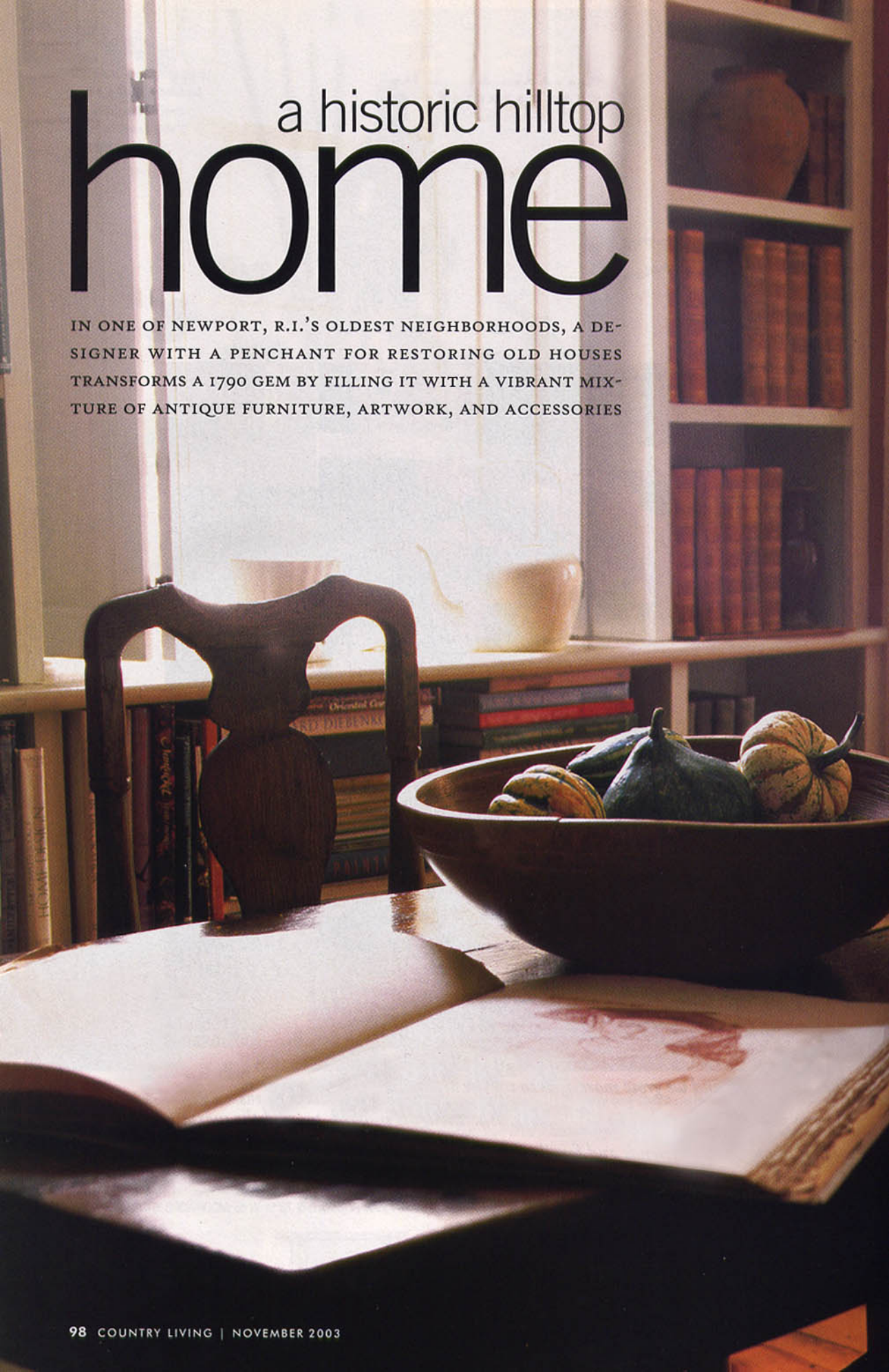



a historic hilltop home

IN ONE OF NEWPORT, R.I.'S OLDEST NEIGHBORHOODS, A DESIGNER WITH A PENCHANT FOR RESTORING OLD HOUSES TRANSFORMS A 1790 GEM BY FILLING IT WITH A VIBRANT MIXTURE OF ANTIQUE FURNITURE, ARTWORK, AND ACCESSORIES



