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Inventing History

A NEW FEDERAL COLONIAL HOME CREATES ITS OWN CONVINCING CHRONOLOGY.

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Patrick Ahearn

Patrick Ahearn is as much a storyteller as an architect. When designing a vacation home on Martha's Vineyard for himself and his wife, Marsha, he turned to the past for inspiration, then took a leap of imagination. The result is a home rich with history—albeit entirely made up.

Like a novelist developing a character, he fleshed out the details. Patrick, who specializes in designing historically inspired homes, imagined one that had been built in 1790 with Federal Colonial architecture. That style's formal symmetry prevails at the front of the house, with two pairs of small-pane windows flanking the center door, proportioned and detailed to the period with its 42-inch width and oil-rubbed bronze hardware.

The symmetry of the front facade translates indoors as equally proportioned living and dining rooms on either side of an entry that provides a view through the house and on to the backyard pool. "These rooms are detailed in a more

formal Federal Colonial style, with inset-panel wainscoting, sconces, and a formal balustrade," Patrick says.

Columns continue the aesthetic and open the spaces for a more modern floor plan. Plank floors and cut-faced, period-correct nails visually connect the spaces. While living and dining rooms flow into the entry, each retains its own character thanks in part to Patrick's choice of materials. He clad the living room ceiling in 6-inch-wide beaded board, then painted it and the walls white. The dining room trades airiness for warmth. Paneling and beams create what Patrick calls a tavern—a dining room and library blend—which, he says, "is a smart trend in making use of a sometimes little-used room."

TEXTBOOK TOUCHES Spot-on period details in the living room, above, include walnut-stained floors and a brick fireplace surround. **FINE DINING** Antique ceiling beams and quarter-sawn oak give the dining room, opposite, a weighty library feel.



FANCIFUL

Surprising details — such as this bowed indoor balcony — are often the most endearing and memorable.





Imaginary origins

The threads of Patrick's tale pick up again in the 1800s. Here he projected that a barn was incorporated into living space. "The great-room at the back of the house is what I imagine to have been the barn," he says. Features such as clerestory windows or a soaring ceiling with rustic beamed trusses would have been incorrect for a Federal Colonial house but standard fare on a Federal-period barn.

"We wanted a space that was both welcoming and dramatic," Marsha says, and Patrick provided the drama with a Juliet balcony overlooking the great-room. "It's not a period feature but entirely whimsical," he admits, yet it still feels authentic. "I think of it as something like the stern of a pirate ship that would have been sailing during Edgartown's whaling years," Patrick says. "I think, especially with so many period details in the formal front rooms, you can capture the spirit and attitude of the period in the rest of the house without requiring that you live a period lifestyle."



BEAM THEME Salvaged barn timbers, *opposite*, refer directly to the architect's vision of the great-room as converted space.

HIDE AND PEEK The fireplace wall, *above left*, deftly conceals a television behind two sets of nicely detailed doors.

LIGHT IT UP The generous room, including this alcove, *above*, is well lit thanks to bay and clerestory windows.

CONNECT IT

Use some of the same materials from room to room to help ease the transitions and also define spaces.





Modern function

Creating a kitchen in a historically inspired house is always a challenge, and compromises are typical. Patrick circumvented the problem with his notion of the great-room as a renovated barn. The lofty space is big enough to meet modern needs without straying from its backstory. "I imagined the original family grew into the barn. Then the house had been abandoned for years when we ran across it and renovated," he says.

Like most good fiction, that plot is believable. The high-ceilinged "barn" area segues into the kitchen work space, which features a lower ceiling. "Just off the great-room is the kitchen, much as you would imagine stables extending beyond the main part of a barn," Patrick says. The kitchen's beaded-board ceiling, old beams, and pine floors create smooth transition. Subway tiles on the backsplash and an apron sink—features that would have been used in an actual restoration—keep the space informal.

ROOM TO WORK A long island, *left*, as well as the lowered ceiling, helps define the boundaries of the open kitchen.

WARM WOOD Cherry counters and vintage beams add coziness and continuity to the bright-white kitchen, *above*.



Eastern exposure

Patrick positioned the master bedroom and bath at the northeast corner of the upper floor. French doors with oil-rubbed bronze hardware open to a private balcony facing south and east, allowing the homeowners to soak up soft morning light. Antique beams circumscribe the room, outlining the 8-foot-high ceiling and extending down from it to define the room's four corners. The weathered beams imbue even this soft space with an authentic edge and tie it to rough-hewn references elsewhere.

