

TRADITIONAL HOME

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ROVENCE

on the Plains



Now that it's been refashioned, this once-unremarkable Fairway, Kansas, house captures the look and feel of a farmhouse in France.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILLIAM DENNIS, III



Utilite Dorothy and Tom, Roger Poley and David (left) didn't have to leave Kansas to transport themselves to a fantasy world. They snuggled in to Platteau, a suburb of Kansas City, and completely escaped their surroundings. Why? "It's our pleasure and our hobby," says Roger. "It's a hobby and the gift of our mother-in-law." He has worked on houses. They have casually staged two or three calls to build a country house somewhere in southern France.

Though it didn't take a month, getting from "here" to the imaginary "there" was no simple matter. It has, when the house shows on those pages and the first-appearing David and Roger bought six years ago, here is a museum in the air and the foundation. Everything else, from the orange-painted fence to the doors, windows, garage, and driveway, has been changed.

More dramatic, though, is the radically altered exterior. Thanks to a new addition, and numerous cosmetic

transformations, the floors, beams on the ceiling, and walls finished with plaster and stone help to put the living room, left, in a marvelous French place of mind. A wall of new glass doors in the left of the eating area leads to a swimming pool and cabana.

Several other examples of simple place, below, is a still life of apples painted by David's artist grandfather. Keeping the charcoal pine console in an old building, on 18th-century plaster, and a substantial bronze mandarin pig.

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and structural changes, not a trace of suburban-house optimism remains. A major remodeling cost slice in the living room, formerly a "jocely constrained, sit-on family room, built by a local handyman, with windows and doors that matched nothing," according to Rager. He raised the ceiling height from eight feet to 10, installed new windows and French doors, and widened the opening to the dining room from three feet to eight. He also lowered the floor by 2 1/4 inches. "This was necessary," he says, "to accept the weight of the new staircase side table." And weighty it was. It took two tons of steel and four tons of tile to complete the floor. Thus came the cosmetic changes.

"We definitely wanted a casual feel—that of a European farmhouse rather than a chateau or villa. We wanted it pretentious but elegant," says David. To restore the living room, the dining room, and the adjoining music room, all walls were treated with straw-thrown plaster, then glazed for a pitted, aged effect. "We had one straw-and-plaster wall in old form-

The former kitchen now the dining room, to be remodeling. Rager attached the door leading to the living room and opened the wall between this room and the former garage to make space for a music room. He also lowered the ceiling to create an intimate feel.

The dining room's old-world ambience is enhanced by the still life below. The colors of the painting are echoed in the floral arrangements, the porcelain centerpiece, and the real pine on the marble sideboard.

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rooms in France and Spain, but we had to figure out the mixtape for ourselves." David says. (Click here for *they did it*, an Decorating French on page 12.) To French off the South of France accents, David and Roger installed light beams in the living room. "They're actually made of pine," David recalls, "but we stained them to look like French limestone."

With the walls backgrounded in place, David constructed 36 furnishings in the new, old-world setting. Opposite seating pieces, all covered in classic country French fabrica, mingle with French and English antique, carefully chosen artwork, and an array of furniture-faceted accessories. The sofa, with its "big 'one-friendly' pillow, is covered in fine sets of elegance that David shares with the staves.

Decorating the room is a full-time project, reminiscent of the '60s, and involved from a distant Kansas City hotel. Though the painting was the same—and the color scheme—of the room, Roger notes that it was probably done by someone who knew nothing about French. "Because the color's going off on the wrong side."

The patina of Provence continues in the dining room, furnished with a late-19th-century pine

What the dining room, left, looks like is not more than makes up for in character. Ceiling beams were added for historic farmhouse effect, and ornate patterns, all provincial, were brought into play. *Softening the heavily scheme is a large painting (shown in detail) and a man's hair light fixture. Placed in close proximity to the slight bed, a brass container becomes a ritual piece.*

When it's time to relax, Roger, chess, gravitates toward the library. Depending on the weather, David, below, is drawn to his favorite of the garden.

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Evening is served in the morning room, right. Though unadorned, the room has many striking accents, among them walls painted to look like pebbles, white-washed floors, and a delightful mix of French-flavored furnishings, accessories, and artwork.

To give the walls in the bedroom below the look of old parchment paper, David first applied a coat of "papering brown," then sprayed the surface with chalky white paint. The beautiful tray is a Korean low table.

With a 19th-century French refectory table, and baroque-style chairs that have been distressed with a large-scale blue-and-white check fabric. Because the ceiling here is much lower than in the living room, beams could not be used. Instead, Roger added crown molding for character and to create a transition between the room's smooth ceiling and its rough, stone-washed walls.

To make room for Roger's grand piano, the former garage was turned into a music room/dining room, a pleasant spot that's adjacent to the dining room. An accomplished cook as well as a pianist, Roger is interested among friends for his gourmet dinner parties. "He set only cooks, but he provides the music," says David. Guests at these parties have been known to comment, "We're not in Kansas anymore, Toto." ☐

Project Editor: Pat Arnold

For more information, see Reader's Resources on page 116.

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