

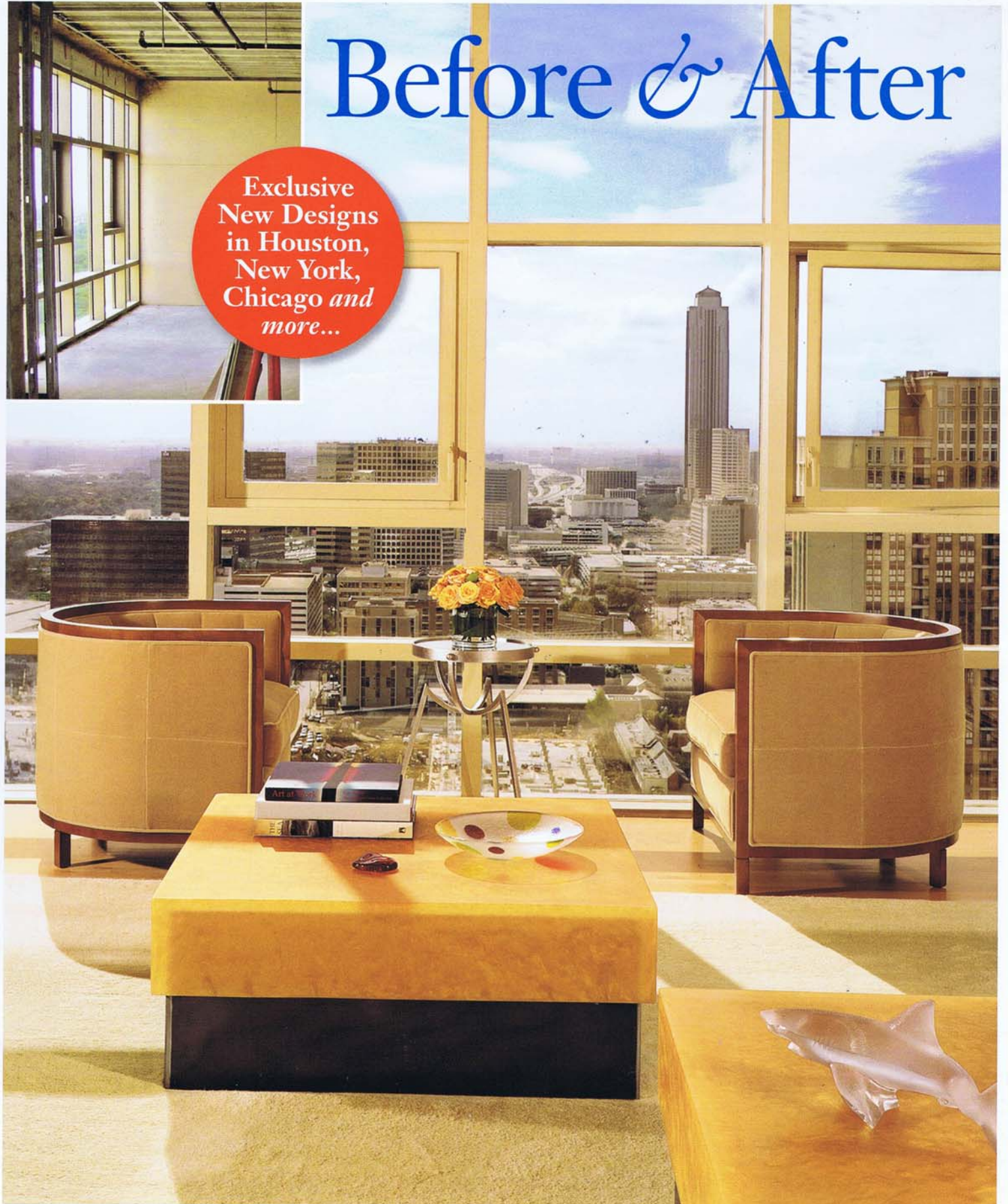
ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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Before & After

Exclusive
New Designs
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more...



