



The large dining table is perfect for a Christmas setting – Jackie uses white Wedgwood china and introduces splashes of red with napkins, candles and flowers. The plain cream curtains ensure the room is full of light, even in winter



## HOUSE FACT FILE

**THE PROPERTY** New England farmhouse in six acres in Vermont

**BEDROOMS** Three

**BATHROOMS** Five ???

**BUYING PRICE**  
\$180,000 (£98,000)  
in 1996

**IMPROVEMENTS MADE** An extension with two bedrooms; the kitchen extended; redecorated

**AMOUNT SPENT ON RENOVATIONS** \$150,000 (£81,500)

**NOW WORTH** \$650,000 (£350,000)



# 19th-century American farmhouse

Jackie and David Ennis furnished their home in traditional New England style

**Who lives here?** 'I'm Jackie Ennis, 40, and I live here with my husband, David Rocchio, 45, and our two children, Callum, six, and Antonia, three. I'm originally from Manchester, but I met David when I was working in the US in 1990 on a one-year placement and I've lived here ever since. He's a lawyer and writer; I work in tourism.'

**How did you end up in Vermont?** 'When I first met David, we were both working in Boston, but he's originally from Vermont and had always wanted to come back. We knew that Vermont would be very different – and much quieter – than Boston and decided to go for a six-month trial period to see if a move felt right.'

We moved to the small town of Stowe, which is quite near the Canadian border, and, at the end of the six months, I was totally sold on the idea of living here permanently. Vermont is famous for its beautiful scenery – particularly in the autumn. But I also loved the whole lifestyle. The population is surprisingly ▶



The kitchen opens onto the family room, with a dresser made from old barn board





Jackie and David had planned to have a painted kitchen but decided they liked the warmth of the maple units combined with white Corian worktops



David often does the cooking at Christmas, when ham or goose is served instead of turkey

► Traditional New England decorations are in red and green with a natural feel. The tree stands in an area of the L-shaped living room that was once a bedroom

small; the crime rate is low and everything is clean and well maintained. The summers are hot and sunny, and they're wonderful for cycling, walking and kayaking. The winters are perfect for skiing and sledding. Even though Stowe is quite small, it has a great social scene, with wonderful restaurants, theatres and art galleries. We both agreed it would be a perfect place to settle down and raise our family.'

**First impressions?** 'It was dusk when we first drove up to the house and the moment we saw the traditional red exterior with fawns skipping around the garden, we both fell in love with it. We particularly liked the fact that it incorporated so many typical New England features, such as the wide floorboards, slanting dormer windows,



‘The colours used in Vermont are soft and warm to complement the scenery’

beams and covered porch. Even though the house was only 1,000 sq ft, we knew that, in time, it could be extended. It was perfect in every way, so we were delighted when our offer was accepted.

Within Stowe our house is quite well known and is often referred to as The Little Red House. It was originally the bunkhouse attached to a farmhouse and there is a large barn that separates the two buildings. When our house was first built in 1840, it was quite near to the road, but, in the 1970s, the people who owned it then moved the entire building back several yards, which makes it very private and secluded.’

**What have you done?** ‘The house had been well maintained and, as there were only the two of us, it would have been

perfectly adequate. But we realised that once we started a family, we’d need more space. We agonised for some time over the nature of the extension. Unlike in the UK, homes built in the early 19th century are not that common in the States and there is an expectation that any extensions should be very much in keeping with the age of the property. We eventually employed a local architect, Bob Burley, who had a wealth of experience working on older buildings. Listening to his ideas, we knew that he would preserve its architectural integrity.

Bob designed the extension, which includes a master bedroom with an en suite and another bedroom above it. The area where we place the Christmas tree had previously been a bedroom, so we integrated

that to create a much larger L-shaped living room with French doors leading to the back garden. We also extended the kitchen to incorporate a casual dining area and this in turn freed up space to create a comfortable family area leading off the kitchen. We fitted a new kitchen of unfinished solid maple units. Lastly, we added what is commonly referred to over here as a “mud room”. Once the snow starts to melt, there is a short period when the roads become quite muddy. The idea is that people can kick off their boots in there, which makes it much easier to keep the rest of the house clean.

We loved the fact that the house had a cosy atmosphere, but it was a little on the dark side. The wooden wall panelling had been painted dark green, so we decided to ▶





The main seating area in this room reflects Jackie's tendency to mix furniture and fabrics that blend well rather than matching exactly

lighten it up with off-white paint. Applying five coats turned out to be a truly tedious job, but it was well worth the effort. We've painted all the walls in quite light colours and hung simple neutral-coloured curtains and though we've retained the cosy atmosphere, the overall effect is so much brighter – especially in the summer months.'

**Tell us about Christmas in Vermont.** 'I'm probably a little biased now, but to me this has to be one of the most picturesque places in the world to spend Christmas. We always have snow and people tend to decorate their homes in a very traditional way, with real Christmas trees, wooden decorations and not too much tinsel. The atmosphere in the town is lovely, with lots of concerts and twinkling lights. Christmas

Eve and Christmas Day are very informal, with friends and family dropping by for mulled wine and egg nog. Needless to say, Callum and Antonia usually have us up at the crack of dawn to open their presents and we tend to eventually sit down to dinner at around 3pm with friends and family. This year, my mother will be spending Christmas with us, which will be really lovely.

