



ANTIQUES

# New Look, Old Tiles *by Jan Lee*

DURABLE ANTIQUE TILES CAN ADD WARMTH, STYLE AND VALUE TO YOUR HOME

Most people think of Delft tile as blue and white, but in the early 17th century, they were plain white. And although Delft refers to the city in Holland best known for their distinctive designs, the tiles were also made in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Harlingen, Makkum, Haarlem, Leiden and other towns. Hubert "Bear" van Asch van Wyck, of **Black Swan Antiques (P.O. Box 1167, Washington, by appointment, 860-868-9094)**, shed some light on Delft tile. "Trade with China brought indigo blue to the tiles of Holland.



Danny Martin of **Black Swan Antiques (P.O. Box 1167, Washington, by appointment, 860-868-9094)**, has supplied antique tiles to prominent homes throughout Connecticut, New York, and the Hamptons for a decade. Martin is a tile importer whose specialty is reclaimed antique tiles from Europe. With over 20 years, his inventory ranges from ornate "carpet" patterned tiles, to basic black and white, and everything in-between. "This is a 200-year-

The Dutch used tiles in areas that came in contact with wet mops or high traffic. Stairwells, baseboard areas, fireplace surrounds were much easier to clean when tiled." The white-washed walls of 17th-century homes were accented with tile made from local river clay. The tile was fired in kilns fueled with peat, which was much more plentiful than precious lumber reserved for home and shipbuilding. For two decades, Black Swan Antiques has been a direct importer of antique Dutch tiles. Van Asch van Wyck chooses each tile himself, offering his collections at a reasonable price because he buys entire lots. He sorts and cleans each tile, matching them with a common theme. His largest sale came from a designer who, upon seeing the beautiful display of 800 tiles at the shop, bought the entire wall for a client's kitchen. Van Asch van Wyck shared a tip in dating antique Delft tiles. "Look for dimples at the corners, which may be covered with glaze. This indicates an 18th-century tile."

that is totally unique to your home," said Martin. The term "reclaimed" means the color goes through the entire tile, as opposed to a tile painted on the surface. Martin has been in the tile recovery business long that demolition and renovation experts throughout Europe call when a special job comes up. "We've just received 2,000 square feet of tile reclaimed from a monastery in France," he exclaimed. He says installing antique tiles doesn't always require a professional. "We help our customers, help them select patterns, plan the layout, and estimate the shipping. We have no minimum, so a client can order for a backsplash or 2,000 square feet, whether they are a homeowner or a professional." Martin provides a certificate of authenticity, and can carry new or reproduction tile. "Investing in these tiles not only adds to the beauty of the home, it increases the value as well because they are fine antiques," he adds.

