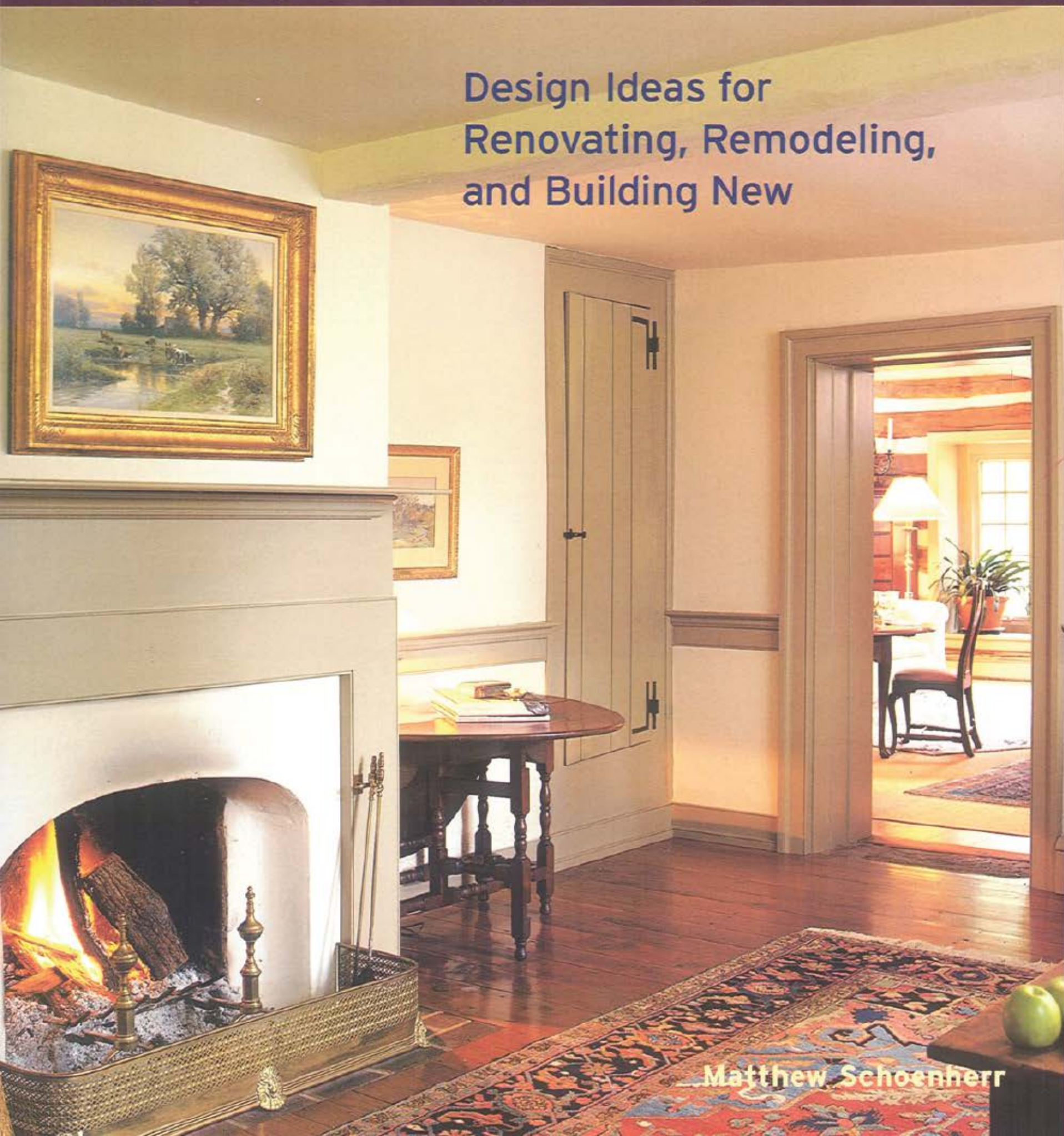




Updating
CLASSIC AMERICA

COLONIALS

Design Ideas for
Renovating, Remodeling,
and Building New



Matthew Schoenherr

Rural Victory



The chinking between logs is composed of an insulating filler material sandwiched between a plasterlike acrylic-based coating. The weathertight chinking adheres to the logs yet remains elastic, allowing movement as the structure expands and contracts with changes in the weather.

