



Farmhouse

UNBRIDLED

A rural postcard from the outside, this Lakeville home is full of surprises on the inside

BY ALECIA STEVENS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUSAN GILMORE



Modern furnishings and striking colors give diva style to this otherwise traditional farmhouse. The work of Philippe Starck, Christian Liaigre, and other designers ramps up the sophistication quotient.

Marjie Newton grew up in bucolic Asheville, North Carolina, a town tucked away from time in the lush Blue Ridge Mountains. One of her childhood passions was horseback riding in the verdant hills that surrounded her.

But things change. As an adult, she found herself living in a traditional home in Edina as a carpooling mom with three busy children and a life that seemed not quite her own. Longing for the country and a place to raise horses, Newton purchased a piece of land in Orono, hired an architect, and began to design the home of her dreams, which got more expensive by the draft.

One weekend, her then 10-year-old daughter, who had been riding since the age of six, went online and found the website www.hobbyfarms.com. She showed Newton a cute little blue farmhouse in Lakeville with nothing but prairie in sight. They looked at it on a Tuesday and made an offer that Saturday. The following Monday, Newton called her architect to give him the good news and the bad: She was selling the land in Orono to begin working on the little blue farmhouse, circa 1910, "for herself, three children, one dog, a chicken, and a goat," laughs interior designer Lucy Penfield of Lucy Interior Design in Minneapolis.

When Newton began working with Penfield and Jim Corrigan of Corrigan Custom Homes in Eden Prairie, she knew what she wanted, she just didn't know how

to get there. She did not want "Country Cliché." She was inspired by Penfield's own home in Deephaven, an old farmhouse with a contemporary addition filled with Penfield's friendly style. "When I saw Lucy's home, I saw a way to live with modern things in a warm, comfortable way," Newton recalls.

Of Newton's little blue farmhouse, Penfield says, "it would have been infinitely easier to tear down the old buildings. But we were committed to saving as many original features as possible." They just didn't know what surprises lay in store: crooked walls and damaged floors, and the barn was crumbling onto its foundation. Many of the rooms had only single windows. Corrigan and Penfield's assignment was to bring in light, add color, and make the place easy to care for. Newton had more important things to do with her time: raise children and horses.

It was a full year before the home was habitable, and Penfield says the project remains one of the most challenging she has ever tackled. The house had to be opened up and furnished, and they added a screened porch. Then there were the outbuildings to renovate—the barn, stables, a chicken coop, a horse arena, and a caretaker's apartment in the barn (which doubles as the kids' hang-out room when it is not rented out). But even with this to-do list, "Marjie was so relaxed," Lucy recalls.

"She was eager to break free from the restrained mahogany furniture, muted Persian rugs, and oil paintings of her traditional past [in Edina]. We had a vision for energy and light, and it simply unfolded unto itself; it was unpredictable and spontaneous."

The old farmhouse is a slice of nostalgia, particularly for anyone who grew up surrounded by this kind of landscape. Small by today's standards and modest in appearance, it is now painted white with shades of green trim—perhaps as it once was. The screened-porch addition is seamless, the perfect place for sipping lemonade or drinking a beer on a steamy summer day, with a ceiling fan whirring overhead. From the white clapboard house to the wonderful hunter green metal barn perched on its original stone foundation, the farm appears to be entirely conventional. But the orange lacquered chair on the front porch gives something away.

THIS PAGE This multi-purpose space holds Newton's compact office and "laundry room," which is tucked behind a curtain fashioned from Peter Fasano's "Dairy Queen" fabric. **OPPOSITE PAGE** Newton originally envisioned an old, round farm table in the kitchen, but was delighted when Penfield delivered this white Saarinen "Tulip" table, circa 1956—the perfect foil for the bright yellow walls.





THIS PAGE Painted white with green trim, Newton's 1910 farmhouse reflects its history.
OPPOSITE PAGE The screened-in porch beckons on steamy summer afternoons.







Inside, a modern sensibility reigns while Penfield plays with traditional forms. Newton recalls discussing an old, round farm table for the kitchen. What she got—and loves—is the round, white Saarinen “Tulip” table, circa 1956. For color, she lives with orange, blue, lime green, and yellow. She remembers the day the pristine white of the new sheetrock walls in the living room were painted. She called Lucy in a panic. “It’s soooooo orange,” she reported. Penfield calmed her. “She said, ‘Wait until the furniture arrives.’ And she was right. It worked.”

The mix of furnishings includes chairs with cowhides, modernist lounge chairs, Indonesian teak cabinets, and molded plastic Starck furniture on the screened porch. The playful names of the fabrics underline the whimsical approach: “Unbridled” by Great Plains fabrics on the sofa, “House Pets” by Donghia for the pillows, and “Dairy Queen” by Peter Fasano in the laundry room.

Newton’s art collection is simply personal. A favorite is a photograph of a horse by Michael Eastman that adorns a lime green wall near the back entry; it’s the first thing

she sees as she comes in from the barn. The laundry area and Newton’s desk sit side-by-side, reminiscent of an old farmhouse in which rooms were always multi-purpose.

As much as Newton loves her house, now flooded with light throughout the day and filled with furniture and colors that make her happy, she spends much of her time outdoors with the horses. She and her daughter continue to ride, but her newest fascination is breeding Swedish Warmbloods. Nine of these horses are at home in the barn, along with one colt and a couple more on the way.

She enjoys country living, chopping her own wood, and caring for the horses. She enjoys the stars, the views of the prairie, and watching a mare give birth to a new colt. She was meant for this life, and doesn’t miss a minute of the frenetic crossroads at 50th and France. That is a good life, too. But it is meant for others. **MH**

ALECIA STEVENS IS A MINNEAPOLIS INTERIOR DESIGNER AND FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO *MIDWEST HOME*.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON RESOURCES FEATURED IN THIS STORY, PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 253.