A photograph of a dining room. The wall is a muted red color. A large, ornate mirror with a gold-colored frame is mounted on the wall. The mirror reflects a wooden table with a bowl of fruit. In the foreground, there is a dark wooden chair with a high back and a upholstered chair with a dark fabric seat and back. To the left, a window with a patterned curtain is visible. The lighting is warm and focused on the mirror and the chair.

To emphasize the intimacy of the breakfast room/library, Sandy Tarr chose a muted red for the walls. Although the built-in bookshelves around the window are not original, Sandy kept them for the time being. Curvaceous 18th-century side chairs flank a French farm table; hand-turned wooden bowls—like the example on the table—are one of Sandy's favorite items to hunt for in antiques shops. The early-1800s mirror retains its period gilding. SEE SHOPPING GUIDE FOR DETAILS.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUSIE CUSHNER

PRODUCED BY KIM FREEMAN

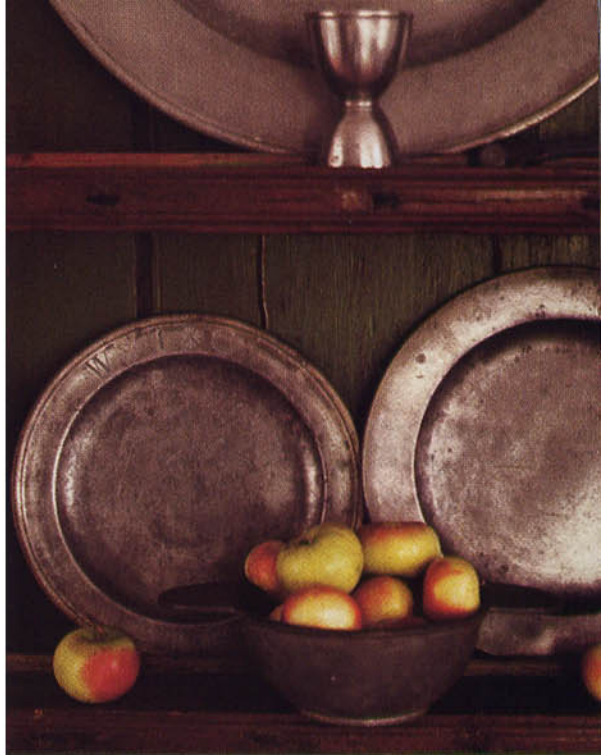
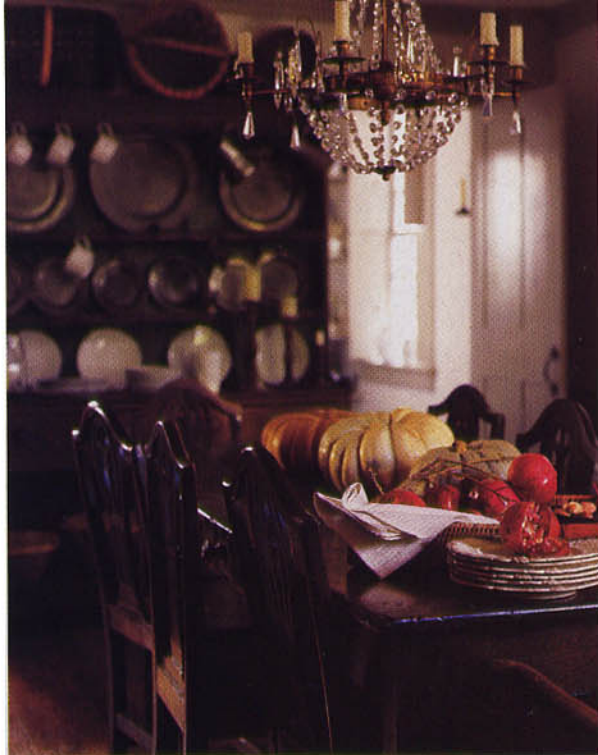
WRITTEN BY MARIE PROELLER HUESTON