HOMEOWNERS GWEN AND JIM DESCRIBE their rural Pennsylvania Colonial as “being equally inaccessible from everywhere.” They came across the home, sited on a 16-acre plot of land, a decade ago and began collecting ideas on how to go about enlarging and renovating the 1741 stone structure, intending on paying respect to its early German origin. It was a puzzle that took years for Gwen to solve.

It wasn't until Gwen began working with architect Peter Zimmerman that the solution became clear. They would add a small addition to the rear of the home for informal dining with seating nearby. An existing stone appendage, ideally positioned to serve the dining area, would accommodate the kitchen and a new hall. The addition would not be of stone to match the house, but instead of rustic logs, a historically compatible means of construction. Peter explains there was no attempt to make a replica of the house. “The intent was to provide a livable building,” he says, “sensitive to the historic nature of its site and its natural environment.”



The renovated house and its new addition appear firmly anchored to the site, rather than looking as if it had been plopped down on the surrounding landscape.



ABOVE, The living room contains a smaller, refined fireplace in contrast to the large hearth in the entry hall. A second access to the new addition was created in this room, allowing a circular flow to the floor plan. The thickness of the exterior stone wall is evident in the deep door jamb of the passageway.

RIGHT, The timber ceiling frame is constructed with the same Old World methods used to support a second floor—a central summer beam supporting joists to either side. The open framework is set at about the same height as the ceilings in nearby rooms to ease the dramatic difference in volume between the addition and the house.



ROCK THE HOUSE

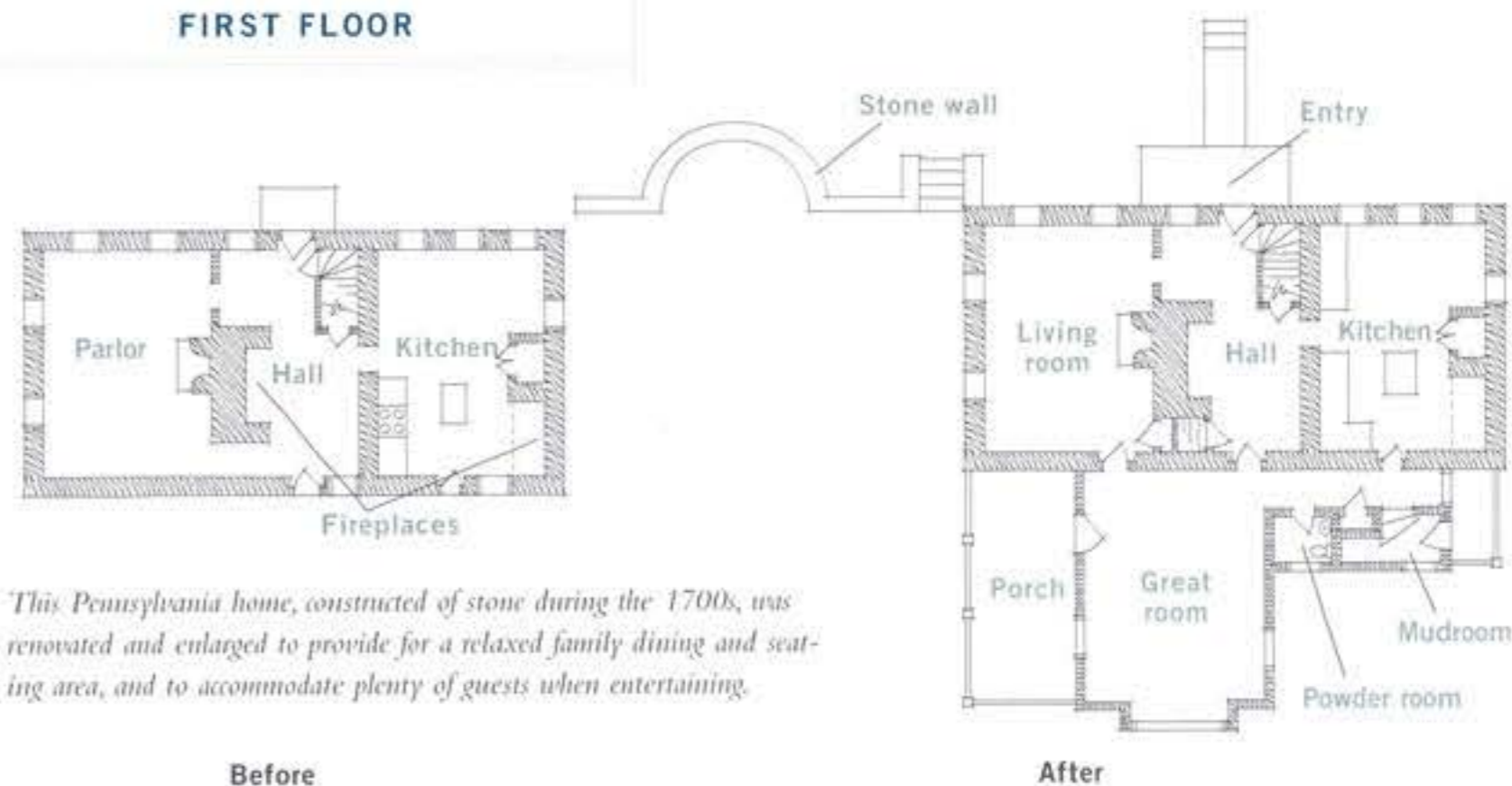
Despite the German heritage of this Pennsylvania Colonial, the floor plan of the original house follows the English pattern of northeastern construction quite closely. A large stone chimney dominates the center of the house, with fireboxes on both sides to warm the lower rooms. The rectangular form of this stone Colonial isn't graced with the typical balanced facade however. The door is well left of center, having originally been the entry to what was known as a *half house*—a small home built with the idea of expanding as soon as the means became available. The early owners must have found their American dream, and the house received a stone addition in the very late 1700s.