Antique pine floorboards in both the bedroom and bathroom suggest age. The bathroom—a series of compartmentalized spaces for the whirlpool tub, shower stall, and toilet—picks up the story line of an antique home with its 3-inch beaded-board walls. In both bedroom and bath, six-over-six windows indicate an earlier vintage, as do the interior wood shutters.

ROOM FOR THE RUSTIC

Outlined with antique beams, the master bedroom, *above*, looks like converted space.

COZY CLADDING Three-inch-wide beaded board dresses the master bath's walls, ceiling, and tub surround, *opposite*. The tub is trimmed with carrara marble.

BATHED IN LIGHT

Windows placed
at tub height fill
the room with light
and fresh air for an
invigorating bath.





Graceful passages

A courtyard with a pool divides the house from the garage (which, keeping with his “story,” Patrick prefers to call a carriage house). “This is like an urban courtyard, of which the pool is the central feature,” he says. By opening onto the courtyard, the carriage house becomes a natural hub for entertaining. “It’s not just used as a garage,” Patrick says. “We’ve entertained as many as 60 people there.” The pergola, particularly its columns, provides the necessary visual transition from the carriage house to the pool—the height and verticality of the columns break up the linear shapes of the two features. In the main house, the two-story great-room, with its bay window, overlooks one end of the pool. On the main level, a covered porch with an outdoor fireplace is accessed from not only the great-room and pool but also the living room. Above is the private balcony of the master suite. On the opposite side is the balcony of an upstairs guest room.

