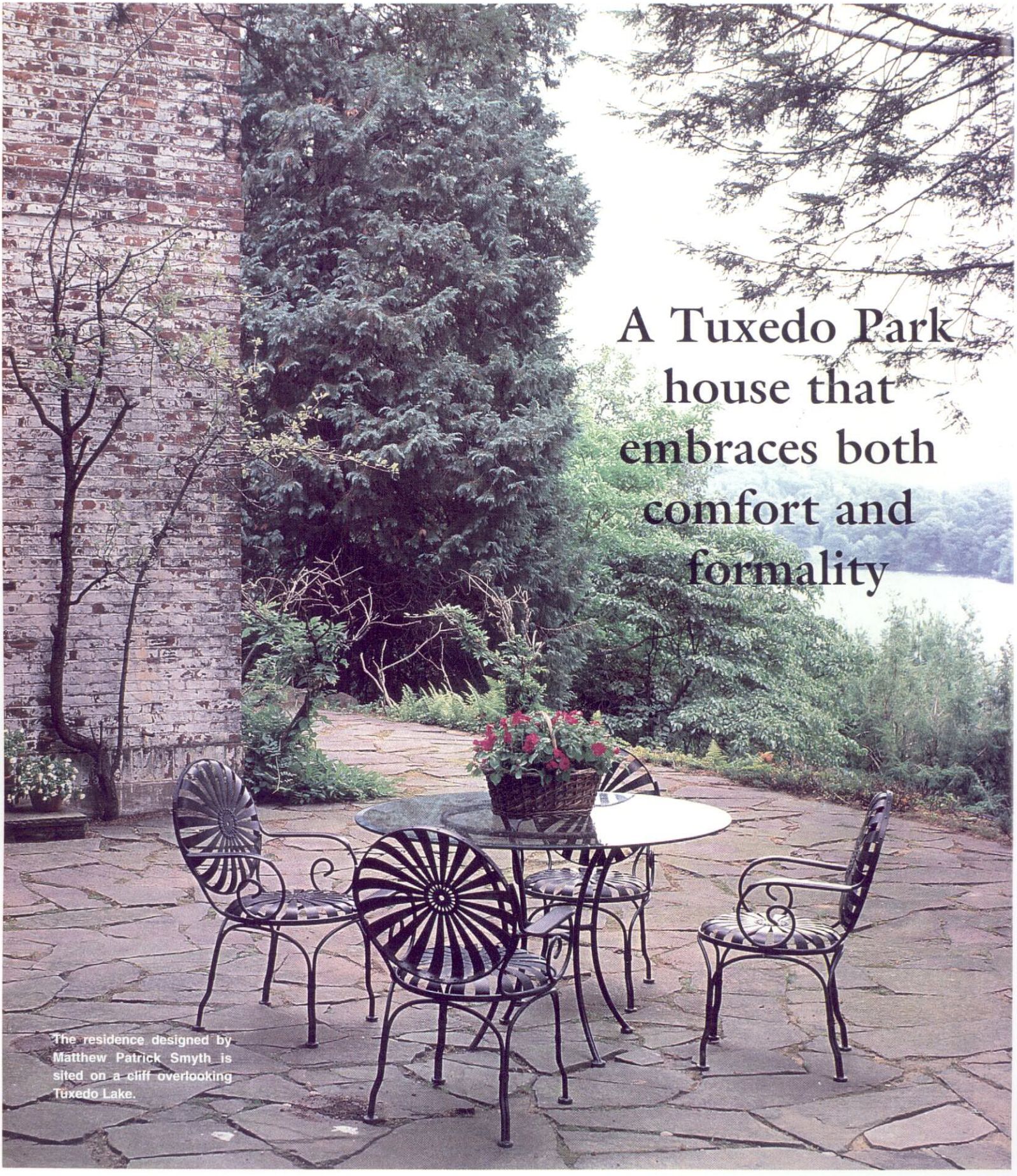

A Tuxedo Park house that embraces both comfort and formality

The residence designed by Matthew Patrick Smyth is sited on a cliff overlooking Tuxedo Lake.

Fabrics and colors were selected to complement the natural landscape that gives the house its unique character. The floral curtain fabric is from Cowtan & Tout; the striped satin on the Sheraton settee is from Brunschwig & Fils.

NO JACKET REQUIRED

To buy a weekend house or not to buy? That is the question facing many New Yorkers who yearn for the comforts of a country refuge but who are unwilling to suffer the slings and arrows of an outrageous commute from Manhattan. For years, the prospect of lengthy journeys to and from the city kept two of designer Matthew Patrick Smyth's clients—a professional couple who live on the Upper East Side—from venturing beyond

Left: The designer restored an original archway leading to the living room.

the city limits. Then they discovered Tuxedo Park. Located just 40 miles northwest of New York City, the Tuxedo Park community promised all the luxuries of country living—beautiful, natural landscape, a pristine lake, charming old houses—within an hour's drive from their Upper East Side residence.

Having previously designed two New York apartments for this couple, Smyth was quite familiar with their tastes and desires. "She's very definite and very particular about certain things like color and pattern. There's no fooling around," Smyth explains. "It's good to work with someone who is clear about what she likes and who can make decisions quickly."

The house selected by Smyth's clients was built in 1934 and renovated several times over the years. While many of the decorative embellishments of past renovations were clearly unsuitable for the new tenants, the structure itself and the thoughtful layout of rooms was in fine condition. In other words, this elegant, three-bedroom brick house was built like, well, a brick house. "The home was very nicely planned, so elaborate structural changes weren't necessary," Smyth recalls. "But there were lots of indoor trellises, mirrored walls, and bleached floors that looked not only dated but also not in keeping with the spirit of the place."

When the old wallpaper, mirrors and dropped ceilings were removed, Smyth and his clients discovered several of the architect's original sketches drawn directly on the walls. These sketches provided a template for the designer's suggestions, which included restoring original archways and mantelpieces, putting in a new kitchen and renovating the bathrooms.

To furnish the house, Smyth and his client went on several shopping trips to London's famed antiquities emporia. "She loves traditional design and feels comfortable with a somewhat formal look. Tuxedo Park also lends itself to that style of design," Smyth notes. "Her favorite period is probably English Regency, but she's drawn to interesting silhouettes and finishes rather than specific stylistic periods," he adds.

In the end, Smyth seems content with the transformation he and his clients were able to effect. "It was fun to correct some of the more questionable decorative decisions that had been made in the past," he says, "and to restore the house to something that looks as good if not better than the original."

STORY BY MACAULEY CONNOR
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIK KVALSVIK

Top left: The furnishings are characterized by a mix of periods and styles that emphasizes complementary materials.

Bottom left: The dining room features a hand-painted Chinese wallpaper from Gracie as well as an English Regency dining table and sideboard.

Right: In the guest bedroom, pink-and-white striped wallpaper is juxtaposed with a cotton chintz featuring floral motifs: both from Hinson.

Bottom: In the living room, the original fireplace mantel, which had been badly damaged, was restored and finished in faux marble by Eileen Connor. The gilt Chippendale mirror adds a note of formality to the comfortable furnishings. Chairs are covered in a printed fabric from Brunschwig & Fils.