In the design of the latest renovation, Peter opened the plan as much as possible, doing away with partitions that were installed by earlier owners. The original floors



Winter visitors arriving by either sleigh or SUV are made welcome in the home's entry hall by the crackling warmth of this original stone fireplace, finished with white-washed plaster. The passage beyond was cut through the thick stone wall and leads to the new addition.

FIRST FLOOR



Conservation and Wetlands

★ PRACTICAL **THAT RAIN GULLY** between you and your neighbor's house might not simply be a ditch for storm runoff. It could be part of a larger inland wetlands ecosystem. There are strict limitations on how close you can build to the edge of wet areas, and it pays to review the town maps even if an obvious brook, marsh, or pond is located on your property. In many

cases, the boundary lines shown on a conservation map will be more restrictive than the visible portion of the wetlands feature on your site. Regulations also exist to prevent soil runoff from an open excavation into sensitive areas. Because of this erosion control, you may be

required to install silt fencing or hay bales at the perimeter of your site. If you live in a coastal environment ask your conservation official for additional limitations that may apply to your property.



RIGHT, The old exterior stone wall remains visible in the new dining area and creates a romantic backdrop for an evening meal. The chandelier holds candles, not electric bulbs, to heighten the effect.

FACING PAGE, The log-and-chink construction creates a dramatically graphic interior finish for the new dining and sitting areas, reinforcing the rustic character of the original house. Daylight floods in from the box bay window at the end of the room and from two small dormers located above.

were refinished, and the stone walls of the fireplaces were repaired and whitewashed.

CABIN FERVOR

Although the addition is of a different material, it nestles in harmoniously with the house. Selected logs were hewn square and stacked, and the spaces between them were filled with plaster in a traditional process called *chinking*. The foundation for the addition, visible above the sloping grade, is a veneer of natural local fieldstone that matches the original house precisely. Even the new mortar that fills the gaps between the stones was tinted to match exactly the weathered mortar of the existing house.

The new room adjoins the back of the two-story stone structure and is accessed by two openings cut through the thick wall. One leads in from the living room, the other from a hall Gwen and Peter carved



from the kitchen wing. The ruggedly textured stone wall in the addition is left visible as a foil to the horizontal log construction. Gwen, an interior designer, furnished the new space with antiques and other furniture she had collected over many years, and she revels in the dramatic contrast between the natural materials and the polished Queen Anne table and chairs.

Centered over the table is a massive summer beam, typical of those used in timber construction. From the beam, Gwen has hung a blacksmith's iron chandelier that is fitted with candles instead of electric lights. The atmosphere created by the flickering glow of the candles casts deep shadows on the rugged materials and radiates an orange blush on the cathedral ceiling above,

taking Jim and Gwen's dinner guests back to the era when the stone house was first inhabited.

Opposite the dining area is a spacious seating group with a box bay window projecting from the cabin's wall. Gwen tiled the windowsill, creating a deep shelf for potted house plants. It's also a convenient place for extra seating when a large group fills the house during a party.

From the side of the room, a glass door leads to a summer porch, which faces a small pond on the property. The porch is deep enough for cushy seats and a small table to while away the evening hours comfortably in the quiet seclusion of this inaccessible full-time getaway.