Architect **Patrick Ahearn**

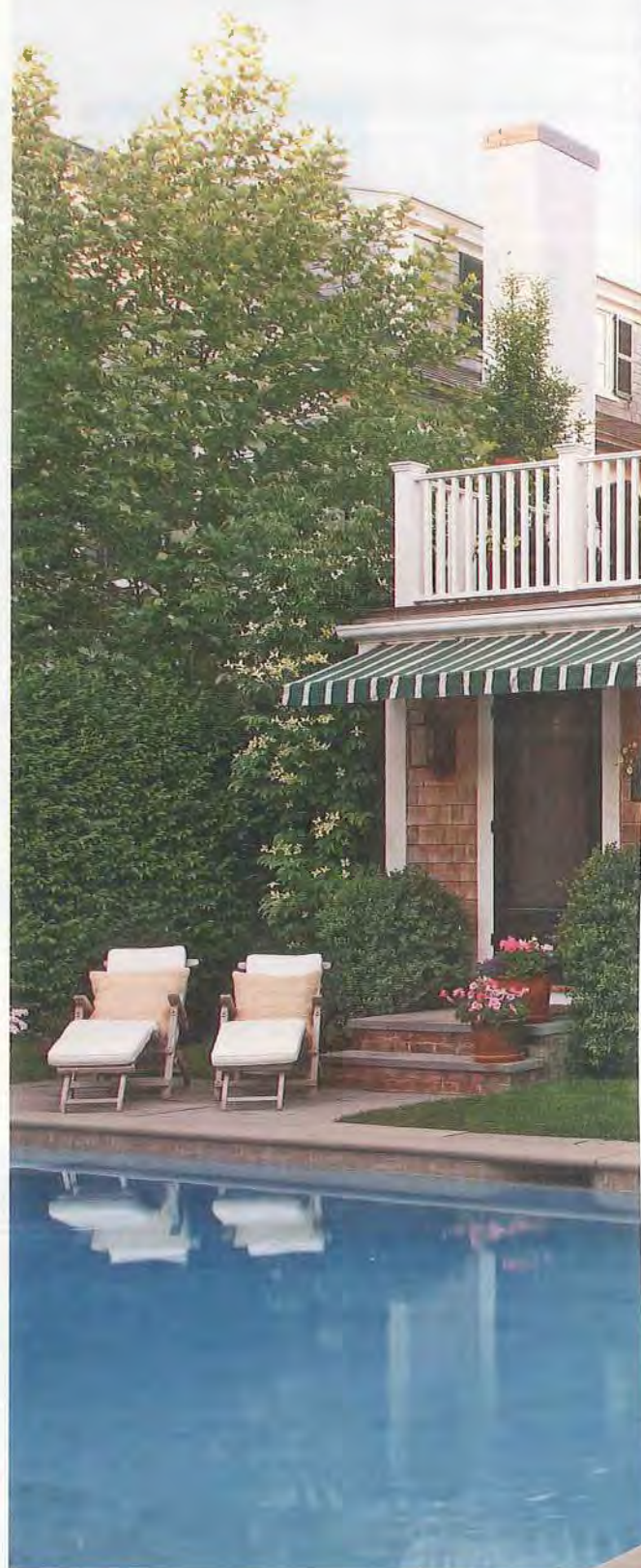
RESOURCES ON PAGE 112

SMOOTH MOVE A pergola, *above*, defines the sitting area outside the carriage house and provides a graceful transition to the pool.

TAKE A LOOK The layout of the main house, *right*, gives the great-room, master bedroom, and a guest bedroom views of the pool.

PLAN FOR THE VIEWS

Flank a central structure with bedrooms so each can enjoy a private balcony.







HORSELESS CARRIAGE HOUSE The three-car garage, *top*, features an upper-level apartment for extra living space.

PERIOD-INSPIRED Beaded-board walls and a brick floor, *above*, repeat period-inspired materials used inside the house.

OF AN AGE

To fit a modern three-car garage into his historic narrative of the house, architect Patrick Ahearn strategically sited the stand-alone building behind the house with access to a side street. This enabled him to construct the house without the burden of a wide stretch of garage facade.

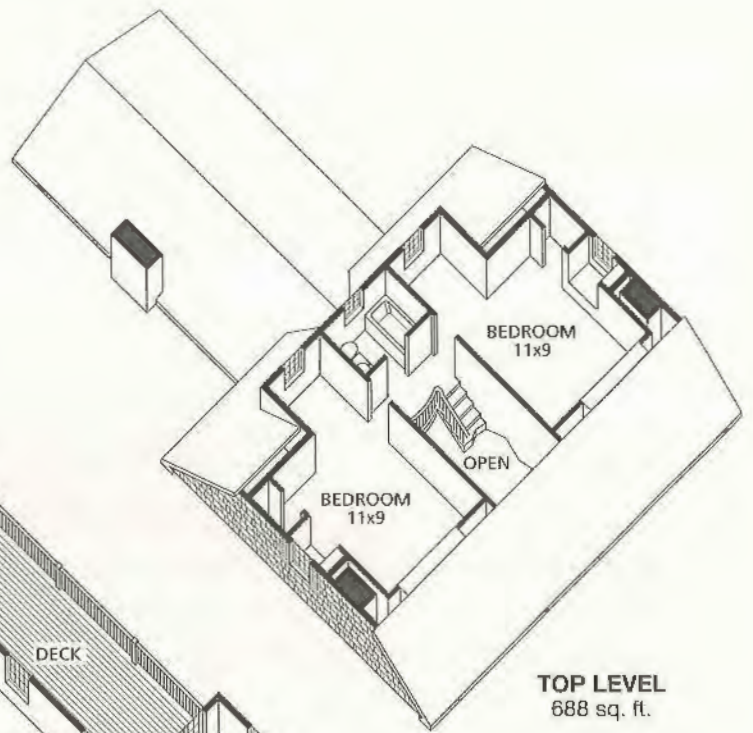
To keep the structure rooted in 19th-century style, on the street side, all three garage doors are arched and topped with small-pane windows. On its back side, an arched door opens to a transitional pergola.



