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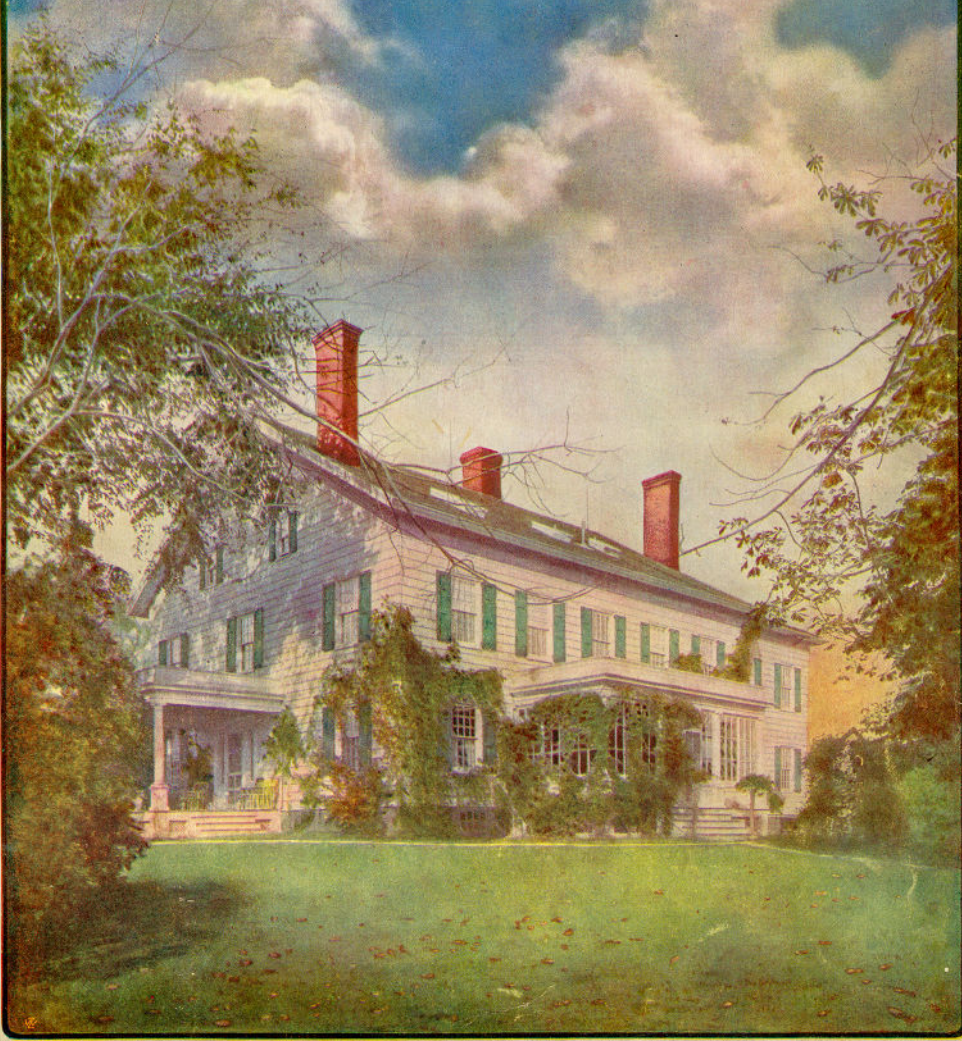
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THE WORLD'S
WORK

AN ARTIST'S UNSPOILED COUNTRY HOME

HOW AN APPARENTLY HOPELESS OLD RECTANGULAR STRUCTURE WAS "BORN AGAIN"—A HOUSE THAT CONFORMS TO THE NATURAL CONTOURS, WHILE THE NEIGHBORS HAVE WASTED THEIR SUBSTANCE ON SUPPOSEDLY NECESSARY GRADING—A HOME BUILT FOR SENTIMENT; NOT TO "PAY"

