

NEW LIMESTONE ENTRIES ENHANCE THE NEOCLASSICAL PROPORTIONS OF THE HOUSE. *FACING PAGE:* MAGNIFICENT BRONZE DOORS OPEN INTO THE EXPANSIVE ENTRY HALL WITH ITS TRICOLOR GOLD LEAF.

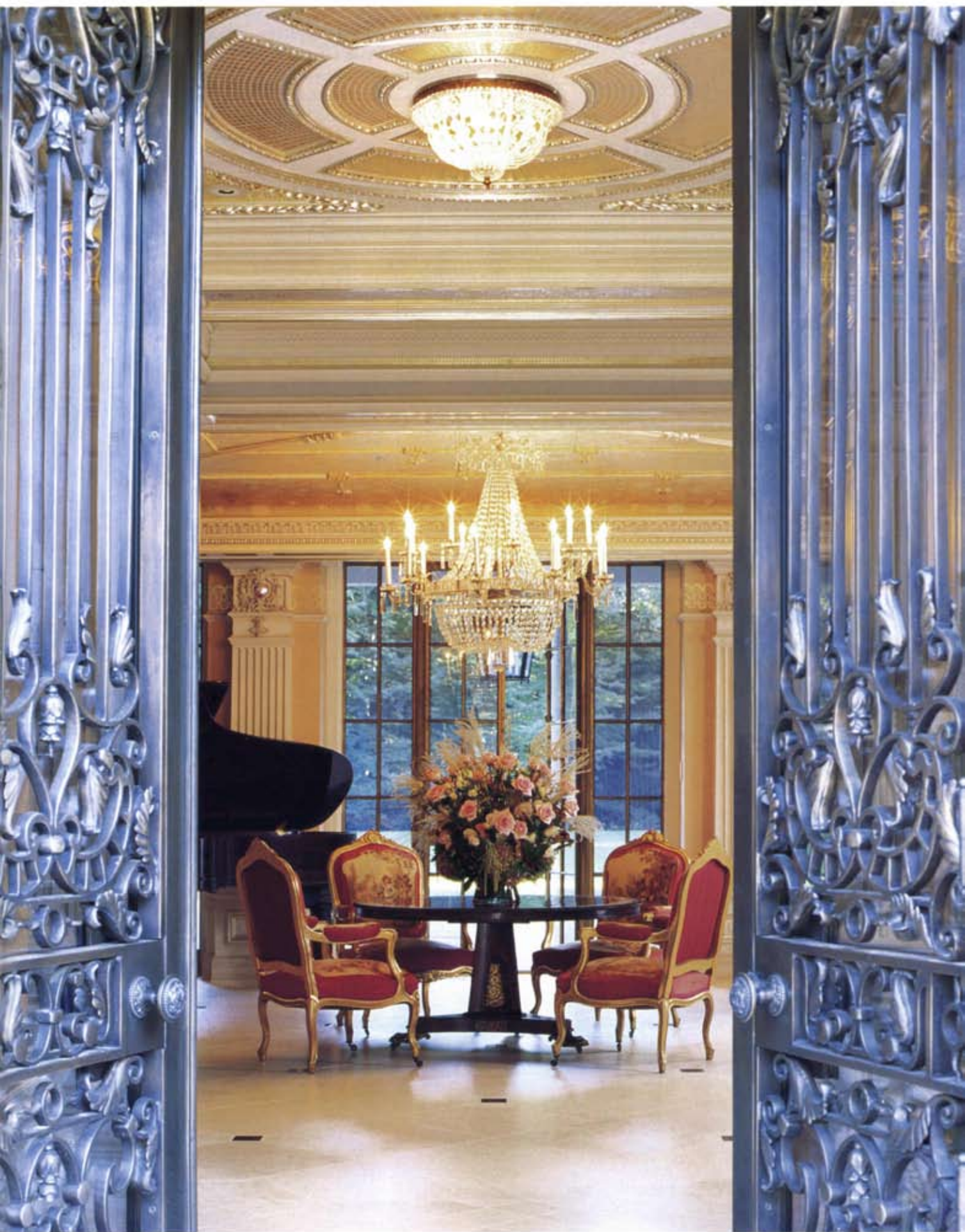


# Gold Standard

*Showcasing the influences of both eighteenth-century France and America's Gilded Age, a Brookline estate shines with a palette of pastels highlighted with gleaming touches of gilt.*

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MILLWORK: WOODMEISTER MASTER BUILDERS | DECORATIVE PAINTING: JOHN CANNING

*Connecticut-based John Canning* is a nationally known and celebrated conservation specialist who, among other high-profile projects, restored the sky mural on the ceiling of Grand Central Station and brought the sparkle back to the dome of San Francisco's City Hall. But when he talks about the Brookline, Massachusetts, estate known as English Rose, his Glasgow brogue softens and grows warm. "The house is something very special, and the entry hall? It's a Fabergé," he says with a smile. An apt description for an expansive space whose architectural





LEFT: EVERY ROOM HOLDS ORNATE WOODWORK. BELOW LEFT: THE BRONZE STAIR RAIL AND NEWEL POST ARE WORKS CREATED FOR THE HOUSE. BELOW: A CRYSTAL CHANDELIER BRINGS JUST THE RIGHT LIGHT TO THE ANTIQUE FURNITURE.



