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Designing a kitchen that respects the age of an old house can be a tricky task. Modern necessity often betrays the simplicity of an authentic period-inspired room. At her home, an 1843 Greek Revival in Montpelier, Vermont, architect Sandra Vitzthum sacrifices nothing in the design of her kitchen, pantry, and mudroom—blending both function and aesthetic for a kitchen that reflects the home’s past.

“When I bought the house in 1994, the kitchen had been moved to the original ‘shed’ [a cramped narrow space which led out to the original carriage barn *cum* garage] and the kitchen sink was right next to the back door,” says Vitzthum. “There was no room to hang a coat when you came in. After I dumped a pot of spaghetti sauce on my boys’ [Alex 14, Carl 11, Auggie 8] snow boots, I knew it was time to rethink the kitchen.”

Vitzthum, who grew up in this well-preserved New England town, has a sentimental connection to her home known as the Loomis House. Her grandfather had stayed in the house in 1938 while interviewing for a position as church minister, and her grandmother had lived next door to the property. Acting as steward to the house, Vitzthum wanted to restore the shed, pantry, and kitchen to their original places—the 1843 kitchen had been utilized as a dining room since the 1950s.

For the kitchen design, Vitzthum chose an “unfitted” composition, contrasting colors and materials in the space. She designed a freestanding mahogany dresser and dish rack and hired local cabinetmaker Paul Donio of St. Johnsbury to construct them. The dish rack hangs on the wall above a salvaged porcelain sink with a double drain board. “I had three salvage yards looking for over a year for that type of sink for me,” says Vitzthum. “It’s a popular style.” The original floor-to-ceiling white cabinets in the room contrast with the dark mahogany pieces and antique kitchen table and chairs.

Right Sandra Vitzthum designed a kitchen that respects the home’s Greek Revival farmhouse past while making it a functional space for her growing family. *Above* Sophie, the family watchdog, loves to spend time in the kitchen in front of the warm Aga cooker.





Tradition Built-in

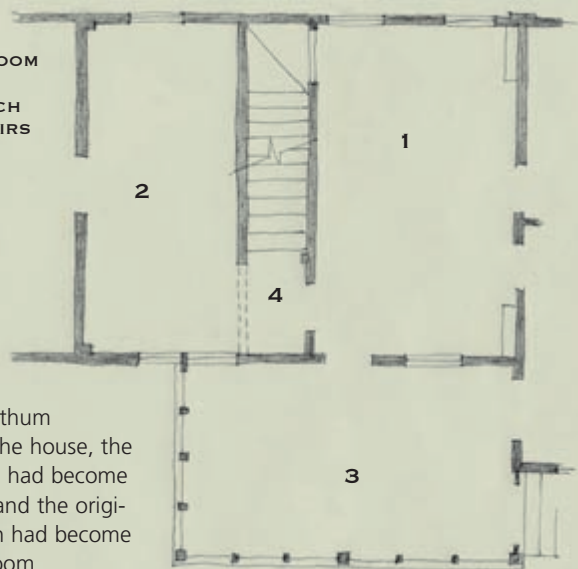
Architect Sandra Vitzthum creates a cozy kitchen for her and her three young boys in Vermont.

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Floor plan Then and Now

Before Restoration

- 1 DINING ROOM
- 2 KITCHEN
- 3 SUN PORCH
- 4 BACK STAIRS PORCH



When Vitzthum purchase the house, the 1843 shed had become a kitchen and the original kitchen had become a dining room.

After Restoration

- 1 KITCHEN
- 2 SHED/MUDROOM
- 3 PANTRY
- 4 BACK STAIRS
- 5 BATHROOM
- 6 SUN PORCH/SUMMER KITCHEN



Vitzthum relocated the kitchen and shed to their original spaces and added a pantry and bathroom.

Top left Vitzthum incorporated a salvaged porcelain sink into the kitchen. *Top right* Local artist Ruth Pope designed and painted the hutch and bench, creating functional pieces of art for the restored shed. *Bottom left* The back staircase was reconfigured to open up a passageway from the kitchen to the pantry. *Bottom right* Vitzthum incorporated the washer and dryer into the dish pantry.

Kitchen Convenience

Vitzthum spent a summer gardening during her college days in Ireland and prepared all her meals on an Aga cooker. She fell in love with the range (popular in the United Kingdom and Northern Europe, it is enameled cast-iron that uses radiant heat to cook food) and installed one in her kitchen. Because it is continually on, it makes the kitchen the warmest room in the house. “We live in the kitchen during the winter,” says Vitzthum, who incorporated a sitting area into the space. “My boys hang out here—do homework or read.” To keep the kitchen cool during the summer months, she cooks on a gas range in the enclosed screened porch just off the kitchen.

Vitzthum, who stands 5 feet 4 inches does most of her food prep right on the kitchen table, which is 32 inches tall. “The standard counter height is 36 inches—that’s too high for me,” she says. She also uses the sink’s drain boards for counter space. Vitzthum wanted the kitchen to feel open, so she did not enclose the sink or add an island. She advises leaving open space under such counters, which will help make the room feel larger. She also kept as many appliances out of the kitchen as possible and focused on what she really needed in the immediate space—a stove, a sink, and dish and food storage. She placed the refrigerator, washer, and dryer in the pantry. “The refrigerator is just a few steps away from the stove. It doesn’t feel physically out of the way, and it’s nice not to have to look at it,” says Vitzthum. “I don’t use a dishwasher, but if I were to add one, I would put it in the pantry where I store most of my dishes.”

Perfect Pantry and Mudroom

To create a passageway between the kitchen and pantry, Vitzthum reconfigured the back steps. The pantry shelves made by Randy Koch of Calais, Vermont, are fashioned after a traditional dish pantry with glass-front doors where she stores her sister Heather Pierce’s pottery, 100 china place settings that Vitzthum’s grandmother chose for the church suppers back in 1940s, and her uncle Sam’s endless jars of pickled vegetables. “We found an old soapstone sink in the basement and added it to the room,” Vitzthum says. She papered the walls with an early nineteenth-century English pattern called “Kensington” from the Victoria and Albert Collection. The walls would have originally been whitewashed plaster, but she wanted to add color to the space.

Vitzthum brought back the shed to its original use: a common room attached to old Vermont farmhouses for people to change out of their outdoor clothes. She incorporated loads of storage into the space, including a shelf that runs around the top of the room. It’s lined with hockey skates, bike helmets, and football equipment. She also added hooks for hats and coats. On the opposite wall is a 5-bay storage unit with 10 cubby holes for the boys’ winter gear. The walls are varnished pine bead board. Local artisan Ruth Pope painted Green Mountain scenes on a hutch and chest for the shed. Today, the spaces respect the past while offering Vitzthum a working kitchen for her and her growing boys. NOH

For Resources, see page 92.