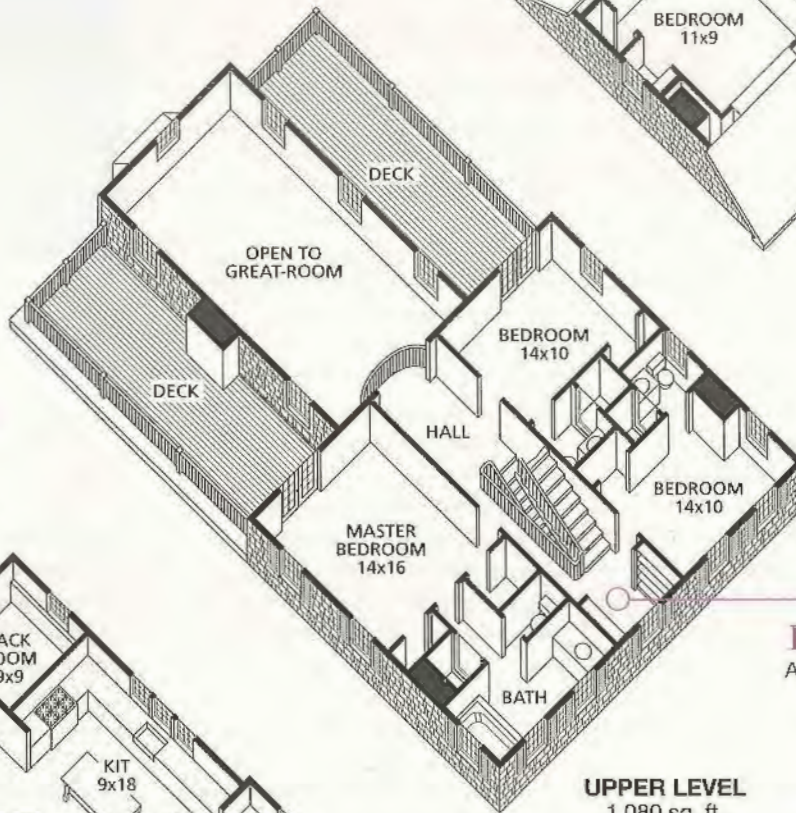
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Ready to relax

Architect Patrick Ahearn built this house with an eye toward history as well as an old-fashioned, leisurely lifestyle. A porch, balconies, a pool, and a generous great-room give the house an easy, casual air.

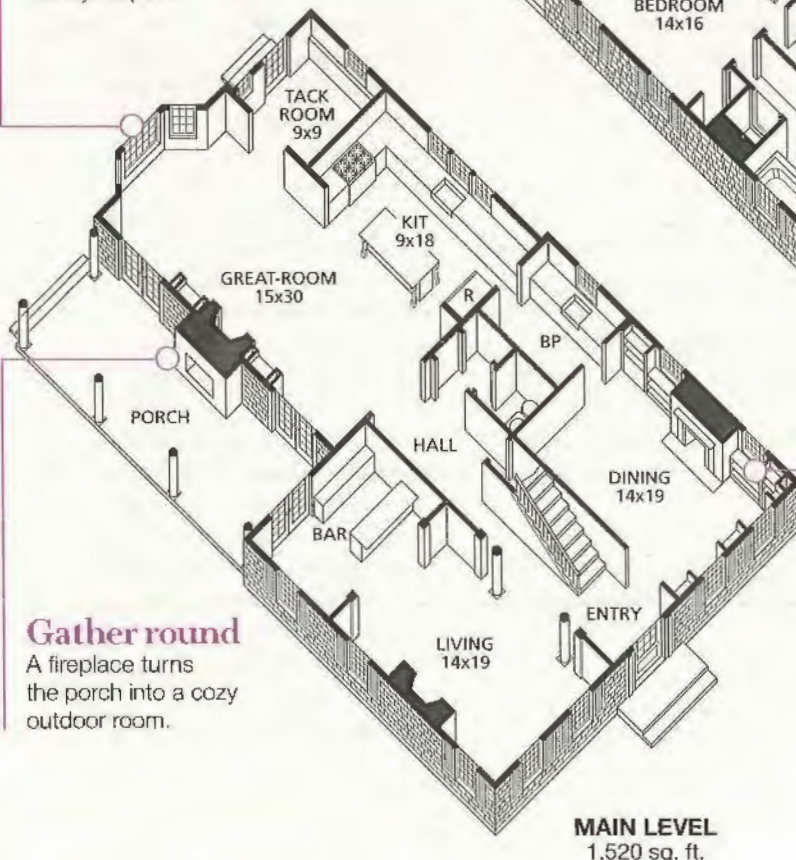


TOP LEVEL
688 sq. ft.



UPPER LEVEL
1,080 sq. ft.

Privacy, please
A central hall separates the master suite from guest quarters.



MAIN LEVEL
1,520 sq. ft.

View of the pool

A bump-out in the great-room is lined with windows overlooking the backyard pool.

Quiet and cozy

Built-in bookcases, window seats, and a fireplace line two walls of the intimate dining room.

Gather round

A fireplace turns the porch into a cozy outdoor room.