

**RIGHT:** The master bedroom illustrates the owner's love of color; she acted as interior designer during restoration of the house. **OPPOSITE:** The main block of the Colonial Revival manor at Rockledge Farm dates back to 1799. **INSET:** Andrea and Randy Brock in the garden.





**T**HEY'D PURCHASED not only a house and a farm, but also an important piece of Vermont history—though that wasn't why Andrea Forrest Brock and her husband, Randy, bought Rockledge Farm in 1986. "Randy was commuting [from Vermont] to Boston then, and we frequently got snowed in," Andrea says. "We had to move to a road that was regularly plowed—and we wanted an old house. Of course, in Vermont we don't have that many new houses!"

The centerpiece of the farm is the 1799 Jennison house. Perched on a low knoll in the Green Mountains town of Swanton, the east-facing house was originally a

## *the house* at Rockledge Farm

In the first quarter of the 20th century, this Federal-era house was stunningly renovated with Colonial Revival sentiment. Today it's still a beauty.

**BY REGINA COLE | PHOTOGRAPHS BY CAROLYN BATES**



**ABOVE:** Canton china is displayed on the living-room mantel. Bookcases and mantel date to original 1799 house. **BELOW:** The dining-room furniture came with the house, as did the horse painting; the former owners bred Morgans. This is a copy of a Stubbs painting that hangs in the Tate.



two story, five-by-four bay Federal wood-frame dwelling with a one-story kitchen ell. Between 1918 and 1922, Clark Saxe Jennison transformed the farmhouse into the Colonial Revival manor it is today. The clapboarded main block has symmetrical wings that date to his renovation. A partially enclosed, shed-roof porch at the rear spans the width of the main block and north wing.

“We are only the fourth owners,” Andrea explains. (Andrea Brock is a retired entrepreneur who invented what she calls a “sleeping bag for plants.” Randy Brock ran for governor of Vermont in 2012.) “This was a post-Revolutionary War land grant. The Jennisons were gentlemen farmers who lived here until 1974. The house fell on hard times after that—“when we moved in, ceilings were falling down, and interior walls had





**ABOVE, LEFT:** In the stair hall, a large oil painting by George Burroughs Torrey depicts the daughters of Henry Seligman, a New York banker. **ABOVE, RIGHT:** Cabinets and a sink dating to the 1918–22 renovation are now part of the back-hall pantry. The newer kitchen is through the doorway on the right. **BELOW:** Pink with rosebuds, the little girls' room, originally the "birthing room," boasts a suite of antique paint-decorated furniture.





## *the* GARDENS

Andrea Brock's favorite "work of art" is the landscape around the house. Six of the farm's remaining 86 acres are gardens, including terraces, a rock garden, an *alée* of columns and columnar evergreens, shaded seating nooks, sunny perennial beds, and a water lily pond arched by a moon bridge painted in carnelian. ■ The only garden that existed when the couple moved here was the rock garden, and it was overgrown. They dredged the existing pond, and now goldfish swim among the water lilies. Andrea says that Rockledge Farm is aptly named: "When we created the terraces, we did not have to look for rocks! They came with the place. Despite its neglected condition," Andrea continues, "the garden was the house's first gift."





**LEFT:** Stone steps flanked by fluted columns lead from the pond to the rear of the house via the rock garden. **ABOVE:** Andrea and Randy Brock added the carnelian moon bridge. The gazebo was added earlier. **BELOW, LEFT:** The sculpture was once half of a large millwheel used as the front step in the walkway. "We treat it as art, to honor the history of Rockledge Farm." **BELOW, RIGHT:** A lily in the pond. **BOTTOM:** An archival photo shows the layout near the main house.







**ABOVE:** Large trees are the backdrop to flower gardens. **LEFT:** A mid-20th-century photo shows the gazebo on the pond with the rear of the house. **BELOW:** The landscape has old trees underplanted with hosta.







been covered with asbestos tile.”

Andrea laughs as she recalls some of the quirkier renovations. “During the 1970s, someone painted all the sinks! In the end, it actually helped—the paint prevented the old porcelain from getting scratched by harsh cleaning products.”

For the most part, however, the house’s early 20th-century elements were intact. “We didn’t have to do anything to the floors, and though cosmetically the baths were in rough shape, the plumbing installed around 1920 was still good,” Andrea reports. So were the bathroom fixtures and coved ceilings.

Nor did the Brocks need to buy a lot of furniture. “Many of the carpets and sofas were left here by the Jennison family. The bookcases came with the books in them.”

Which is not to say that Andrea

Brock brought nothing to the house. Acting as interior designer, she added a new bank of kitchen cabinets to match originals and took 12’ of the adjoining porch for the kitchen, creating a buffer against cold blasts. She also reupholstered old furniture, hung new drapery at the windows, and, to bring the summer sky indoors, painted the master bedroom ceiling cerulean blue. “Obviously, color is important to me!” Andrea says.

An inveterate collector, Brock haunts antiques shops and fairs, looking for teapots, paintings, and art, especially Asian ceramics. Her Canton china graces the living-room mantel, Majolica the bedroom mantel, and paintings hang in every room. One of her favorite sources is the mother of all antiques shows, Brimfield [Mass.], a pilgrimage she makes annually. ♦



**TOP:** New cabinets echo those of the early 20th-century kitchen; the countertop was replaced with iroko wood. **ABOVE:** On the kitchen table, tulips from the garden add even more color. Andrea Brock collects teapots; this is part of her whimsical collection.