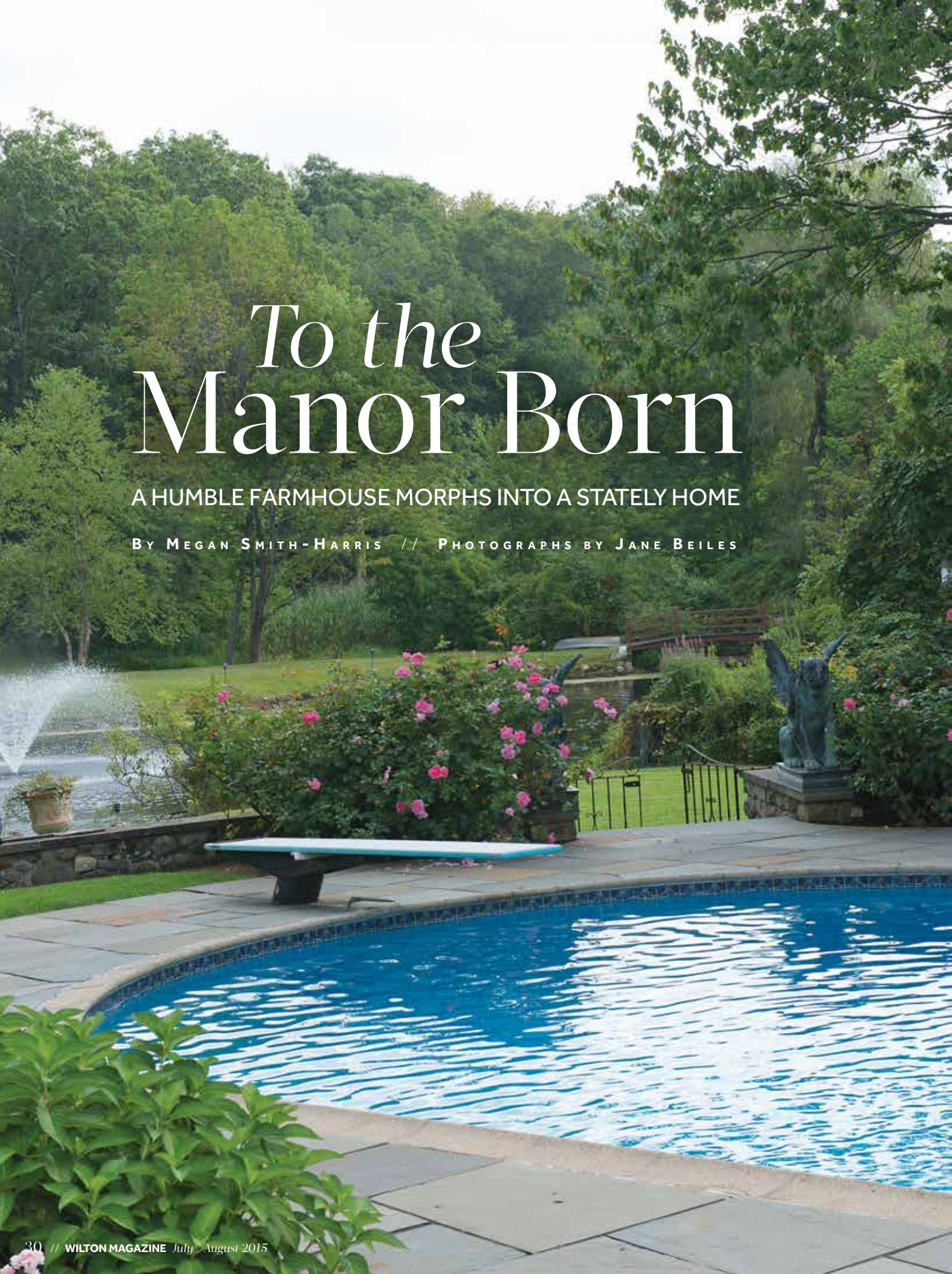


# To the Manor Born

A HUMBLE FARMHOUSE MORPHS INTO A STATELY HOME

BY MEGAN SMITH-HARRIS // PHOTOGRAPHS BY JANE BEILES





**STONE GROOVE** Multi-toned granite from locations near and far add dimension and warmth to the formal Georgian Regency exterior. Classic black and white diamond pattern marble floor in foyer with coffered ceilings and hand-carved molding. The back 10 offer tranquil water views.

**H**eading up Whipstick Road past charming clapboard colonials—both vintage and more recently minted versions—one can’t help but be curious about the serpentine stone wall surrounding what appears to be a large, pastoral estate. Who lives there? Curiosity turns to incredulity after passing through ornate wrought iron gates, and beholding a stately stone Georgian Regency manor, fronted by a fountain with statuary of a boy holding a fish. A first-time visitor might wonder for a second if they’ve suddenly been transported to the English countryside. But no, they are still in Wilton. They have arrived at the home of Simon and Julene Greenshields.

