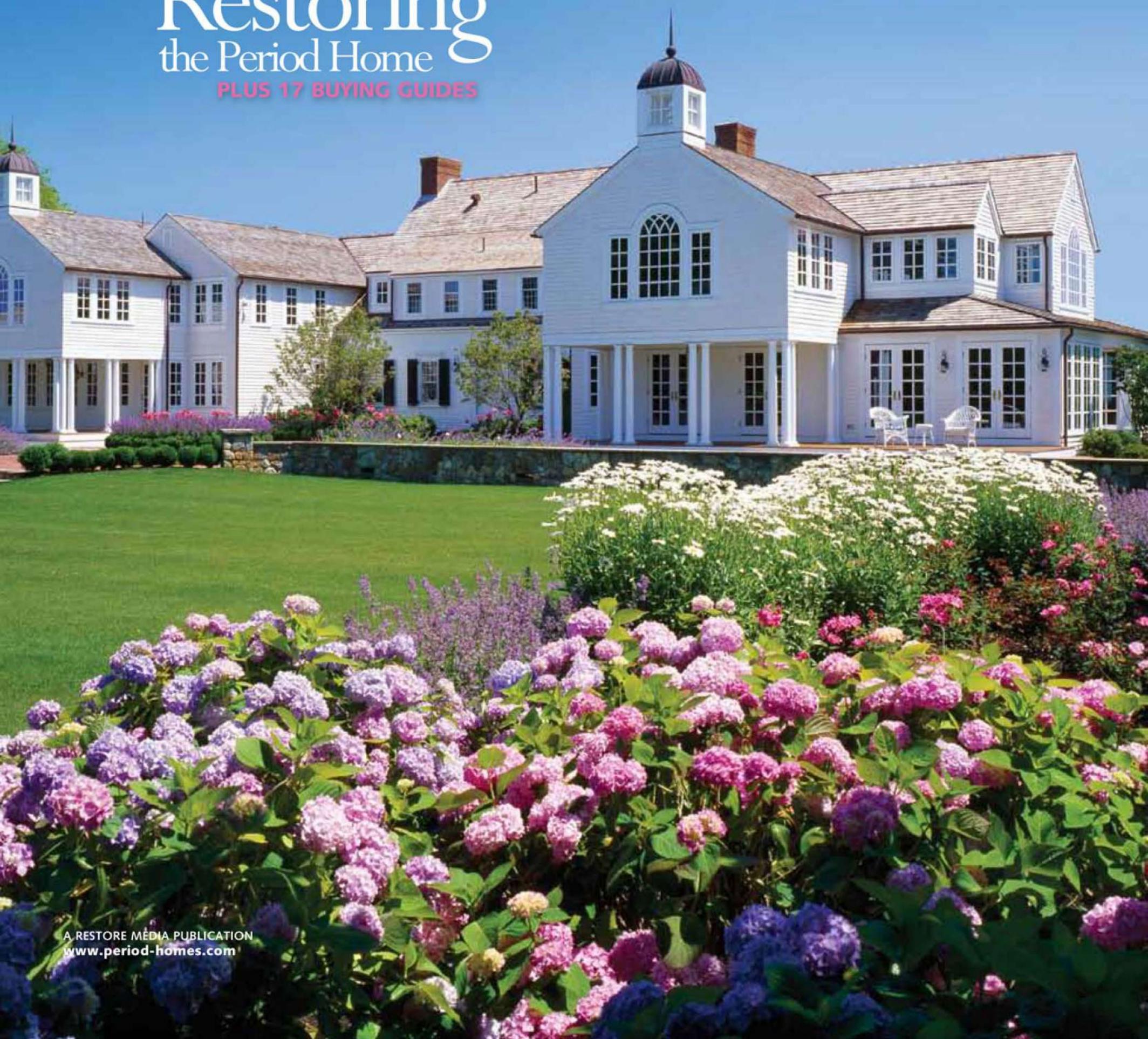
# Clem Labine's Period Homes

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## Restoring the Period Home

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# Okie Inspired

A Pennsylvania firm pays homage to a Colonial Revival master in the renovation of a ca. 1800 farmhouse.

**PROJECT:** RESIDENCE, CHADDS FORD, PA

**ARCHITECT:** PETER ZIMMERMAN ARCHITECTS, BERWYN, PA; PETER H. ZIMMERMAN, AIA, PRINCIPAL IN CHARGE; MARKI BRIGGS, AIA, PROJECT ARCHITECT

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** JONATHAN ALDERSON LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS, INC., WAYNE, PA

“The old buildings existing today are beautifully proportioned, even the simplest woodshed or spring house or bake oven having a charm of its own,” wrote early-20th-century architect R. Brognard Okie for the introduction of Eleanor Raymond’s 1930s book *Early Domestic Architecture of Pennsylvania*. Okie – the utmost proponent of Colonial Revival architecture of his time – traversed the Brandywine Valley studying, measuring and documenting the area’s early stone houses to re-create new dwellings similar to the original prototypes. So it comes as no surprise that Pennsylvania architect Peter Zimmerman takes cues from Okie when designing traditional houses for his clients. And like Okie, when Zimmerman renovates an historical home, he carefully considers each change so that it not only reflects the old structure but also celebrates and enhances that original form.

Zimmerman took this thoughtful approach when renovating and expanding a ca. 1800 farmhouse in historic Chadds Ford for a family of five who wanted to maintain the authenticity of the historical structure. “The existing house was a simple fieldstone building that had been parged and then whitewashed,” says Zimmerman. Although the property was idyllic, sitting on more than 20 acres of bucolic fields and forest, the existing house didn’t offer the room or desired layout the homeowners needed for themselves and their three children.

