

Last night I dreamt about a chintz for Calumet—that’s what Sister said when she phoned me one morning to tell me about a pale green print for the living room,” recounts Barbara de Kwiatkowski. The Sister who evoked the shades of Manderley was, of course, the late Mrs. Henry Parish II, the legendary decorator on whose career the legendary Calumet was a splendid coronet.

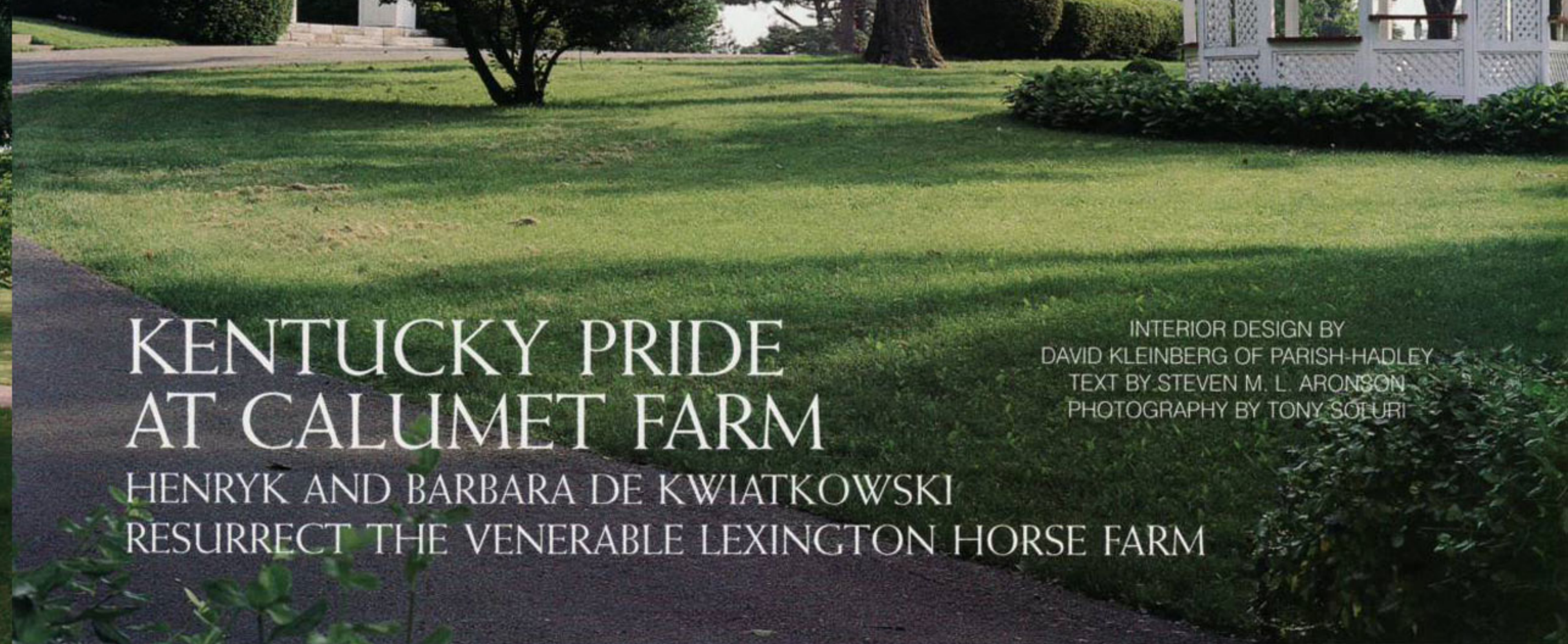
As it is a coronet on the career of Barbara de Kwiatkowski’s husband, Henryk, the Polish-born, Bahamas-based aircraft magnate and investor, and the exuberant owner of such equine glitterati as Conquistador Cielo and Danzig Connection. Henryk de Kwiatkowski had left other horse owners in the dust when he bought the Lexington, Kentucky, farm that, from its establishment in 1924 by the founder of the Calumet Baking Powder Company, had expanded to become the showplace of the Bluegrass country and indeed of American Thoroughbred breeding and racing—the pedigree-peddling producer of nine horses that won the Kentucky

Derby (including two, Whirlaway and Citation, that swept the Triple Crown), plus the nonpareil Alydar, the number-one stud of the industry.

But Calumet Farm, wildly mismanaged, went bankrupt in the early nineties, and all its horses were dispersed. At a court-ordered auction in March 1992, Henryk de Kwiatkowski single-handedly—that is, by merely raising his right hand—saved the place from almost certain development as a hotel or theme park. “Sold for seventeen million!” and the gavel fell. De Kwiatkowski recalls, “The sale was conducted in such a frantic fashion that after I bought the farm and was signing the check, they were selling the table I was signing it on—there was a number on it and they were lifting it away as I dotted the last *i* in *Kwiatkowski*.”

