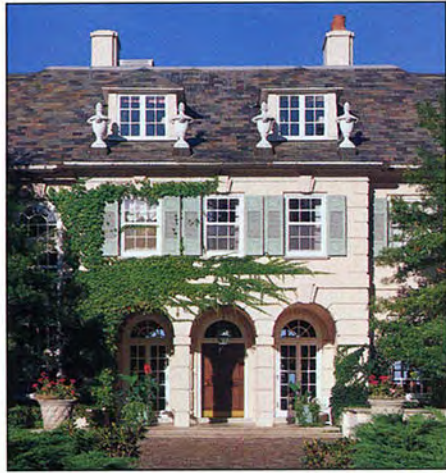


Architecture by Eric J. Smith, AIA  
Interior Design by David Easton  
Text by Jeffrey Simpson  
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# LAKE FOREST IDYLL

ITALIANATE DETAILS REDEFINE A VENERABLE ILLINOIS HOUSE

Founded in the mid-nineteenth century and later popular as a summer retreat for Chicago's great mercantile families, Lake Forest, Illinois, is the kind of old suburb that has developed an identity of its own. Georgian, Italianate and Tudor mansions lie on wooded lots along the bluffs above Lake Michigan, and many of the families that own them have lived there for generations.

David Easton's client has lived in Lake Forest for more than thirty years. "There's an old-fashioned social life there," says Easton, "and my client is comfortable with that. He expects it." He has owned several houses in the area, including one Easton designed that won

"The house was completely gutted and then given classic details," says interior designer David Easton of his client's 1912 residence in Lake Forest, Illinois. ABOVE: An arched porch defines the shuttered front façade. RIGHT: The entrance hall now looks out to Lake Michigan.



the Classical America Award for Architecture for 1976. "He trusted us enough to let us proceed on the basis of floor plans and an elevation," says Easton, "and that was the start of my reorganizing the office and taking on architecture projects, as well as interior design."

The client's current house, built in 1912 in the style of a Mediterranean villa, was designed by the great local architect Howard Van Doren Shaw. And despite the provenance of the residence, Easton and his associate Eric Smith, an architect, did a complete renovation that at one point left only the exterior walls standing. "The house was gray, and it lacked detail," says Easton. "We turned a classical house into an Italianate one."

The residence's long, rather narrow lot, which leads from the street to the lake, "makes the work as tight as it would be in a New York apartment," Smith says. The configuration of the property resulted from the lot's being subdivided. "And that," says Smith, "caused our first problem. There was no room for a garage." Easton, Smith and the owner decided to create a flagstone entrance court in front of the house and place the garage—with room for nine cars—under that. "We collaborated from the beginning with landscape architect Peter Cummin," says Smith. "He's equally adept at the actual architecture of landscape and with plantings. On the street side of the residence there were two problems to be solved: We needed an elegant entrance, and we had to block views of the neighboring houses to the side, which Peter did with hedges. We also needed to have the front of the house look natural, despite the garage under the courtyard. This involved leaving pockets—or beds—in the structure of the garage so that full-size trees could be transplanted there when we were finished."

The interior of the house, Easton says, required extensive work. "There was no visual access from the front door to the lake side of the house," says Smith. "The entrance hall ran from right to left, with a wall opposite the

"The bay window opens up the living room," says Easton, who collaborated on the house with his associate architect Eric Smith. Brunschwig & Fils sofa chintz and drapery fabric; Scalamandré drapery trim. Clarence House fabric on the English armchairs.





front door." Easton and Smith took out the wall and added a Tuscan loggia on the entrance side to parallel the one on the lake side. "The resulting hall is classically symmetrical," says Easton. "It's almost square, with four doors, and with the view through the loggia to the lake, it's my favorite room in the house.

"Some of the other restructuring," he continues, "involved replacing a narrow staircase with landings with a spiral stair; turning a screen porch into a library; and rebuilding the bay windows in the dining and living rooms so that

their roofs could be terraces for the bedrooms above."

As for the interior design, Easton remembers, "We had to take furniture from the client's previous house, which had been a Georgian design, and make it meld into this one, which was more Italianate in feeling. We did that in three ways: We bought painted furniture to supplement the existing Georgian and upholstered things; we used stronger colors than we had before; and we bought more exotic pieces, such as

*continued on page 236*

ABOVE: "Crown molding added more architectural interest," Easton says of the dining room, where a circa 1790 Waterford chandelier hangs above a George III triple-pedestal mahogany table and a set of Sheraton side chairs.

RIGHT: The library's Georgian burl-walnut-and-yew round table "is my favorite piece in the house," the client notes. FAR RIGHT: "The paneled library used to be a columned porch," recalls Easton. Pillow fringe from Scalamandré. Brunschwig & Fils sofa velvet and drapery fabric.





"The master bedroom is soothing, with soft colors," points out Easton, who laid down a Portuguese floral carpet on the polished wood floor. Above the English pine mantel is a framed circa 1790 Chinese painted panel. Drapery and bed canopy fabric, Clarence House.