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# Inspired by the Sea

A beautiful Shore Road home designed by Patrick Ahearn and built by Whitla Brothers Builders hearkens back to the early 20th century.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREG PREMUR

With its prominent American flag and broad, elegant lawn, the home on Shore Road presents a stateliness and timeless style.



Patrick Ahearn's design offers the family plenty of space, views and privacy.



*“We wanted to keep the integrity of the house. We wanted it to look like an old sea captain’s house.”*



The dining room table is both “modern yet classic,” says the homeowner, and the large framed rectangular light fixture above “complements the table because it is funky, but still fits into the classic look we were going for.”

When a couple with a lifelong history of summers spent on Cape Cod bought a prominent property on Shore Road, they may have been tempted to build a capacious home with walls of windows and wide open spaces designed to command the views. But they knew the town and its special qualities well, having lived there first in a seaside bungalow and then in a more whimsical house on Morris Island. When they hired Patrick Ahearn, a Martha’s Vineyard- and Boston-based architect known for historically sensitive designs, they thought they would renovate the early 20th-century home that already stood on the site, but they soon realized that wasn’t practical and ended up tearing down the original structure: “When we dug deeper, we realized the house didn’t flow, and it didn’t make sense.”



Though he was unable to justify rehabilitating what was there, Ahearn felt strongly that “whatever we did had to hearken back to the 1910s when the original houses in the area were built as opposed to those built in the 2000s, which are so volumetric. We wanted to keep the integrity of the house. We wanted it to look like an old sea captain’s house.”

His clients had presented him with an ambitious wish list. They wanted a main house large enough to accommodate their family, which includes three children, a guest house, a carriage house, as well as a pool and hot tub. Though local zoning permitted greater height than he ultimately designed, Ahearn succeeded in satisfying the wish list all within the original home’s stature and on a scale and with a form reminiscent of the turn of the century.

Ahearn used vestiges of the original façade as the inspiration for his design. “We elected to base the new design on the original because we thought it was the right thing to do,” says Ahearn. Theoretically, it’s an elongated gable,” he says. The street-face of the house presents symmetrical wings, each with a set of bay windows, twin chimneys, and paired north and south porches, all cozing up to a recessed circular entry, topped by a small curved deck supported by columns.

The reclaimed brick veneer on the foundation, chunky, heavily detailed trim, copper downspouts and cedar shingles that will weather to gray, all contribute to the home’s illusion of age. With its prominent American flag, its broad, elegant lawn leading up to a parking court, and the home itself set well back so that it would not dominate the street, the property presents a stateliness and a timelessness that enhances the community of which it is part.



The homeowners chose hickory floors over pine because they needed something that could handle their dogs and a lot of foot traffic.



The sea-inspired bathroom features wallpaper with various species of fish.



Reclaimed brick was used in the mudroom.



The foyer, with two leather chairs, provides a relaxing, conversation space.

Ahearn’s design feels authentic in its context while offering the family the space, views and privacy they desire in a home currently used seasonally, but which his clients intend to live in year round in the future. “Once you open the front door,” Ahearn explains, “a sequence of events unfolds—you can go through the house out to the terrace and fire pit without having to traverse through the living room.” Just beyond the terrace, the fire pit, the pool and the hot tub, a secondary structure serves several purposes: A pool cabana, guest house and a carriage house for the family’s vintage automobiles.

While the foyer may act as a pass through, it is itself a destination, with a pair of leather chairs facing a fieldstone fireplace accented with a mantel made from a reclaimed wooden tie. This has become a favorite space, says the homeowner: “When we built the house, the foyer was intended to be a passageway from room to room or from the front door to the terrace. With lots of experimenting, we were able to make the foyer into a perfect conversation space—just to add another room for people to relax in. The breeze flowing from the ocean makes the room the perfect place to read a book or indulge in conversation.”





The water and sand inspired all of the home's interior choices. "A lot of the design revolves around bringing colors from the beach, the ocean and the sand into the home," says the homeowner.

Another distinctive feature is the floors. The main living spaces are clad in hickory. "We were considering pine," says the homeowner, "but we have dogs and knew there would be high heels crossing the floors, so we chose hickory. It is harder." Also hardy is the reclaimed brick used for the mudroom, where built-in cubbies and window seats covered in American flags make for a space both utilitarian and patriotic.

This flag motif recurs in an area rug upstairs and in accent pieces in the first-floor study, where handsome walls clad in fir are naturally complemented by a rich blue paint, a selection suggested by the home's builder, Doug Whitla of Whitla Brothers Builders, who was instrumental in the selection of various materials. "He suggested blue for fun and because it matches the color of the water across the way," the client says.



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A fire pit, pool and hot tub spell relaxation.



A secondary structure on the property serves several purposes: A carriage house for the family's vintage automobiles, a pool cabana and guest house.



The outside patio is the perfect place to read a book or just relax with friends and family.

In fact, the water and sand inspired all of the home's interior choices. "A lot of the design revolves around bringing colors from the beach, the ocean and the sand into the home," says the homeowner. The blues, sands, grays and crisp and marbled whites of the fabrics, furnishings, marble counters and tiles, "tie back into the idea of the colors mirroring the beach," she says. "The gorgeous colors found at the beach complement each other perfectly."

Another crowd pleaser is the nautically inspired curved bar, sitting strategically at the edge of the living room and next to French doors that lead to one of the two side porches. "We wanted a bar," the client says, "and it was Patrick Ahearn who told us not to put it in the basement." This leaves the basement free to accommodate several other activities, including a playroom, exercise room and wine cellar.

Mariner traditions inspired many other facets of the house, including the ship's ladders leading to lofts in the three children's bedrooms and the floating circular staircase with its rope railing that leads to the broad widow's walk. From this vantage, the views of sea and shore are unencumbered. Ahearn has seamlessly married past and present. 🚢



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