By ALFRED HENRY GOODWIN

Photographs by HENRY TROTH

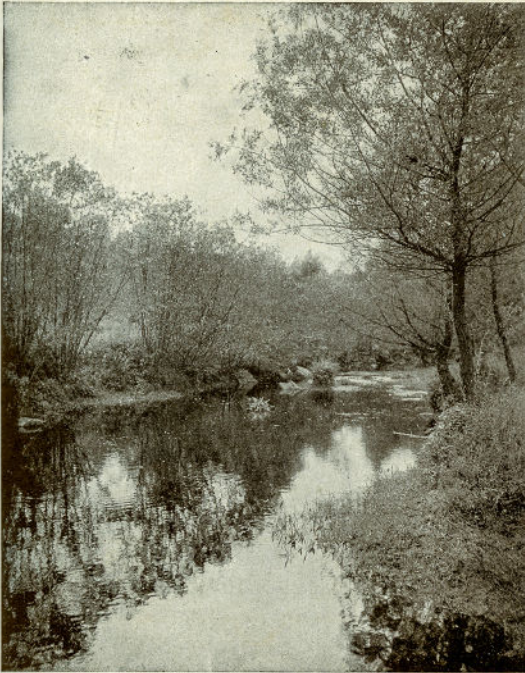
THIS is the true story of how a man discovered his estate by following up a brook, and how he made a home out of an ugly house that happened to be desecrating the land.

No attempt is here made to show that the place pays its way by selling eggs or edible grass. A balance sheet of its

If the setting was desirable, the house was ugly, with an ugliness not harmonized with its surroundings by thirty years of weather beating. It stood high and angular, 20 x 26 feet. That was the original problem. Given a gaunt house at the foot of a mound, what should be done? The answer was to join the house to its hill. The roof was high and uncompromising, like a triangle stuck up aloft. So he extended the roof in a strong, full sweep till it had some connection and relation with the ground. And that vast expanse of roof shingling was relieved by dormer windows. Many architects would have urged that the original house be torn down and another built from the ground up. The novice home maker would have followed this advice and built him a house which even another thirty years could not have blended into the landscape.

Some architects would have set the house upon the hill. But on such a site it is the better part to share the hill rather than surmount it. As now it is, the house flows up the hill, it fits into the curves and continues on up to the crest.

The house extended itself in three directions. It came south with a saddle room on a roof extension. It went west with a dining room and living room, and north with the open-air dining room and columned porch. To balance and carry this increase in space the dormers were applied to the

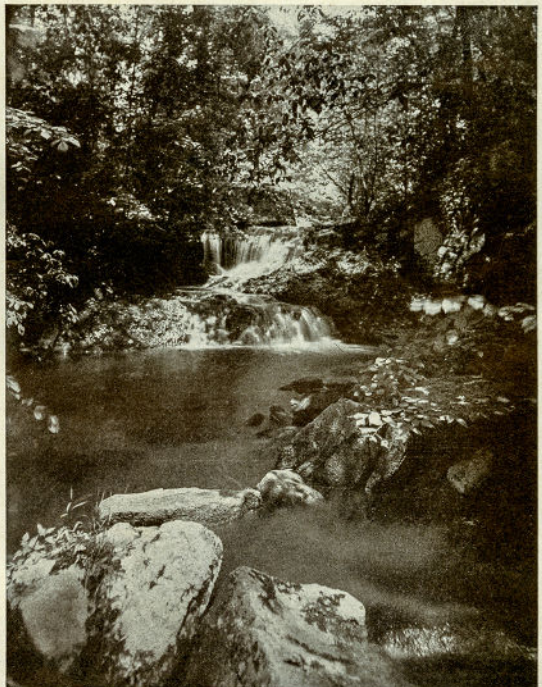


The brook that led to the discovery of the home site

annual expense is not in existence. Housekeeping inside its dormer windows is not a commercialized process. Neither is the experiment made of disguised farming. It is frankly a home, and its moral is not statistical. Thoughtful architecture is what is taught from the roof-tree to the underpinning.

One day fifteen years ago the late J. H. Twachtman was following up a stream in Fairfield County, Conn. The way in which that Greenwich brook bent and curved and deepened into pools, and dashed itself to foam in miniature vociferous falls, could not fail to charm any painter. And at the point where it spread itself with an added vivacity he walked away from it over the hill to the house that owned it to investigate the possibility of a transfer.

In the fulness of time he bought the house and seventeen acres of land at a total cost about equal to that which neighbors are to-day paying acre by acre. Those seventeen acres were chosen because full of motives for a painter—the land dips and curves in a thoroughly natural way.



