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Patrick Ahearn

The latest project by one of Martha's Vineyard's best-known architects stands as an example, writ large, of his commitment to preserving and enhancing the character of his beloved island. **PORTRAIT BY KENT DAYTON**

We asked noted residential architect Patrick Ahearn, principal of Patrick Ahearn Architect, longtime island resident and author (so far) of more than 100 building and restoration projects in Edgartown alone, to discuss one of his most significant projects over the last few years.

Kyle Hoepner: Briefly, Patrick, what is the Boathouse?

Patrick Ahearn: The Boathouse/Field Club is a private club with two primary locations. The Boathouse itself is located on the edge of Edgartown Harbor, on Main Street, in a newly constructed building I designed. The first floor houses the

Atlantic Fish & Chop House, which is open to the public; the Boathouse Club is on the second floor. Both facilities offer extensive outdoor dining space as well as public access to the docks, where the club's private fleet of boats is moored. There's also a third-floor "crow's nest" club room that provides a unique space for meetings and lounging.

The Field Club is located one mile from Edgartown, set on seven-plus acres of manicured grounds. There is a clubhouse, a lawn games area, a full-service spa, a members' restaurant and club bar. There are three heated outdoor pools. The main

Interview

pool—with a unique “beach entry” at one end—is surrounded by a large patio and a series of seasonal cabanas.

The Field Club is surrounded by a new residential development consisting of twenty-six large residential lots (of which only one lot is not yet spoken for). I have designed three of the new residences so far in this development, including my own “car barn” on an individual lot that I purchased two years ago. Although it’s separate from the club proper, the residential component of the development embraces the same Shingle-style architecture used for the club’s facilities, all linked by a white-fenced, tree-lined entry drive.

KH: How did the concept come about, and how did you become involved in it?

PA: I originally became involved in the idea of creating a new, upscale, family-oriented club while having dinner with my wife, Marsha, and my good friends, Dan and Mary Stanton, to celebrate the completion of a new house I had designed for them. The ladies thought that an upscale club would be a wonderful addition to the island and that Dan and I should pursue the idea.

After a few years of searching for a location, the old former Navigator restaurant on Main Street in Edgartown came up for sale, as did a former gravel pit just outside of Edgartown Village, halfway between the village proper and South Beach.

KH: So you bought them?

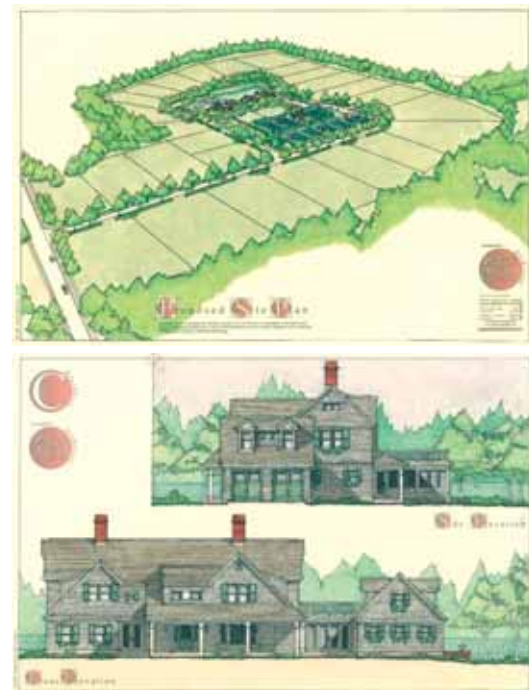
PA: A partnership was formed between Dan Stanton, Arthur Halleran, Gerret Conover and Tom LeClair, local real estate brokers, to purchase the two properties and create the Boathouse/Field Club. My architectural firm was retained to design all of the components of the Boathouse and Field Club, as well as to assist in obtaining all the various town and island approvals. This process took about two years to complete.

The whole project was constructed in an amazingly short period of time—in ten months both facilities were completed by Metric Construction. Geoff Caraboolad, the owner of Metric, has deep roots on the island; in fact his wife, Nancy, grew up in Edgartown, and she and Geoff met on the island while he was working as a summer-break carpenter during his college years. The entire team was exceptional, really. Dan Gordon was our landscape architect for the Field Club, and his vision led to the club’s timeless appeal.

KH: What were the core design concerns during the course of development?

Interview

PA: The core design principles varied for the two locations. The goal for the Boat-house was to design and construct a significant new building in the Edgartown island-vernacular style that could be a catalyst for the revitalization of downtown. As part of this design, the sidewalks around the former Navigator restaurant were widened with brick pavers, new trees were planted, residential street lights were installed, street furniture was added and public access to the harbor and waterfront docks was created. All of this was done to enhance the public realm. In addition, an affordable public restaurant—the Atlantic—was created to allow outdoor dining overlooking the harbor, further animating the village



streetscape and providing a needed public amenity.

The core design principles for the Field Club recall the lush landscapes of parts of the country such as Charlottesville, Virginia, with its horse farms surrounded by white fences. Having the Field Club located along the bike path to South Beach from

Site plan and elevations of one of the Field Club residences

Edgartown Village allowed me to create a rich oasis of indoor

and outdoor recreational facilities. The ease of access by bike, island transit, walking or driving—with plentiful parking!—further enhanced the locale.

KH: How well do you think the final product achieved your intentions?

PA: I believe all of the goals and objectives

Interview

have been accomplished. The Boathouse and Field Club are integral parts of island life for seasonal and year-round residents alike. The Boathouse building on Main Street has been the catalyst for additional new restaurants, quality retail and architectural improvements. The Boathouse/Field Club also supports many island-wide causes on a regular basis, including things like the new YMCA, swimming lessons for island kids, charity functions, the Boys & Girls Club, and so on.

I believe the island is a richer, better place for people to celebrate the uniqueness of Martha's Vineyard since the Boathouse and Field Club have become an integral part of the community and island life, and therefore I would not have done anything differently.

KH: Your involvement with the development and revitalization of Edgartown has been more extensive than just this one project, of course. Will you share a bit of that history?

PA: As proud as I am of the success of the Boathouse and the Field Club, I am equally proud that I have had a significant role in the restoration, block by block, house by house, of Edgartown Village as a whole over the last twenty years. During this time I have completed more than 100 projects within the village proper, both new construction and restoration. My projects have included the Edgartown Yacht Club, portions of the Harborview Hotel and the 1682 Zollo Property on South Water Street, as well as many cottages, guest houses, carriage houses and captain's homes.

KH: In light of this history, and the Boathouse/Field Club development, where do you see things (and yourself) going from here?

PA: At sixty-two years of age, as an architect, I feel that I have much more in my professional career to accomplish. I look forward with enhanced enthusiasm for every new project that I take on, be it on the island or wherever my clients take me.

KH: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

PA: As an architect, I see the world with different eyes, and this vision exhilarates me and keeps me young. I tell my associates and staff that we produce better and more sensitive projects every year, and that architecture provides a lifelong learning experience that we embrace every day of our professional lives. This is our mission, our passion, our goal, and our life. •