

New England HOME

Cape
&
Islands

Celebrating Fine Design, Architecture, and Building

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COASTAL BLISS

High-style homes where life
is both elegant and easy

A deft mix of antiques and contemporary pieces fosters a charming cottage ambience. "The wife and I had a wonderful time sourcing pieces," says interior designer Linda Banks. "Many of them are from local sources." Holding court in the living room, the old cherry coffee table has a waxed finish reminiscent of a boat's deck.

Treasure Island



A renovation reveals the gem hidden within a careworn shingled cottage on Chappaquiddick.

Text by **Megan Fulweiler** | Photography by **Michael Partenio**
Produced by **Stacy Kunstel**

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: The breakfast area is open to the kitchen and living room, which allows family members to engage in different activities and still be together; the framed commemorative scarf is a memento of one of the numerous Newport to Bermuda races the husband has sailed. The sophisticated walnut dining room table sports a hand-planed top and rustic carved bases—a fetching contrast to the hearth's edited frame. The living room's vintage black barley twist writing table was among the first purchases made for the home.



PROJECT TEAM

Architecture:

Patrick Ahearn, Patrick Ahearn Architect

Interior and architectural design:

Linda Banks, Banks Design Associates

Builder:

Colonial Reproductions

Landscape design:

Donaroma's Nursery & Landscape Services

EVERY SUMMER, THE OWNERS make their way down a picturesque, half-mile sandy road lined with scrub oak. At the end sits their jewel of a house on a green slope that coasts through bayberry and sea grasses to the water.

Years ago, the husband, an avid sailor, often brought his soon-to-be-wife here by boat. The couple would drop anchor in Edgartown Harbor and let the days unfold like petals on a flower. Then came marriage, followed by

twins, and for years, parents and kids decamped to a rental perched on what could be Chappaquiddick's most beautiful spot. When the shingled house next door became available, they snapped it up, ensuring that their getaways would always unfold in the same special setting.

Not quite as dreamy as the location, however, the old house called for a fix-up. Originally built in 1920 as a duck-hunting cabin, it had morphed over time into a plainspoken two-story structure with a one-story addition. To make it family-friendly, the couple turned to Linda Banks. Banks, who is as

astute at interior architecture as she is at whipping up stylish decors, got the place humming by merging the kitchen and living area to create an open, more modern layout. Sliders in lieu of windows ushered in views and delicious breezes.

Two years later, the homeowners embarked on a full-fledged overhaul, enlisting architect Patrick Ahearn. With Banks and Ahearn at the helm, the house was refurbished top to bottom and doubled in size, becoming a comfortable haven for July and August's parade of lucky visitors.

Of course, construction on an island is always



French doors open to a stone terrace and an outdoor fireplace—a destination of particular summer delight. The whole venue fairly shouts, “We’re on vacation!”



challenging, and design constraints mandated that the home’s footprint remain the same. So to devise more space and maintain the existing scale, Ahearn cleverly took the building up and down. Yesterday’s appendage was swept away and in its stead came a two-story addition. The top floor holds the daughter’s bedroom (the son has an aerie in the new carriage house nearby) and a small library affectionately nicknamed the petite bibliothèque. On the first floor sits the new dining room and a private guest suite. Not stopping there, Ahearn also carved out a ground level to hold a powder room, a playroom (pool table included), and a fishing tackle

room. French doors open to a stone terrace and an outdoor fireplace—a destination of particular summer delight.

But then, the whole venue fairly shouts, “We’re on vacation!” and it all starts with the glossy painted floors. “The color is like melted coffee ice cream,” Banks says. “It’s the number-one thing making the house feel like summer.”

Banks subtly reinforced this kick-back vibe, too, from the charming kitchen to the stunning living room. Pale blue cabinets mark the former, while the latter is tricked out with a classic arrangement of navy-blue upholstered pieces. In between rests a cherry table Banks nabbed

ABOVE: In compliance with the owner’s wishes, the rejuvenated house looks like it has always been there. “We wanted to maintain the home’s modest scale but also make it function the way people like to live today,” explains architect Patrick Ahearn. **FACING PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM:** The generous deck wraps around the house and is accessible to the living room and the guest bedroom. Family members and guests make their way through a natural meadow to the water’s edge.



The petite bibliothèque features a range of comforts including an enticing window seat for soaking up the views. The eye-catching painting is by local artist Allen Whiting, who was inspired by the Norton Point Breach, a breach in the barrier beach connecting Edgartown with Chappaquiddick. **FACING PAGE:** The wife scored the captain's chairs at a charity flea market in Manhattan, and Banks designed the weathered oak refectory table crafted by furniture maker Mike Elkins of Elkins and Company in Boothbay, Maine.

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 views, work, or
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in Atlanta and cut down to cocktail size. It's all so handsome, few register how the skillful designer also homes in on function. The seating, for instance, is floated away from the wall to provide an unhindered path to and from the deck. Fashioned in a woven plastic material, the chairs at the corner game table can be whisked outdoors should extra seating be needed there.

As focused on design as she is on decoration, Banks considers a room's every element. Note the non-traditional six-pane configuration of the living room's French doors. (“To lift the ceiling,” she says). Or take in the dining room, where walls of raffia cloth in a soft wheat color foster warmth and congeniality—

the perfect tone for a gathering. The show-stopping Italian table is trestle-style, which allows for flexible seating. And the chairs are upholstered to encourage lingering. Rather than fuss with the hearth, Banks framed it with an understated molding that speaks to the home's engaging simplicity. “It's an edited, updated version of colonial,” she says. “I take inspiration from Americana, but I don't want it to look like country.”

Another case in point is the petite bibliothèque. “It's a kind of a Mary Poppins room where people can escape from the happy chaos and soak up the views, work, or contemplate,” Banks says. There's a built-in reading podium, scaled down club chairs for curling up, and an antique table where nautical charts



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT:
The king-size bed in the guest room is from Leonard's in Seekonk, Massachusetts. "Should the owners ever want one-floor living, this room is like a secondary master suite," Banks says. Versatile x-benches slide out of the way when not needed, while an oat straw and wood Orkney chair lends texture. The guest room's washstand was made in England. The daughter's bedroom boasts a headboard covered in a textured fabric that looks like crewel work.



might be unfurled or tea laid. Open on its balconied side to the downstairs, the library is removed but not isolated.

The most private spaces are the bedrooms. Next door to the library, the daughter's sweet-as-a-garden sanctuary claims one end of the new wing. Banks has slipcovered the bed's headboard in a fuzzy, crewel-like fabric reminiscent of the chenille bedspreads that once bloomed in every coastal cottage. The pretty bath sports the designer's famed "nickel gap"—a term Banks coined to define her square-edge paneling. "I request builders put a nickel between the boards to measure their distance apart," she says.

As for the en suite guest nest, you'd be hard pressed to find visitors who didn't yearn to stay longer. There's nickel gap here as well along with a stellar four-poster bed and an Orkney chair from Simply

Home, Banks's Falmouth, Maine-based retail shop and design center. Hand-screened linen curtains dress French doors leading to the deck.

Just as one would imagine, the bath is no less alluring. The custom cherry vanity includes old-school spool-turned legs. Mirrored medicine cabinets are discreetly recessed between sconces wearing frosted hurricanes.

"We wanted relaxed, welcoming rooms that were also New Englandy," Banks says. Certainly, she and Ahearn have done just that.

Island locales such as this are a rare treasure, indeed. This team devised a carefree house that suits the peaceful surroundings and the appreciative owners, who love spending time in their home as much as they do in the blue water flowing all about. ■

RESOURCES: For more information about this home, see page 162.