Horse Neck Falls, from which the brook is named



A TRIUMPH OF REMODELING

This is the Twachtman house, reconstructed beyond recognition out of an angular farmhouse by additions in three directions and the liberal use of dormer windows



THE SOUTH FRONT

Showing how great length can be kept interesting by breaking the lines and blank empty spaces—the veranda, porch, and open-air dining hall all contribute



Fitting a house to a hill—the roof comes close to the ground at the west end of the second story

great roof expanse. The charm of the home, resident in a hundred details, is dominant in those wonderful dormer windows. Four front north and two south, and they give significance to the second story. The house is the record of the romantic possibilities of dormer windows.

The brook walk was taken in the spring. By fall of that same year, the living room with its overhead rooms had been built to the west. The result of this was to continue the roof line toward the ground. Just so at the other side the roof was continued down, and where the house definitely ended at the east a tall chimney was built up. The seven little steps that led up to the entrance of the house were done away with and the slight remaining space that separated the house from the hill was built into with a staircase.

This house stands to-day two stories high, seventy-two feet long east to west, and thirty-two feet wide. It is colored a gentle white, not a blatant white. So neatly does it fit its little niche between the hills that the second story at the west opens by door and window to a ground level, so that one can step outdoors from upstairs as easily as from the front door. This would be pleasantly informal in the event of fire.

But the key thought must not be lost hold of. The whole place has co-operated with Nature. Where hillocks grew, hillocks were left unlevelled. Neighbors have spent thousands of honest dollars in flattening off their land and rendering it as level as the admirable boulevards of Baron de Haussmann.

The saddle room created by the continuing roof at the south is redolent with high-class leather and Max Müller's translations of the Far East Bibles.

THE OPEN-AIR DINING ROOM

Walking due north through the house from the mystic saddle room, we step out upon the open-air dining room, which is a wide veranda twenty-five feet wide, one-third roofed by the overhang of the house roof and the remaining two-thirds by an overhead trellis covered with grapevine. The effect at a little distance of this vine-clad eating hall is like that of a pergola, or like one of those charming open-air cafés sifted around in the forest of the Bois de Boulogne.

The rooms of the second floor are at different levels to give diversity to the morning walk to the shower bath.

The joy and pride of the house is the living room, which, in any other house, would be the hall, but has here widened out into the main room of the dwelling. Rough plaster was thrown on the walls, which were then bronzed over with a brush, resulting in a quiet Japanese effect. The ceiling is beamed wood. The fireplace is massive with field stone mortared in, with one stone (half way up the side of the wall) projecting as a bracket for an Italian saint. Set in the panels of the porch entrance are a couple of luminous color studies. This is a detail in which an artist's home can be the expression of his working aims in a way that is perhaps denied to a pork packer, let us say.

THE RAVINE OUTLOOK

If the immediate set of the house is snug, it is further fortunate in that its outlook is clear all along the ravine in which it rests so comfortably. The front porch aims right down the gulch, whose foreground is a clump of apple trees, the vista ending in a forest of birch, chestnut, hickory and oak. To make still more evident this effect of

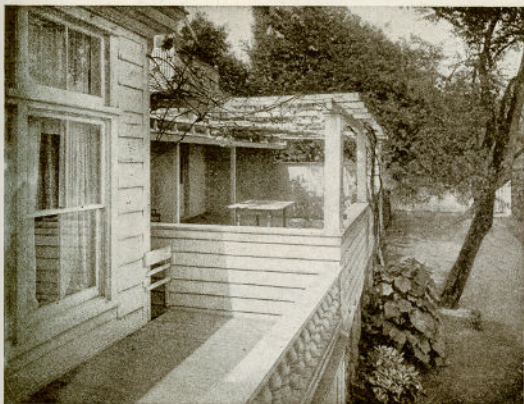


How an artist handled native stone work—note the various sizes of stones and the irregular way in which they are fitted in, no mortar being used

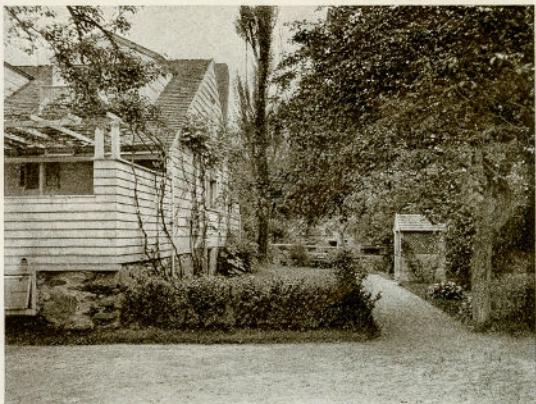


an observation as if down the length of a telescope, two ailanthus trees stand in front of the house, balancing each other well.

