

ON LOCATION

Callicoon, N.Y.

# With Wide-Open Acres



1. Christine Salway and John Moskowitz (shown with their son, Julian) were drawn to the farmhouse for its history (they believe it dates to the early 20th century) and its privacy (it's set back from the road, on 43 acres).



2. The table and chairs on the porch were a street find that Ms. Salway spray-painted.

3. The kitchen doors were rescued from a restaurant in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, that was being remodeled.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE D1  
 pecially after touring the house in snowy January and seeing how much work it needed. Windows were falling out of their frames, ugly linoleum flooring and dropped ceilings had been installed, the kitchen was stripped, and no one was living there to maintain the plumbing or electrical systems.

"When we left I was like: 'Whoa. Somebody's got a lot of work ahead of them,'" Ms.



Salway said. "The little house just needed to be nursed back to health. Whereas this was, for us, an enormous undertaking."

Still, they both knew that to find an old farmhouse near a town they liked, set far off the road, on rolling hills, with property lines extending as far as the eye could see — and priced within their budget — was "one in a million," as Ms. Salway put it. So after a brief bidding war with a falconer who wanted to use the property for his birds, the couple bought the place for \$205,000.

The deal required them to sell their cottage. In the 30-day period before the deed was transferred, Ms. Salway and Mr. Moskowitz stayed there and drove to the farmhouse to work, while Ms. Salway's mother watched their infant son. They were in a race to get the downstairs into a condition where they could safely stay there overnight, without driving back to the city each day.

Then, more slowly, they began tackling the rest of the house. For bigger projects, like the plumbing and insulation work, they hired professionals. For cosmetic fixes and smaller projects, like pulling up the linoleum and installing kitchen cabinets, they did the work themselves, often with the help of friends and the couple's families. The renovation cost around \$30,000.

BEING INSIDE THE FARMHOUSE NOW, it's hard to believe it was ever a wreck. The hardwood floors revealed under the linoleum are in great shape. The kitchen is open and bright. And Ms. Salway has decorated with a countrified mix of Craigslist finds (a brass bed, a pair of albino leather sofas), furniture and art she got from clients (a dining table, 19th-century portrait paintings) and items found in antiques stores (ceramic plates of the 50 states).

The rooms are atypically spacious for a

farmhouse, too. The vibe is loose and welcoming. "There's nothing perfect in this house," Ms. Salway said. "I just wanted everybody to feel like they could flop around."

For Mr. Moskowitz, who grew up in the city, owning 43 acres is thrilling. He still isn't sure what to do with it, other than puff out his chest.

"It's goofy, but there's something very manly about having land," he said. "I've been living on top and under a million people all my life. Being able to get away from that is incredible."

Both are glad they went for the farmhouse, even though it may take years to fully grow into the property's abundant proportions.

"Truthfully, I don't think we're quite grown up enough for this house," Ms. Salway said. "But it landed on us, so we said maybe the timing isn't the best — but you just jump."

MARKET READY

**Q.** What can I do about messy foot traffic during winter showings?

**A.** The thought of having strangers tromp through a home with their shoes on, especially after they've been walking through snow and slush, may be enough to give some people nightmares.

For sellers, "it's something that's in the forefront of their minds as soon as it snows," said Stacey Max, a sales manager at Bond New York real estate in Manhattan.

But it's difficult to avoid having showings during inclement weather if you're selling your home in the winter. "As a broker, you don't want the owner to say, 'Don't have any open houses this winter,'" Ms. Max said. "That's not a good solution."

Insisting that potential buyers remove their shoes before coming in isn't the best solution, either, she said, because apartment hunters frequently react negatively to such requests.

"You want to avoid having people in their socks in the dirty hallway of an apartment building," she said. "Nobody who hates you from the first minute they walk into the apartment is going to buy the apartment."

On all but the sleepest days, a better option would be to have a supply of contractor-grade shoe covers from a hardware store at the ready, and to ask visitors to slip them on before walking into your home.

But if you're set on having people take off their shoes, do what you can to make them as comfortable as possible. "Put out a rug or a mat, along with a stool or a bench, where people can sit down," Ms. Max suggested. "You can do it inside the entrance or even in the hallway of the apartment building, if there's room."

To make visitors feel at home, set out a basket with inexpensive new slippers, said Meridith Baer, a home stager with offices in Connecticut and California. That way, they won't be forced to walk around in their socks.

"Make it feel welcoming," she said. "Leave a cute sign outside saying, 'Please leave your shoes here.'"

But only if necessary, Ms. Baer said. "In my heart of hearts, I feel like the best thing is to not worry about shoes," she said, "because you don't want the house to feel like a museum or a place where you can't really live."

Homes that are beautiful but feel uptight can languish on the market, she added, and "the minute we make them more homey, they sell."

So unless you're showing your home during a blizzard, the best approach may simply be to allow the shoes, Ms. Baer said, and to "hire someone to clean up after."

**Questions about repairs or redecorating before putting a home on the market may be sent to marketready@nytimes.com. Unpublished questions cannot be answered individually.**



JANE BELLEF FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

GET 50% OFF

The New York Times HELPS STUDENTS SUCCEED — IN COLLEGE, IN THEIR CAREERS, IN LIFE

GIVE A DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION TO A STUDENT AT THE EDUCATION RATE

Learn more or subscribe by visiting [NYTIMES.COM/EDUGIFT](http://NYTIMES.COM/EDUGIFT)