*“People have the impression that good craftsmen are a thing of the past, but this house proves that isn’t so.”*





THE LIBRARY WALLS ARE LINED WITH HAND-TOOLED LEATHER FINISHED IN THE SHADES OF PEACH AND ROSE FAVORED BY THE HOMEOWNER. FACING PAGE: THE DINING ROOM WALL PANELS ARE FAUX-PAINTED TO LOOK LIKE DAMASK.

elements gleam with gilding in three different gold leaf: 15 karat, 18 karat and 23 karat. The exquisite ceiling, whose painted mosaic rises to a gentle peak framed by a deep, carved cove, crowns walls decorated with a luminous neoclassical frieze, gleaming ornamental eggs atop reeded pilasters, and carved wood whose relief is picked out in tender shades of peach, rose and cream. The overall effect is like that of a beautiful woman clothed from head to toe in exquisite couture: her jewels are the final, glittering accent to a perfect composition.

*Canning is one of* a roster of talented people who worked on the house, and each of them becomes enthusiastic, even sentimental, when remembering the project. "It's a beautiful, romantic house that's elegant, grand and European," says Eugene Lawrence, the Newbury Street-based interior designer responsible for the stunning

collection of antique and reproduction furniture, chandeliers and fireplace mantels, as well as for the dramatic and suitable window treatments. "It's rare for a house's design to be so well integrated, so all of a piece. But here everything reflects a feminine, ethereal aesthetic."

The house was built in 1929 for Quincy Adams Shaw, a wealthy copper mining investor. A three-story, symmetrical red brick Georgian Revival of nearly 18,000 square feet, it reflects a prevailing taste that looked to England for design inspiration. Four years ago, Canning and Lawrence joined Boston architects Meyer and Meyer and Woodmeister Master Builders of Holden, Nantucket and Newport to bring about this renovation. Together, they took their cues from the refined, balanced proportions favored in the Georgian era, as well as from the best of American Gilded Age design.

"This is the nicest piece of property in the area," says John Meyer. "The original materials were the best possi-



ble. We straightened out the interior and made it look like it was supposed to: not just handsome, but as though it was the original work.”

The impressive nature of the house starts right at the front door. “The entry is a copy of a room Christian Herter designed for Oliver Ames at the corner of Commonwealth Avenue and Massachusetts Avenue,” Canning says, citing one of the great Herter Brothers of New York, whose late nineteenth-century furniture is displayed in museums and celebrated as the pinnacle of the cabinetmaker’s art. “That Boston room was a copy of one designed for J.P. Morgan. But in this house, we changed the colors to suit the taste of this particular client.”

The soft pastels this homeowner favors occur throughout the house, even in the library, where a dark wood wainscot and tooled leather walls would, in other houses, create a dark, massive sensibility. Here, the design in the English leather employs soft pinks and blues, and the

upholstered furniture and window treatments are liberally treated with shell-pink accents.

*The dining room, clad* in Canning-created, damask-patterned wall panels, features luxurious draped and swagged window treatments that echo the rich aubergine on the walls. But here, too, that same shell pink lightens and softens the whole via shirred satin valences. “This style evolved because the homeowner travels extensively in Europe and is especially enamored of the chateaus outside of Paris,” Lawrence explains. “It resulted in an interior that’s more French than American and that’s informed by historic design imperatives. The pastel colors hint at French rococo and are perfectly suited to the house’s architectural style. Many Georgian houses emulated the French.”

The master bath may be the most compelling and beau-



THE MASTER BEDROOM IS A STUDY IN FEMINE TONES AND TEXTURES. BELOW: THE FOUR SEASONS BLESS THE MASTER BATHROOM SUITE. FACING PAGE: AN ENFILADE OF OVAL ROOMS CULMINATES IN A FRENCH SLIPPER TUB.



tiful example of the house's neoclassical soul; if Palladio had designed master bathroom suites, he might have made them look just like this. An enfilade of rooms culminates in a curvaceous French slipper tub, placed in the center of a sun-filled room for an effect that's Zen-like in its simplicity. On the way to this ultimate bath is a circular space whose painted wall panels depict the four seasons as beautiful young women. A fanciful, upholstered trefoil bench placed in the center is the room's only furniture.

*The house may be* large, but distinct sections, each with rooms built to a comfortable human scale, create intimacy. The entrance hall, living room and dining room are the most public and also the largest rooms; each opens to an expansive rear lawn through tall bronze French doors. Bronze is also the material of the front doors and the magnificent railing and newel post of the limestone staircase. The template for the stone risers and treads was sent to Carrara,







Italy, where each was cut at the quarry, then shipped here and assembled on site.

*Superb millwork installed* by Woodmeister turns each room into a jewel box of ornament: ceilings are coffered, walls divided into panels, and rooms feature near-extinct examples of the woodworker's art such as hand-carved brackets, pediments, chair rails, dados and picture rails. And in room after room, artfully applied bits of gold, platinum and even aluminum leafing catch the light, making the architectural elements shine and underscoring the proportions of each room. The gilding can be dazzling, as in the entrance hall, or subtle, as in the master bedroom, where mere touches at the bases of the columns give them distinction and make them appear to rise up out of the ground.

"It all works and is not overdone," says Canning.

Architect Meyer agrees. "People have the impression that good craftsmen are a thing of the past," he says. "But this house proves that isn't so." **NEH**

**RESOURCES** For more information about this home see page 276.

TWO LONG LILY PONDS EDGED WITH BOXWOOD EMBELLISH THE BACK PATIO. *FACING PAGE TOP:* THE SWIMMING POOL IS IN A HIDDEN GLADE. *FACING PAGE BOTTOM:* TALL WINDOWS GAZE OUT TO A WOODED LANDSCAPE.