Willows were planted on either side that greatly add to its effectiveness. Left to run unprotected and bare to the sun, as for other stretches of its length, the brook has no sugges-



A pergola treatment for the open-air eating hall

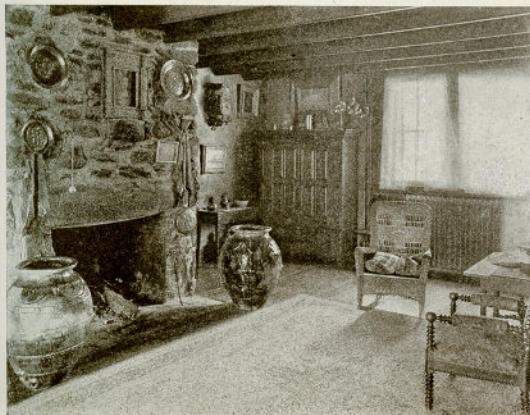


The east end of the house

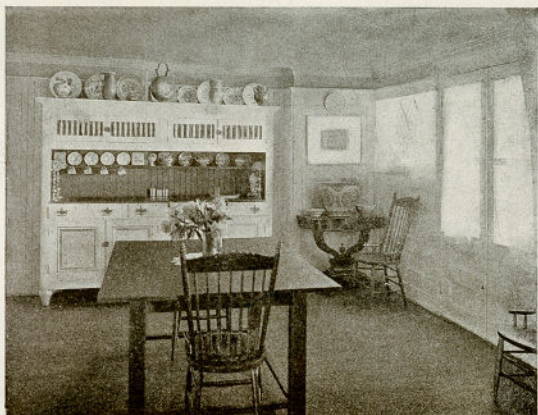
The seventeen acres of ground are formalized just enough by one hundred poplar trees that cut straight lines and geometrical patterns to front and rear.

It might as well be a piece of irrigation. But here it is equipped with mysteries and quaint nooks. It begins with a little stone dam that widens the five-foot flow into a swimming hole protected by a great and ancient rock.

If we began with the brook with the brook we must end.



The living room with the field-stone chimney



The dining room

Then we come on the broad-nosed, flat-bottomed yellow rowboat. It operates in a seven-foot-square area of water that contains many assorted tadpoles of extraordinary size. Still ascending toward the source of the brook, we come to Horse Neck Falls, which in June fall a couple of feet with a width of half a foot, but in the early spring are twenty or thirty feet broad.

The approach to the house from the falls brings us to the south entrance, past the simple old white barn and a trim garden.

ABSENCE OF THE TEDI- OUSLY USEFUL

It is one of the few blessed country places where nothing is done of a useful rural sort. There are no swarms of poultry to defile the morning air. No attempt is made to supply the table out of the back yard. Once a pig was kept for show and ornament. But he died six years ago, and where he



The charm of nature undisturbed: a walk on the grounds. The seventeen acres of land were chosen because abounding in "motives" that would appeal to a painter

stamped a three-foot-high Swiss chalet stands—a children's play house.

Informality being the thought, it is more a pleasure than a surprise to chance on the happy camping ground and a tent of boy Indians just in the lee of the hill that embraces the second story of the house. And it is a touch of the same idea that makes one unsure as to whether the entrance proper to the home is north or south, so wholehearted being this effect of easy haphazard that when a stranger once inquired of the hired man how to reach the front door, the answer came, "Take the side path to the back of the house."

These details of brook and hills and informal rocks are the reasons why this place was bought by an artist and not another, and why the house is unique in a tedious country side. It is a piece of autobiography.



The dormer windows—an important element in the remodeling—relieve and animate the great expanse of roof