Like many old houses, the antique farmhouse sat very close to the road and lacked a formal entrance. “The house site also posed a challenge because it slopes up steeply from the road,” says Zimmerman. And because of the house’s location in an historic district, Zimmerman needed to acquire special zoning variances to enlarge the original structure. Another design restriction was that any new addition could not extend north (toward the road) beyond the original footprint. With the wish list satisfied and logistical obstacles overcome, Zimmerman – working with project architect Marki Briggs – set to design complementary additions, reorient the entry, create outdoor living spaces and car courts, as well as update all existing outbuildings.

Top: Located in Chadds Ford, PA, this ca. 1800 farmhouse was recently renovated and expanded by Berwyn, PA-based Peter Zimmerman Architects. On the exterior of the additions, new stucco over concrete block matches the texture of the stucco over stone of the original structure. All photos: courtesy of Peter Zimmerman Architects



Before the renovation, the driveway terminated behind the existing stone barn and the original three structures were connected by a series of walkways; post-renovation, the new formal driveway creates an entrance courtyard between the four structures. Site plan: courtesy of Peter Zimmerman Architects

Reconfiguring the main structure posed the greatest challenge for Zimmerman because of the amount of extra square footage required to fulfill the design program – which would include a new family room, living room, laundry, mudroom and breakfast room, as well as bedrooms and baths. Zimmerman first transformed an existing equipment shed into a guesthouse where the family could live while the house was being renovated. From the main house, Zimmerman removed a poorly constructed wraparound farmhouse porch and an ill-conceived 1960s rear addition. To increase the living space while still maintaining proper scale and proportion, the original central stone massing was expanded from three bays to four, creating the necessary scale to handle two secondary additions. “It’s important for the scale and massing to break down additions into smaller



Above and right: A one-and-a-half-story addition was constructed on the original west-facing facade (above), and a new, light-filled family dining area is housed under the shed porch.



The east facade of the structure included a wraparound porch that was removed in the renovation.

volumes,” says Zimmerman, “so they don’t overwhelm the original structure.” Zimmerman also incorporated three dormers into the old structure’s attic, establishing the original structure as the primary massing. The dormer additions not only create a hierarchy in the overall design, but also provide much needed space for a guest room and bath to the third floor. The homeowners wanted to embrace the whitewashed look in the new construction, so the fourth bay was created using concrete block and stucco veneer, which was applied by hand to give the exterior facade a textured-stone look.

Off the four-bay structure Zimmerman added two two-story additions – one for a formal living room and one for a family room – both with bedrooms on the second floors. Through these additions, the house took on the shape of a T, with the secondary additions flanking the primary structure to the east and west. Zimmerman introduced beaded cedar clapboard as siding for the secondary structures – paying special homage to Okie, who often applied clapboard in his Colonial Revival designs. “We also found evidence that the house once had shutters so we incorporated them into the design,” he says.

Zimmerman also wanted to create better light and flow in the house through the renovations. “Adding these elements to old structures can be tricky,” says Zimmerman. He overcame this challenge by creating three one-story glazed porches – including a breakfast room off the kitchen, a sitting room off the family room and a vestibule





Seen from the family dining room, the kitchen is visually connected to the hallway beyond and the courtyard by a large interior window. The central island is brown English oak and the cabinets are topped with honed Carrera marble.

off the formal living room – joining the older portions with the new additions. These secondary circulation routes both create flow in the home and flood the interiors with natural light. The kitchen’s internal wall is a row of interior windows, which again allows light to enter the space from the hall beyond.

During the renovation process, Zimmerman and general contractor Jack Young had to take the structure down to the stone and re-create many elements, such as window and door trim and a staircase. They incorporated salvaged flooring and early-19th-century doors to

the house to add a layer of patina. The doors were scraped of years of paint and reconditioned, adding depth and character. Zimmerman also introduced hand-wrought hardware to the doors and shutters and found antique Philadelphia mantels with gray and white King of Prussia marble surrounds to introduce formal spaces. “That marble is no longer quarried but adds a wonderful patina to the mantelpiece,” he says. Antique brick laid in a herringbone pattern became the flooring of the breakfast room addition. At thresholds, Zimmerman added stone slabs to further the illusion that this was a “later” addition. He also left transoms between transitional spaces to give the notion that these additions were created at a much earlier date.

Creating outdoor living spaces as well as a formal entrance to the house were key components to the overall design. Zimmerman worked with landscape designer Jonathan Alderson to re-create outdoor spaces. The original driveway was rerouted to pass the stone barn and guest house; it now terminates at a car court leading to a new formal entry porch located on the east side of the house. A secondary drive passes above and behind the stone barn leading to a new garage, and a stone pathway leads back to the house. Outdoor living spaces were carved into the terrain and local stone was quarried to create

walls that define these outdoor spaces.

The renovations and additions blend into the context of this historic town; one can imagine R. Brognard Okie approving of Zimmerman’s design. — *By Nancy E. Berry*

*Nancy E. Berry has written extensively about architecture and interior design for a variety of publications. She is also author of Architectural Trim: Adding Wainscoting, Mantels, Built-ins, Baseboards, Cornices, Castings and Columns to Your Home (Rockport Publishers, 2007).*



Seen from the southwest, the additions (left and right) demonstrate the growth and expansion over the years typical of historical Pennsylvania farmhouses.