It started out as a small 1825 farmhouse and has evolved, over time, into its current form. Back in 1990, the newly married Greenshields were smitten by the quaint house nestled on a ten-acre plot of land that abutted the Weir Preserve. They were both pursuing careers in New York, Julene in the fashion world and Simon in finance. Believing Morgan Stanley would relocate their headquarters to Stamford, Wilton seemed like a logical area to settle in. “When the relocation didn’t happen, we thought about moving closer to the city, and looked at houses in Darien and Greenwich but couldn’t find any we liked,” says Simon. “And then we’d pull back in and see the property here,” adds Julene, “and it’s really the property as much as the house that make this place so special.” So they decided to stay put and expand, a decision motivated by the arrival of their three children Logan (now 20) and twins Emma and Natalie, (now 17), in the 1990s.

The couple scoured design magazines and architectural books looking for inspiration. Simon, who grew up in northern England, and attended school in Yorkshire and later in London, had very definite ideas. Julene’s only request was for a kitchen that overlooked the pond. Construction



**HEIGHT & LIGHT** View into the formal living room with 25-foot ceilings. Hand-carved Brazilian cherrywood bannisters, classical Greek marble bust of Minerva. A home office that is inspired by a photograph includes feminine touches. A cozy breakfast room with pretty marquetry floors.



began in 2001 and was scheduled to take three and a half years. It took seven. Though they remained in the house through a large part of the process, the many delays necessitated the family moving into rental homes for a three-year period, first in Ridgefield and then closer, on Nod Hill Road.

Though the exterior is now vastly different from the original homestead, the Greenshields made sure to maintain the integrity of the farmhouse's interior, including the low-beamed ceilings and beehive oven. The Cottage wing, as it is now called, contains a sitting room and a family room off the kitchen.

All home construction has its setbacks and the Greenshields' project was no exception. Because of the combined weight of the slate roof and stone walls, the core of the house had to be framed in steel. The frame was duly erected, but it was six inches off on one side. The contractor lobbied to leave it as it was, but Simon was adamant that it be taken down and redone correctly. "The whole point of a Georgian Regency home is symmetry," he says. "And six inches off on one side presents a very big problem."

Julene worked closely with designer Beth Schoenherr of Sheridan Interiors. The overall look is formal, yet welcoming. Every room in the house has comfortably inviting chairs and sofas, soothing art to look at, and offers beautiful views of the property. The massive living room is divided into several conversation areas, and one space that



**SPA-TACULAR** A pool and spa with hand-painted frescoes is accessible only by elevator or a hidden entrance. A warm and inviting guestroom with turquoise Chinoiserie wallpaper; detail of the master bedroom fireplace—one of seven in the home. Exquisite marble mosaic tile floors in the master bath with a stunning carved marble bathtub and garden views.



includes a gaming table. Simon's office walls are upholstered with the Greenshield tartan; and the master bedroom suite is decorated in serene shades of blue and beige, elegantly combining both feminine and masculine elements. Each of the children was allowed to express their individuality and create a personal look for their rooms.

After seven years of effort, expense, and inconvenience, moving day couldn't come soon enough. "I was very relieved to move in," says Julene with a laugh. "For years I ran back and forth every day—first thing in the morning, again in the afternoon, and finally at the end of the day—to make sure the workers had arrived, and that everything was being done properly. Even though Simon was on a business trip, as soon as the guys got done sanding and sealing the floors, and the fumes had evaporated, the children and I moved in. We had our first party a week later."

The detail of the millwork is extraordinary. Coffered ceilings, built-in cabinetry, and ornate moldings abound. Yet it is surprisingly homey. Admittedly there are grand touches that most houses don't possess: the indoor pool and spa accessed through a hidden door off the vestibule, an elevator (installed





**SURROUNDED BY BEAUTY** A cozy family room in the Cottage Wing off the kitchen—perfect for a morning cup of coffee. Gorgeous backyard view of the Weir Preserve which abuts the homeowner's property. One of several seating areas on the 60 foot stone terrace where family, guests, and even dogs, can make themselves comfortable.



for the comfort of elderly relatives), seven fireplaces, a carved marble bathtub, a living room with 25-foot ceilings, an enormous hand-blown Venetian glass chandelier, and a small minstrel gallery. When asked what each of them likes most about their home, Simon immediately replies, "I like the tranquility. The area has a rural flavor to it and the property enjoys views across the pond and beyond, to the Weir Preserve." Julene ponders the question. "I really like looking out my kitchen window to the pond. I also like the light and that there are lots of windows looking out onto the property. But most of all, I like that the kids fill it with friends." Recently Simon left Morgan Stanley after 31 years and has started his own private equity fund based—ironically—in Stamford. When reflecting on the overlong process of building their distinctive home, Simon sums up the experience succinctly. "I was relieved that we'd got to the end. It's something that I'd never do again. We severely underestimated how much time it would take to build this house. But I'm glad we did it, and did it right." ■

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