



MEET THE ARCHITECT

# John B. Murray *by Sharon King Hoge*

THIS ARCHITECT FINDS THAT SUCCESSFUL RENOVATIONS BUILD ON THE PAST



**Considered Design** An addition to a country residence in Lakeville: family room and a west view (right). See *Resources*.



**“If things are thought out, they work, and you appreciate how beautiful it all looks”**



**What do you love about renovating homes?** Residential architecture is a very hands-on process between a client and myself. A renovation is one of the most important things a person will ever do; it's a reflection of who they are. **How do you decide whether to renovate a house or to raze it?** It's helpful if the underlying structure has historical elements or redeeming features—qualities that could become the germ of the renovation and make it worthy of the effort that would go into

it. **You've done renovations that incorporate a combination of historical elements. What does that achieve?** When we do a renovation, the objective is to make the whole the greatest thing by marrying the parts together. It's very rewarding to be able to rejuvenate a house so that one plus one becomes three instead of 1.5. **What makes a renovation successful?** People will think that a house has been there for a while, but at the same

time it will be very much tuned in to the living style of the clients. And it will be a state-of-the-art structure in terms of energy, conservation, electronics and mechanics; insulated so that it is temperate in both summer and winter. **Why are house systems so important?** Thinking through the functionality is critical to success. Working at Parish-Hadley, I learned that the space needs to work. It's not just how it looks. If things are thought out, they work, and you appreciate how beautiful it all looks. **You start your work with analytiques (detailed hand-drawings). What does that contribute to the design?** Within that singular drawing, you see the plan, the elevations, the molding arranged in a beautiful way. They're useful for preliminary pricing so they help balance the budget. Many are so beautiful that our clients frame and hang them. **What house would you like to renovate?** I would love to work with a true 18th-century house. Lower ceilings and smaller spaces present certain constraints. Making additions so that a house really works with the way people live today can be exciting. We restored the James Madison house in Virginia to the time of just after his Presidency—almost a reverse restoration.

JAMES BLECKER