A typical prospective buyer, upon seeing the state of neglect this 1910 Colonial Revival house was in when it came on the market, might have wished to tear it down and replace it. The beauty of its 2.67-acre setting would have been the attraction. The house overlooks the broad and scenic Delaware River, a safe and pleasant distance from the edge of a bluff 30 feet above the water line. In every direction, trees as old as the house command the grounds. Best of all, without a visible boundary, the woodlands, clearings and paths flow into neighboring Andalusia, an 80-acre country estate.

Fortunately, potential buyers with tear-down schemes never had a chance. The seller of the land and house was the late



A Pennsylvania Chronicle

IN THE SHADOW OF ANDALUSIA, NEAR PHILADELPHIA, A 1910 HOUSE IS RESTORED

Restoration Architecture by Kass & Associates/Interior Design by James A. Scott
Landscape Architecture by Charles Hess Landscape Architects
Text by Mildred F. Schmertz/After Photography by Barry Halkin

James Biddle, great-great-grandson of Nicholas Biddle, who acquired Andalusia from his wife's distinguished Philadelphia family, the Craigs, in 1814. The former head of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's American Wing, Biddle intended the estate to become public in his lifetime yet remain intact. As president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation from 1967 to 1980, he helped save many landmarks, including Grand Central Terminal and the original exterior of the United States Capitol. The year he left the trust, he turned to his own landmark heritage and created the Andalusia Foundation. He would sell the Colonial Revival house, but only to a buyer who strongly wished to restore it.

Biddle finally chose H. Craig Lewis and

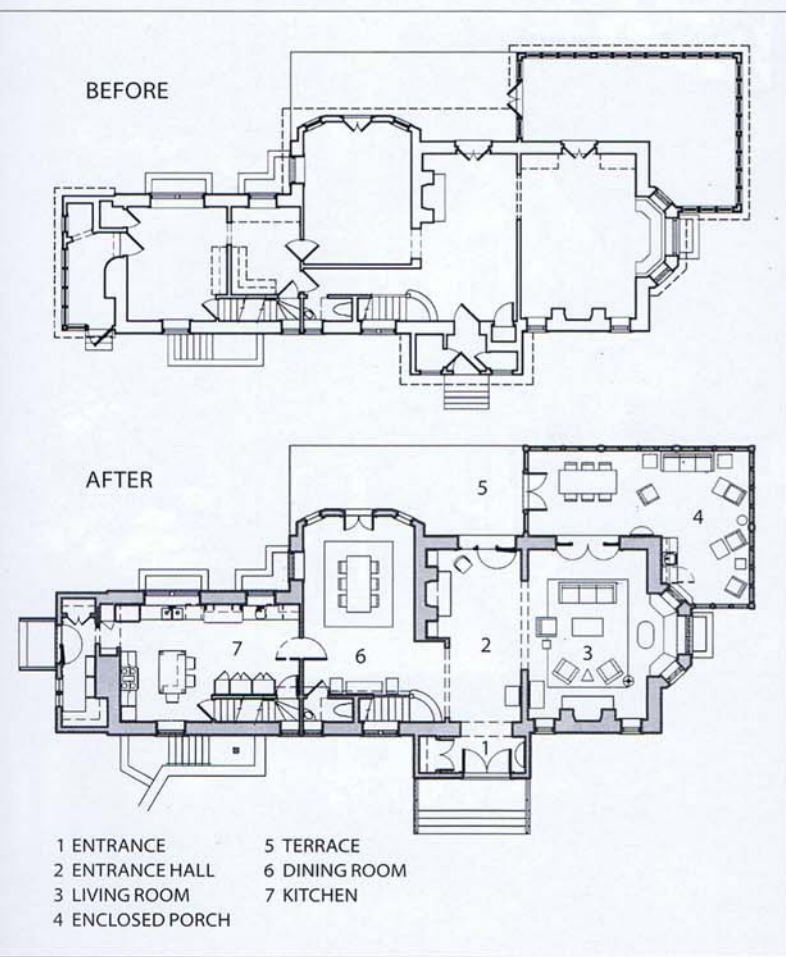
ABOVE RIGHT AND FAR RIGHT: H. Craig Lewis and Dianne Semingson bought a 1910 Colonial Revival house adjacent to the historic grounds of Andalusia, 20 minutes from downtown Philadelphia. RIGHT: Semingson with architect Spence Kass, seated, and interior designer James A. Scott, who restored it.







