

TRADITIONAL HOME

A rustic interior scene featuring a wooden table with various decorative items like a duck figurine, potted plants, and a hat hanging on the wall. The scene is lit with warm, natural light from a window in the background. The title 'TRADITIONAL HOME' is written in large, bold, red letters across the top of the image.

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HOMES
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DECORATING

HIS AND HER GARDENS

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LUXE FOR LESS: DESIGN TACTICS

90 YEARS



MATTHEW SMYTH'S WEEKEND

HOUSE IN THE HUDSON RIVER

FROM

VALLEY IS NEARLY A CENTURY

REMOVED FROM HIS APARTMENT

IN NEW YORK CITY.



MANHATTAN

BY PAMELA J. WILSON PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF McNAMARA



A small patch of the kitchen
serves as a garden shed and a
showing nook for the
assortments of wares and
things. The entire lot rack is
kitchen. (Opposite) The old
American home of the century
house sits in an acre of land,
but it's only a few minutes' walk
to town. (Opposite) The
house is filled with a book.



Placed against the painted staircase in the living room is an old wing chair recovered in gray linen, an ottoman table that Matthew likes for its "tough but formal" design, and a quirky Gothic-style chair. Right: The view from the kitchen into the living room shows one of several diamond-paned windows that add to the charm of the house.



When he tires of the fast track in New York

City, (which is usually every Friday), interior designer Matthew South leads a quiet retreat to his weekend place in the Hudson River Valley. It's about a two-hour drive from his Manhattan apartment to the small village where his house is located, but for Matthew, the drive seems shorter. "I stop crossing the minutes when I exit the [New York State] thruway," he says. "It's all about a half-hour to me because that's the rest, but the drive is so beautiful I don't notice the clock."

When he pulls into the picturesque village in the foothills of the Catskill Mountains, the designer's first stop is the grocery store, where he stocks up on groceries and jars of salsa. "It's my Friday-night ritual," he says. Then it's off to home. By the time I open the front door, Manhattan is far behind me. I'm in a different world." And how could he not be? The 50-year-old New York City house—until newly overflowing in it—feels so comfortable to his sophisticated legs in the Big Apple. "I finished this place not as I might have for clients, but just to please myself and my guests," says Matthew, a 1997 *International House of Design* award winner. "It's a very personal house, designed for my own enjoyment."

Matthew owned the house for a year before he decided to get down to business and fix his weekend rest. "I kept thinking I didn't have time to become absorbed with my own projects—that it was more important to concentrate on my clients—but once I decided what I wanted to do it only took me a few months."



Above: An old leather tufted sofa with shiny new cushions is the centerpiece of the living room.

Matthew found the tufted sofa at a house sale in Connecticut and used it in his city apartment before deciding it was better suited here.

Right: Whether he's alone or with company, Matthew loves sitting in the peaceful kitchen dining area, anchored by original big windows. The table, an antique American pine, is surrounded by reproduction Windsor chairs.

Opposite: In lieu of using modern-day marriage material in the new, country-style kitchen, Matthew tapped the antique island with antique hickory fourburners.

The decorating scheme—"of no particular period or style"—is a smattering ground of many old, fun, and interesting things, all tied together with simple backgrounds, original woodwork, painted low-luster white, and polished Douglas fir floors.

"I started with an inventory of things I had collected that were sitting or stashed and things not really bringing home to my new apartment," says Matthew. "Most everything else I found locally as while traveling. I have a whole inventory of antique shops that I keep my eye on. Every weekend I drive around, fighting the temptation to buy something and keep it for myself."

But try as he does to resist temptation, Matthew, like others who collect, often succumbs. Glass pottery, coffee tables, and gift basket paintings by local artists are three passions he finds hard to pass up, early to mid-19th-century furniture is another. "It's always an adventure. I never know what I'm going to find," he says. And not assured, rarely does he come home empty-handed.



A recently acquired "invisible" is the Italian-style four-poster that takes up most of the master bedroom. The bed is definitely old, but not as old as the oak needed to make it. Matthew suspects that some of the pieces are at least 200 years old. Another favorite acquisition is the local wood octagonal table placed by the staircase in the living room. "It's just a country piece based on a classic design," he says. "I loved it because it was rough but somehow so formal."

The color scheme—quite subtle in the living room, more green in the kitchen and dining area, and with bright and historic updates—covers the house with a consistency throughout. "The wall colors change according to the size of the," Matthew says. "I especially like it when the sun shines through the stained-glass windows. There's a wonderful glow that's almost ethereal."

In addition to being a very personal place, the house is personal, too. Matthew says to that. When, for instance, he remodeled the kitchen (mostly a series of small moves), he did so with guests in mind. "I like to cook, but I like it even better when my friends cook, so I give them the very best. Nice talk," he says.

The pleasure of the kitchen goes far beyond practical necessities, though. With-



Opposite: A sturdy, Tudor-style four-poster bed snug as a bug in the small but inviting master bedroom. The tester is lined with trim elegantly draped to the boards. Among the other furnishings are an old Spanish-inspired table and a circa-1850 wood-paneled stool.

Above right: The sink in the bathroom is new, but it has a wonderful, old-fashioned feel. Truly vintage are the heated rug, the dramatic 1930s antique black tub, and the Egyptian revival stool.

Above: At the top of the stairs, Matthew turned second space into a desk area.



area, the old stove and stove, that he likes. Especially appealing is the eating area reinforced by three large windows that look out to the garden and the old stone houses beyond. Since there is no formal dining room in the 1,200-square-foot house, this space suffices for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Meals are usually casual affairs, with dishes prepared with fresh ingredients from the local farmer's market. Going to the market is Matthew's Saturday-morning ritual. "It has all kinds of wonderful things, and it's open all year," he says.

As much as he enjoys going out and about—hiking in the Catskills, hunting for antiques, and peering around the charming village—this New Yorker is happiest "just doing nothing" at home. The collection may be far from approaching its Manhattan, but here, on weekends at least, it's still 50 years away. ■



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For more information, see the Reader's Resource on page 100.

