

serendipity on the sound

by Saxon Henry
Photography by Elizabeth Glasgow

Horace Walpole coined the word “serendipity” to describe the enterprise of making fortunate discoveries by accident. He gained his inspiration from *The Three Princes of Serendip*, a fairy tale recounting the travels of three princes who, with great regularity, made delightful discoveries quite by chance. Similarly, the homeowners of a Lloyd Neck

residence, along with interior designer Jo Ann Deegan, ASID, of Jo Ann Deegan Interiors Ltd., Huntington, had a variety of serendipitous finds as they collaborated on building a 7,000-square-foot home perched on a knoll above Long Island Sound.

Exhibiting many of New York architect Robert Stern’s stylistic markers, such as continuous flowing space both vertically and horizontally,

the American Shingle-style exterior of the home reflects the influence with its varied roof line and the placement of windows, which fill the interior environment with natural light. Deegan, who was hired three months before the homeowners were slated to break ground, remarks, “The house came together almost as if I had done it in another lifetime. The process was almost scary at times!”

Both designer and client envisioned a mix of old and new furnishings. Their search for antiques and one-of-a-kind pieces would bring them added excitement throughout the collaboration. An antique grandfather clock, which now graces a wall in the foyer of the home, is a central character in one of their favorite fortuitous tales.

Deegan and her client were touring an antique show in Greenlawn when the homeowner spied a clock that had been manufactured in Leeds, Scotland, by “Ja. Gallaway.” The clock was just what the client had envisioned

Leading a path through the first-floor hallway and up the graceful stairway is British Axminster carpeting. Greenery and flowers throughout the house, such as the yellow forsythia reflected in the mirrored armoire, was created by Scarsella’s in Laurel Hollow.



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in both design and stature, but the emotion it evoked made it all the more alluring as it elicited memories of her grandfather, whose name was James Galway. There was only one suitable wall in the house for the stately clock and, because a sconce had been mounted on that wall, they feared it wouldn't fit. What a relief to discover the light fixture had inadvertently been installed a bit off center, leaving just enough space for the sentimental find.

Many elements were chosen with a similar particularity, says Deegan. Rather than an exception, one-of-a-kind antique light fixtures are a rule in the residence. An antique Waterford crystal chandelier hangs in the dining room above custom-built Avanti furniture, which took even longer to manufacture than it took to build the house. Clarence House wallpaper and Stark Carpet, profuse with bouquets of red, mauve and purple roses, make sitting in the room very much like being ensconced in an old-fashioned corsage.

Throughout the house, a variety of richly-toned paint colors and exuberantly patterned wallpapers create a warm backdrop for the home's mix of upholstered seating, antique furnishings and the couple's fine art collection, including originals by Amedeo Modigliani, Raoul Dufy, Henri Matisse and Édouard Vuillard.

In the Georgian-style library, fitted with custom-built cherry cabinetry, the Dufy hangs above one of the home's four fireplaces. The room is a family favorite. With its south-facing windows, it's cool in the summer and warm in the winter. When windows are opened during the summer, fragrant flowers planted beneath them infuse the room with their scent.

Deegan's mother, Ruby Mancuso, created the sumptuous window treatments throughout the home, as well as a variety of other linens, such as pillow shams she crafted from French lace and a duvet made from an eyelet tablecloth. "When she sews, she doesn't sew as if she's sewing for strangers," explains Deegan. "She sews as if she's sewing for family. It makes all the difference."

Deegan's expertise at recognizing antiques that could be altered into exceptional furnishings provided the home's interior with another distinctive difference. In the dramatic foyer powder room, the top of an intricately carved antique Bombay chest has been replaced with a top manufactured from the same marble as the floor.

The billiards room with its large north-facing window is anchored by a Renaissance Revival-style American Brunswick table.





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Set like a gem in the purple-veined stone that now caps the vanity is a colorful Sherle Wagner sink.

A king-size bed in the master bedroom suite, which was created by joining two French Régence twin beds, is also unique. Wolfgang Thoma of Huntington, who repaired, restored and enhanced many of the home's

furnishings, fused the beds to Deegan's specifications, splicing end pieces so that the two would appear to have always been a single piece of furniture.

Though she and her client traveled as far as England and visited a variety of markets, including Portobello Flea Market in London and the Brimfield Outdoor Antique Shows in

Massachusetts, in search of a bed, they need not have looked any farther afield than Huntington Station.

In a dimly lit barn, where the European acquisitions of the House of Charm Antiques are stored upon arrival, the two combed through hundreds of beds. Losing her balance while tugging on one of the beds,

The view of Long Island Sound from the master bedroom is framed by draperies in a floral print from Clarence House. The subdued stripes of the Brunschwig & Fils wallpaper create a subtle backdrop for the French Régence king-size bed — made by fusing two twin-size antique beds.



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Deegan's client landed in a very comfortable chair. They exchanged what had become familiar glances that, when translated, meant "must have." The Deco-style chair and its twin now furnish a cozy nook off the kitchen that is crowned by a trompe l'oeil starring the family cat and one of the resident birds.

The Axminster wool carpeting that runs the length of the first- and second-floor hallways was yet another unexpected find. While the two stood in Deegan's office discussing their frustration over what was turning out to be very illusive floor covering for these areas, they each looked down and noticed a small carpet sample that Deegan was using as a mat. Simultaneously they exclaimed, "That's it!" According to Deegan, she managed to purchase the last yardage in existence in Great Britain.

The 1870 Renaissance Revival-style American Brunswick table that anchors the verdant walls and vaulted ceiling of the billiards room was also a coup. Thoma's daughter found the pool table in the YMCA in Saratoga Springs. Because it was being used as a Ping-Pong table, it had been fitted with a wooden top and the sides were badly gouged, but Thoma worked his magic on the antique, restoring its august dignity.

"We had a lot of laughs," marvels Deegan, explaining that many of their adventures were the result of her client's desire to collect unique accessories. "When you see most rooms that others consider to be complete, they lack detail. There is such detail in this house. Everything was handpicked with love."



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Curving lines and bold patterns in the living room give way to the floral-drenched finery of the dining room (above). The curved lines of the chaise (below) — tucked into a corner of the living room — contrast with the angular shapes of the framed menagerie.