comfort

Sandra Tarr is a woman of many talents—textile designer, painter, and interior decorator among them. Yet restoring old homes is one of her favorite activities. During the past 20 years she has rescued nearly 10 houses from the effects of age. In 2001, a 1790 dwelling beckoned. “The instant I saw its seven fireplaces and wide-plank chestnut floors I knew it was for me,” Sandy recalls. To uncover the home’s intrinsic charm, Sandy kept paint colors, window treatments, and furnishings simple. “Historical accuracy is not my goal when I begin a project,” she says. “I want rooms to look comfortable, as if the objects in them were right at home.”





Newer pieces intermingle with old

furniture

Opposite page: Sandy spotted the century-old crewelwork-covered sofa in an antiques-shop window. "Pieces don't have to be period perfect as long as a room's overall look is right," she points out. Discovered in Asheville, N.C., the c. 1800 walnut-veneered high chest has been in the family for 15 years.

collections

Above, left: Sandy fell in love with the late-1700s hutch in a local antiques shop; fortunately the large item fit neatly into the keeping room. The stately piece now holds antique pewter (*above, right*) and reproduction white china. A late-1700s Gustavian crystal chandelier adds a touch of sparkle.

artwork

Sandy appreciates the simple compositions and stark contrasts between dark and light in Early American portraits (*opposite page, main photograph*). "My own paintings are more impressionistic," she says of works like the living room's oil-on-canvas row-boat (*right*), "but I enjoy the play between old and new when I display them together."





“I never retouch the antiques I buy,” Sandy says.

“I love patinas and chipping paint and have yet to see a restoration that doesn’t look too pristine. What’s the point of having something old if it looks as good as new?” Witness the keeping room’s late-18th-century blanket chest and the well-worn wooden trug that sits on top of it (*this page*). The painting—signed simply Quigley, with no other name—is dated 1675. Open shelves in the butler’s pantry (*opposite page*) support antique china and glassware. “I often combine colors and patterns,” she reveals. “For me, setting a table is like painting.”



finding the perfect bed

After admiring a photograph of an antique canopy bed, Sandy began searching for a similar design to use in her own bedroom. She eventually found the four posts of an early-1800s Sheridan campaign bed and hired a furniture maker to re-create the base and canopy around them. The bed now stands as a graceful centerpiece in the serene setting. The canopy itself is left bare to accentuate the sculptural lines of the frame. Apricot taffeta curtains add just the right amount of softness to the pared-down interior. A gentleman, whose early-1800s portrait rests in a gilded frame, surveys the scene.





The essential elements of a bedroom

restful colors

The white walls and pale-gray woodwork found elsewhere in the house work especially well in the bedrooms. Furnishings and accessories throughout the rooms add subtle washes of color. The warm wood tones of bed frames, dressers, and floorboards punctuate the tranquil atmosphere.

ample storage

Blanket chests and small trunks (*opposite page, main photograph*) hold photographs, magazine clippings, and quilts. Sheets and towels fill the bottom drawer of the guest bath's mahogany Sheridan dresser (*above, left; detail, opposite page*); the top drawers have been left empty for guests' belongings.

vintage linens

Crochet-edge pillowcases and matelassé bedcovers (*above, right*) are combined with new items because, as Sandy observes, "manufacturers didn't make full-size fitted sheets 100 years ago." She keeps patchwork quilts—like the late-1800s design on the guest room's wing chair (*right*)—on hand for added warmth when reading or writing.

