



**HOUSE & GARDEN**

Deborah Schmidt's Lakeview property was built c. 1830 for George W. Mead, Sr., as a country home for his brood. Schmidt spent 20 years updating the structures and tending to the land.



# TURNING *the* PAGE

SAYING FAREWELL TO A HAPPY HOME

“I was living in Amsterdam 20 years ago, and while back here visiting a friend in Bedford, I saw an ad for this place in the real estate office window,” says Deborah Schmidt. “I realized I had just enough time to see it before I headed back to the airport, so I called the agent, and we walked around the place. It needed a lot of work, but the property was beautiful, and I just thought, ‘I could do that.’ I’m always that way; I see the potential in everything.”

Schmidt, a designer and single mother to eight-year-old Julian, returned briefly to Amsterdam where she had lived and worked for three years with her first husband, artist Eric Staller. She negotiated the sale of this historic Waccabuc property while abroad and didn’t see it again until the closing.

Built circa 1860 by George W. Mead, Sr., the nearly six-acre property, known as “Lakeview,” included the 2,300-square-foot main house, a two-story guesthouse, and a dilapidated pole barn. Schmidt and her son settled in on the first and second floors of the main

BY JENNIFER MOORE STAHLKRANTZ



**OLD & NEW**  
Schmidt installed new custom cabinetry, featuring a stained glass panel fabricated by her brother Daniel, in the kitchen, left. The dining room, right, boasts a vintage tile floor and fireplace. The second floor living room, below, showcases Schmidt's blend of old architecture and modern decor.



house, as the third floor was not yet habitable. They slowly fixed what they could. "It's been 20 years of tiny fixes," the designer says.

As she repaired the old house, Schmidt, who early in her career designed interiors for architect Edward Larabee Barnes, infused a modern sensibility into its décor. "The juxtaposition of old and new always interests me in design. After living in a 1500s canal house in Amsterdam, this old place felt like a fit," she says. "I love mixing modern, which is super comfortable, with small spaces from the 1800s." Once she made her mark indoors, she then turned her attention to the lush, overgrown property.

Having lived in urban settings for most of her adult life, Schmidt was a novice in the garden. When she started, she planted scores of Dutch tulip bulbs and learned quickly about the perils of sharing her outdoor canvas with hungry deer. She responded by teaching herself about deer-resistant plants which resulted in a fabulous perennial garden. Eventually, she installed deer fencing to expand her planting options and then added an extensive vegetable garden, privet hedge, and later grape vines, too, with which she and her second husband, Cal Cray, made Lakeview Vineyards wine.

Ten years in, she decided to address the biggest project: rehabilitating the barn. "The wood siding was falling apart, there were openings in walls where windows had once been, but I wanted a work space, and the barn offered the potential for high ceilings and lots of light." The renovation took nearly two years, but it was well worth the wait.

After two decades at Lakeview and despite her love of the "the whole package," Schmidt recently decided it was time to downsize. The property sold to a young couple from New York