BEFORE



TOP: The old living room. ABOVE: The first-floor plans show how Kass widened openings and removed walls to ease divisions between spaces. RIGHT: The renovated living room. Robert Allen sofa; Baker armchair, with Calvin stripe; Ligne Roset lamp; Donghia club chairs. Boyd light fixture in hall.



AFTER

“Craig and Diane wanted to give themselves a year to sink into the place,” explains designer James A. Scott.





BEFORE

his wife, Dianne Semingson. Friends of Biddle's, Lewis (only coincidentally named Craig) is vice president of corporate affairs with the Norfolk Southern Corporation; Semingson is president of the consulting firm DLS International. "We were proud to be able to contribute to Jimmy's plan to preserve the house," says Lewis. "He wanted no material alterations on the façades; there were historic easement regulations, but it was easy for us to comply. We love the landscape, and we have a great affection for Andalusia."

The original architects of the 5,100-square-foot residence were Arthur Howell Brockie and Theodore Mitchell Hastings, whose prominent Philadelphia firm practiced from 1903 to 1919. They designed a three-story, gable-roofed, dormered house of compact, rectangular rooms, domestic in scale rather than grand, with each room oriented to the river view. Spence Kass, the architect of the renovation, respected the quality of the house and did only what was necessary to give it new life. He restored or replaced floors, ceilings, windows, doors, the shingled roof and interior moldings and trim. A new gabled garage with a caretaker's apartment above matches the style and materials of the house and faces a new gravel entrance court. "I designed and placed it," explains Kass, "to evoke an

ABOVE AND RIGHT: Kass knocked out a wall to combine the old kitchen and pantry for a more efficient space. "The previous kitchen had seemingly not been updated since the 1950s and was incredibly rudimentary," he explains. Franke sink, Sub-Zero refrigerator, KitchenAid dishwasher and Wolf cooktop, at Abt.com.



AFTER





BEFORE

informal rural compound that appears to have evolved over time.”

Kass improved the interior plan of the house with well-considered adjustments to create free-flowing space; for instance, he united the entrance hall with the living room on one side and the dining room on the other. Judicious wall removals and replacements, as well as cleverly inserted new baths, make the second and third floors more attractive and functional than before.

The interior designer, James A. Scott, was a close friend of Biddle’s and has a private summer house on the Andalusia estate. His choice of furnishings makes reference to popular styles of the last century, including Art Moderne and Art Déco. The house was not decorated at once. “Craig and Diane wanted to give themselves a year to sink into the place, so they thought it best to move in first.”

The owners now have the best of two worlds—a fine house and landscape of their own and access to historic grounds that are home to Andalusia’s main house, designed by Benjamin Henry Latrobe, with a Greek Revival façade by Thomas U. Walter; a little stone chapel conceived by Walter as a Gothic ruin; a large Gothic Revival guesthouse; and formal gardens. Now public, the estate is far from crowded because the land is generous. All who come to love it have James Biddle to thank. □

ABOVE AND RIGHT: Scott describes the master bedroom as “the most traditional room in the house.” A 1920s vase and works of art by Dean Dass, Richard Berger and Jacqueline Jacovini adorn the mantel. Schumacher chair linen. Restoration Hardware bedside lamp. Martha Stewart bed.



AFTER





“We love the landscape, and we have a great affection for Andalusia,” says owner H. Craig Lewis.

The existing brick terrace was repaired and extended, linking the enclosed porch, entrance hall and dining room. Neglected underbrush once screened views that are now open to the Delaware River. Kass collaborated with landscape architect Charles E. Hess on the intentionally informal gardens.