For the fortune he had just paid, de Kwiatkowski got himself 847 acres of lavish pastureland crisscrossed with miles of pristine white fences and dotted and dashed with more than forty buildings: a fourteen-room main house, fifteen white barns with

BELOW: Rescued at auction by Henryk and Barbara de Kwiatkowski, Calumet Farm is back as Kentucky’s showplace for racing and breeding Thoroughbreds. RIGHT: “It was in fantastic condition,” says Parish-Hadley designer David Kleinberg of the 1939 clapboard main house, with shutters painted in Calumet’s devil’s-red racing colors.



## KENTUCKY PRIDE AT CALUMET FARM

HENRYK AND BARBARA DE KWIAWKOWSKI  
RESURRECT THE VENERABLE LEXINGTON HORSE FARM

INTERIOR DESIGN BY  
DAVID KLEINBERG OF PARISH-HADLEY  
TEXT BY STEVEN M. L. ARONSON  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TONY SOLURI





ABOVE: The main stallion stable at Calumet Farm is a clapboard with a standing-seam metal roof and copper cupola.

red-trimmed cupolas, a sophisticated veterinary clinic, an equine swimming pool and underwater treadmill, two racetracks, a gazebo, a modest log cabin. . . . The three thousand people attending the auction gave him an ovation lasting several minutes, and the press and public alike hailed him as "the king of Calumet."

De Kwiatkowski has gone on to revel in the role. As he tells it, "Sister Parish said, when she walked in and saw the place, 'The possibilities of this house are regal—when *we* get through with it, it will be fit for a king.'" Only failing health kept her from presiding in propria persona over the decoration of Calumet; in the end she had to entrust the project to her associate David Kleinberg, who over the years had worked with her on dwellings for the de Kwiatkowskis in Palm Beach, Manhattan, Greenwich, Connecticut, and Lyford Cay in the Bahamas.

RIGHT: "Relaxed formality" is how David Kleinberg describes the living room, where the furnishings include an 18th-century English chinoiserie-style japanned cabinet and a Queen Anne corner chair. Chintz from Cowtan & Tout.







ABOVE: A detail of the living room reveals a 19th-century bull's-eye mirror over a 19th-century pine mantel that Kleinberg had painted and gilded and a George III bench with lion's heads.

Kleinberg, like any designer worth his withers, knew that a horse farm, to look fit for a king, should not look like a palace—there would be no thrones, after all, in the stalls. Says de Kwiatkowski: "My instructions to David were, 'You know my taste.' I wanted everything at Calumet to look like it had always been there. But don't get me wrong, I do not particularly appreciate a hall with a chair saying that Queen Elizabeth sat in it. I want the kind of chair the queen can sit *today* in—not five hundred years ago. Fit for a queen *today*."

Within a few months the very queen de Kwiatkowski had in mind—Elizabeth Regina of England, with whom he shares a horse trainer—was congratulating him on buying Calumet Farm. He recalls, "She said that

RIGHT: A series of panels in the dining room depicts horses in imagined landscapes, based on American naïf paintings. The Regency sideboard holds salt-glaze plates and creamware baskets.

it couldn't have fallen into better hands. She said this to me in person at Ascot, at the races of that year, 1992." Barbara de Kwiatkowski enthusiastically interjects: "You know that BBC program on the day-to-day life of the queen? There's a part where she's watching a race at Ascot and she says to the Queen Mother, 'Mummy, the horse I bet on won!' and she's jumping up and down. Well, that was Henryk's horse."

Flying down to Lexington on his first reconnaissance trip, David Kleinberg was beside himself. "In a way, it's how Mrs. Parish must have felt when Jacqueline Kennedy asked her to do the White House; now I was going to be working on one of the best-known houses in America, too," he says. "What I found was an absolute-







LEFT: The knotty-pine-paneled library was restored to display the de Kwiatkowski stable of trophies. Two bobbin-turned armchairs are by an English pedestal table. Fabrics by Lee Jofa. Rug, Patterson, Flynn, Martin & Manges.

ABOVE: The trophy room "is for reading, relaxing or card games and will eventually contain many Calumet trophies," says Kleinberg. American hooked rug from Laura Fisher. Area rug by Patterson, Flynn, Martin & Manges.

ly empty farm. Broom-clean. Every broom, even, was gone—every pitchfork. Every single stall was empty. There wasn't a shred of hay or a feed bucket in sight."

Fortunately the house itself was still there, sitting on one of the highest parts of a high plateau: a big 1939 clapboard with a white-columned portico and devil's-red shutters, a traditional center-hall plan and altogether the look of a manor house. Kleinberg had been given only a year in which to decorate it all—it had to be completed by May 1993, in time for the Kentucky Derby. "I saw right away that it was all about making it comfortable and glamorous but not glitzy, that it was *not* about going overboard—Henryk doesn't like things to look rich, and besides," Kleinberg laughs, "he said to me, 'I

don't want to go broke like the previous owners.'"