Thanksgiving, which falls on the last Thursday of November, is the time when most Americans have a turkey dinner, so when Christmas comes, the more traditional choice is ham or goose. David is a keen cook and he tends to take over in the kitchen – an arrangement that I'm more than happy with. After dinner, our family tradition is to wrap up well and go outside to build a huge

snowman with the children and then go sledding. It is very cold here in the winter, but it's a dry cold, so it's not unpleasant.'

**How would you describe your style?** 'I'd say we have furnished and decorated our home in a typical New England style. The colours used here tend to be soft and warm to complement the scenery. Soft greens and russet tones work particularly well.

I tend to prefer to take a mix-and-match approach rather than having a matching three-piece suite. There are some lovely furniture stores in the US and we had no problem finding comfortable sofas and chairs that blend well with our collection of antique rocking chairs and side tables. We've used lots of rugs to add warmth to the wooden floorboards. I had originally



During the winter months, Jackie dresses the beds with colourful patchwork quilts that are typical of the area



► Antonia getting into the Christmas spirit. Tongue-and-groove panelling is typical of New England homes; the roll-top bath was in the house when they bought it

wanted plain sisal, but David felt that Oriental rugs would add a splash of colour and be richer. Much as I hate to admit it, I think he was absolutely right.

**What's the nicest thing anyone has said about your home?** 'After we had finished all the building work, our refuse collector admitted he had been horrified when he heard that we planned to extend The Little Red House. But once he saw the end result, he felt we'd done a wonderful job and hadn't detracted from the house in any way. The people in Stowe are proud of their town and maintain everything to a high standard.'

**What's been your best find?** 'The red dresser in the family room. It's actually a new piece, but made from old barn board in a colour that's similar to that of our barn. It's ►





▲ **Antonia's room has bedspreads from Bed Bath & Beyond ([www.bedbathandbeyond.com](http://www.bedbathandbeyond.com)) and a traditional hook rug**

perfect for displaying my collection of china, which I brought over from the UK.' **If you've learned one thing...** 'I can't claim to be an expert, but I've found that it's really important to choose décor that complements your surroundings and the style of your home. Pastels might work well in the bright sunshine of Florida and California but not up here. I don't think that ultra-modern furniture or very bright colours would have been right for this house. I'm hoping that everything we've bought will continue to blend with the old beams and floorboards – and maybe even get better with age.'

**What's your favourite room?** 'I love the family area off the kitchen – it has a really cosy atmosphere and everyone seems to congregate in there. I also like the fact that, if one of us are cooking and the kids are playing at the kitchen table, we can all chat easily to one another.'

**If you could change one thing, what would it be?** 'We only have three bedrooms. When we were extending the house, we maybe should have added a fourth one, which would have been useful for when family and friends come to stay. It's lovely to have visitors from home – especially over Christmas. Our main consideration at the time was that we didn't want to ruin

the lines of the house. Hopefully, when we get round to converting the barn, we'll be able to create a self-contained guest suite, which might actually turn out to be better in the long run.'

**What's next on the agenda?** 'We need to decide how best to use the area in the living room where we place the Christmas tree. It's ideal at this time of year, but, for the rest of the year, the space is a little bit wasted. On one side, we've created a library/reading area that's ideal for the occasional times we can sit in there and relax. David would like to have a baby grand piano on the other side of this area, but when I think of Callum and Antonia pounding away at the keys, I'm not so sure.'

And, of course, there's the barn. We intend to convert it into a multi-purpose area. As well as somewhere for friends and family to stay, the plan is to create an office for David and a playroom for the children. We're looking forward to getting stuck into another big project.'

**Do you miss the UK?** 'Fortunately, my job gives me plenty of opportunities to return to the UK and I always enjoy my time there. I love meeting up with my family and friends, and seeing the various trends and fashions that are emerging. But I must admit I'm totally settled here – I love our home and our whole lifestyle. And, at this time of year, I feel privileged to celebrate Christmas in such a beautiful place.'



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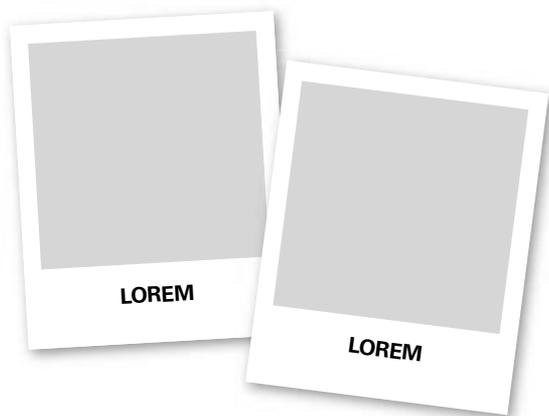
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# Homeowner's style

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