

RENOVATING THE COUNTRY HOUSE

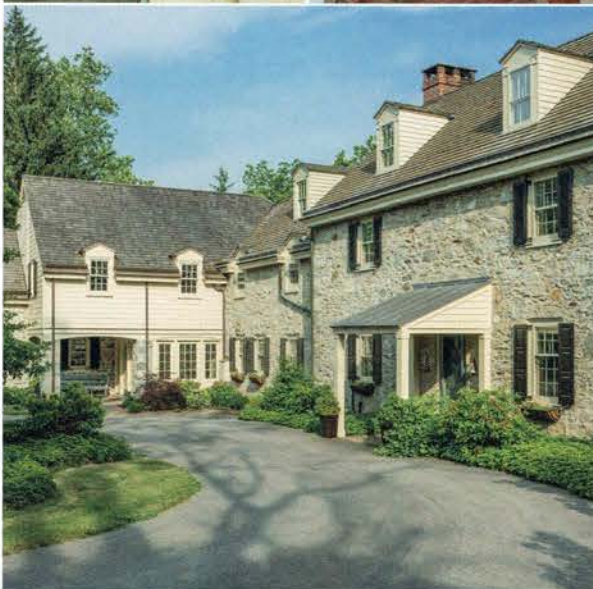
Location: Pennsylvania

Architect: Period Architecture, Malvern, Pa.

ROLLING PASTURES dotted with horses, hours whiled away on the porch, and connected to the land—for many, country life is the only life, and few things complete that picture better than the idyllic country home. While some things about country living will never change, there are many ways that modern life has changed what we demand of our homes, and often the old country houses of our dreams can't meet those demands. So how do you update and renovate for today's living? Thoughtfully and carefully, as was the case with this renovation of the 1929 John Bartram Reproduction House.

John Bartram was an early American botanist, horticulturist, and explorer born into a Quaker farm family in colonial Pennsylvania. His eight-acre botanic garden, Bartram's Garden, would become what is frequently cited as the first true botanic collection in North America. Today, it is a sprawling 45 acres and, as the oldest surviving botanic garden in North America, a National Historic Landmark.

Bartram built his original stone home around 1728-1731 in Philadelphia. The first portion of this John Bartram Reproduction House (the country version of the original city dwelling) was built in 1929 and designed with the original home's size, proportions, and farmhouse details in mind—the dormers, windows, and layout of the reproduction are strikingly similar to Bartram's 1700s design.





The homeowners were passionate about the history of both Bartram homes and were sensitive to keeping with the original aesthetic, age, and quality in renovations or new additions.

One of the most commonly renovated spaces in an older country home is the kitchen. New advances in technology and design have made kitchens more functional than ever, and many families count on these updates for a smoothly running household. The homeowners wanted a larger, more open, farmhouse-style kitchen that felt appropriate to the early 1900s portions of the home. Working closely within the home's original aesthetic, Period Architecture custom-designed a classically detailed but thoroughly contemporary kitchen, butler's pantry, and walk-in pantry. These three spaces were rearranged to afford better flow and to create the movement of an open floor plan without sacrificing the distinct division of rooms that is typical of the home's heritage. An island was designed to have the appearance of a farmhouse table while cleverly adding much-needed and utilized storage. Natural oak wood beams, soapstone counters with a built-in farmhouse sink, a built-in hutch, random-width floors, and hand-forged iron light fixtures give the space a sense of history and place without sacrificing modern comforts and conveniences.

Another important space in the modern home is the mudroom. With country living comes dirty boots, muddy paws, and all manner of outdoor debris, not to mention the endless accoutrements

of busy families. The mudroom satisfies the demands placed on this transitional yet essential space, while keeping within the home's historic style. With a full bath, coat closet, pantry, laundry room, and covered entry, it ticks every box for functionality. A salvaged antique-brick herringbone floor (complete with radiant heat), iron hardware and fixtures, and beadboard barn slider doors and paneling give this utilitarian space the handcrafted farmhouse feel that the homeowners craved. Similarly, touches like a custom fox door handle on the mudroom entry—a detail crafted by local blacksmiths—lend both character and purpose.

Lastly, a pool was also added to the Bartram house to further modernize the property. Built into the hillside with tiered garden terraces lovingly tended by the homeowners, this contemporary addition complements, rather than competes with, the home's existing landscape. Rounding out the exterior updates to the home is a large, three-car attached garage with a future in-law suite above.

Integral to the success of this project was the handiwork of local craftspeople, who used traditional techniques to create the cabinetry, countertops, light fixtures, and hardware throughout the renovated spaces. By incorporating modern amenities with a meticulous eye to matching the home's classical style, the Bartram Reproduction House is an exceptional study in how to renovate the country home of yesteryear for today.