De Kwiatkowski had also instructed Kleinberg to stay away from racing colors in the décor: both those of the farm's founding family, devil's-red and blue, and his own, red and white, the colors of the Polish cavalry. Even more emphatically, Calumet's new owner didn't want horses as a motif running throughout the house. "I don't have to have them inside," de Kwiatkowski said, "when outside I'll be having the most beautiful ones in the world." Indeed—soon the oak-paneled stalls at Calumet were tenanted again, and the fields were full of foals and mares. With hundreds of Thoroughbreds, racehorses and polo ponies now in residence, imported from de Kwiatkowski's stables in England, Ireland and France, the farm



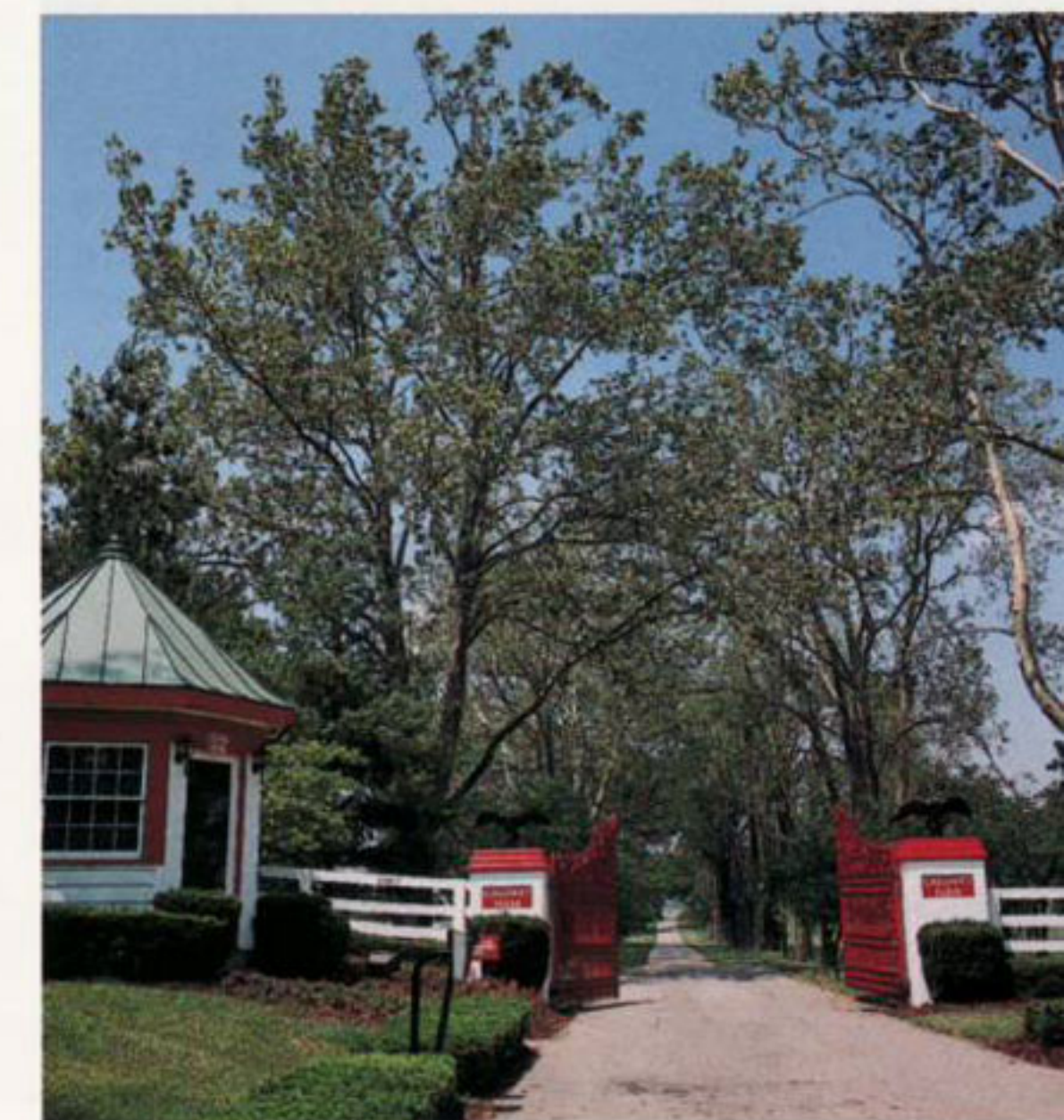


Sister Parish selected the pale yellow chintz wallcovering for the master bedroom, against which hang reverse-painted-and-decoupage-glass still lifes. "It's the kind of house she loved even though she wasn't able to see it completed," says Kleinberg. Drapery fabric from Clarence House.





“I love what I feel in Kentucky. I never loved anything like I love Calumet.”



ABOVE: A mile-long drive winds its way from the entrance to Calumet Farm past 847 acres with two racetracks, paddocks and outbuildings up to the house.

looked once more like a Stubbs painting come to life.

Meanwhile Kleinberg, after a ten-day furniture-packed shopping expedition to London with the couple, was busy achieving the look of permanence de Kwiatkowski coveted. “I always think of Henryk’s places as looking like those of an Englishman abroad—let’s say, an Englishman who’s moved to America,” the designer sums up. “It’s a combination of American things with a lot of English influence, such as Georgian furni-

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LEFT: Among the 200 or so horses now stabled at Calumet are the de Kwiatkowskis’ first crop of yearlings, “their first real new babies,” says Kleinberg.