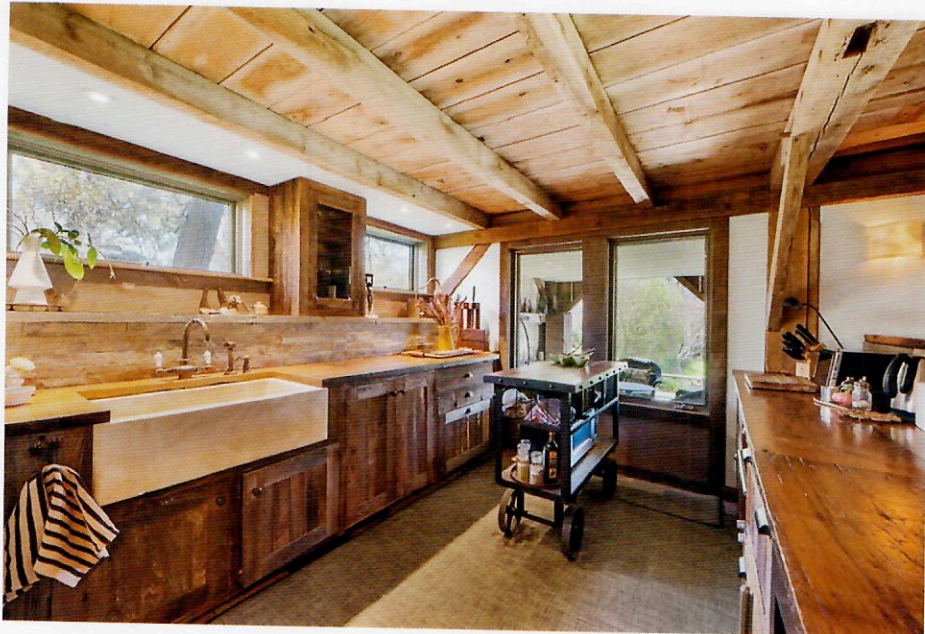


who will undoubtedly write a new chapter for this storied home and land. Just weeks before the closing, we took a final tour with Schmidt.

Inside the automated gates, a gravel drive leads first to Lakeview's main house, known among the 19th-century Meads as "the incubator." An undated cupola tower addition to the original structure houses the present-day main entrance. Inside, a doorway leads to the dining room and kitchen, and a three-foot-long Princess telephone sits at the base of a staircase that rises to the second floor. The dining room features vintage geometric floor tiles and picture windows that frame the vistas of meadows to the west and the south. Schmidt completely updated the kitchen which now boasts custom cabinetry, Japanese granite counters, and balcony doors to the terrace.

The second-floor living room and library showcase Schmidt's love of blending old with new. While the walls are white, the woodwork is a warmer shade. Schmidt explains, "In Amsterdam, they painted the woodwork in old houses with oil paint, and the oil would yellow over time. So I did white walls here with a linen white trim to mimic that look." With the neutral walls as a backdrop, the designer then added a whimsically colorful décor, including one of Staller's photographs and a sculpture by Tulio DeSantis. The cozy library is replete with vintage millwork—beading, columns, and bookshelves—and punctuated with colorful art, as well.

Schmidt comes from a creative family. Her brother, Daniel Schmidt, is a stained-glass artist (his work is installed at Lakeview as both panels and lighting) and another brother, Phillip Schmidt, is a woodworker who has crafted



#### BARN AGAIN

After renovating the main house and guesthouse, Schmidt tackled the pole barn, taking it down to its framing and rebuilding it with a new purpose. She added a ground-level kitchen and gym where the horse stalls once stood, a first-floor great room and two workspaces, and a second-floor studio for her son, Julian.





**SUITE DREAMS**

The guest house features two bedroom suites, including this child-friendly upstairs aerie. The main house has a second-floor guest room and two third-floor suites. The cupola sits atop the master suite.



custom doors not only for his sister, but also for her clients. His handiwork can be found in all the home's exterior doorways, including the original front entrance that faces Chapel Road. Beside this door, a narrow flight of stairs leads to the third floor where two bedroom suites overlook the gardens, meadows, and Lake Waccabuc.

Just a few feet from the main house is a charming two-bedroom guesthouse that Schmidt renovated to host family and friends, and at the base of the driveway is the barn. "Everything is new in here except the framing—even that was greatly repaired," Schmidt explains as she slides open wooden barn doors to reveal a pair of glass doors. Inside, original overhead beams mix seamlessly with replacements that were added to complete the graphic in the family room that doubles as overflow party space. There are two light-filled work spaces where Schmidt displays photos of the site-specific installations she created with Staller as well as her own sculptures and three-dimensional works of art.

Downstairs, the old horse stalls were repurposed as a kitchen that overlooks the sunken gym (featuring a teak hot tub) and leads to a covered terrace. As she steps outside, Schmidt notes that among the many things she will miss about Lakeview are the hot tub, the outdoor shower, the vegetable garden, and the house, as a whole—"I've touched and painted every wall myself." And then she points west, "I'll also miss this view," she says. "The seasons change, and from here I can watch them endlessly." ■