

CHATHAM LIVING BY THE SEA



\$8.95 2020 ANNUAL
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A New Chapter of *History*

Under the guidance of architect Patrick Ahearn, Chatham homeowners honor the design and footprint of their original cottage and rebuild it to modern standards.

By LAUREL KORNIHISER | Photography by MICHAEL J. LEE

You really have to trust your architect to buy a house sight unseen based on his word alone. Such was the case when Boston and Martha's Vineyard-based Patrick Ahearn advised his clients to purchase a Chatham cottage across the street from a project he had just finished. Ahearn and his clients are neighbors off Cape and having renovated their primary home, he knew what they were looking for in a Chatham getaway. The cottage he had found was scrappy and scrunched, had a paint-peeling porch and sat directly on the grass. But, says Ahearn, "It was on the water and I saw the opportunity to give my clients the amenities they were looking for. They had one day to decide."



Ahearn's clients had been keeping an eye out for just such a place. "We went on a lot of walks and runs and looked at houses," says the client. "This house sold in 2014 and we missed it. It returned to the market in 2015." At that point, the couple's relationship with Chatham was more than secure and they were ready to buy. Both husband and wife had vacationed in Chatham as children, and they later became engaged there. Weekend sojourns turned into seasonal rentals and the couple became a young family with three children. "We bought the cottage without even going into it," says the husband.

The initial idea was to renovate what they thought was an antique I-shaped cottage. Sitting on a non-conforming lot between a windmill house and another larger home, the property was also bound by several restrictions. "There were a lot of zoning and conservation issues that could be resolved," with a little creativity, recalls Ahearn. "There were grade constraints, height restrictions and a view corridor for an abutter."



Sleek lanterns hang over the white marble island in the bright kitchen with planked wood ceilings and walls. At left, modern architectural lighting, such as the bubble fixture in the living room, was chosen so it would add more visual interest and not interfere with the view.

"Our plan," says the homeowner, "was to lift the cottage to add a basement and move it." Beyond that, he says, "We thought we were going to do a historic renovation."

Ahearn and his clients studied historical photographs of the home and others in Chatham and sought input from the neighbors, all long-time residents. "The way that this family included the neighbors and worked to honor the history and architecture of Chatham was a breath of fresh air," says Tamara Bazzle, who with her husband, Ken, owns Crosstrees, the historic home Joseph C. Lincoln built in 1916.

After gaining approval from various regulatory

agencies, the homeowners were surprised during an inspection to learn that because of renovations over the years, nothing was antique. "How about the floors?" the client asked. "1970s," was the answer. "And the mantel?" "Not old."

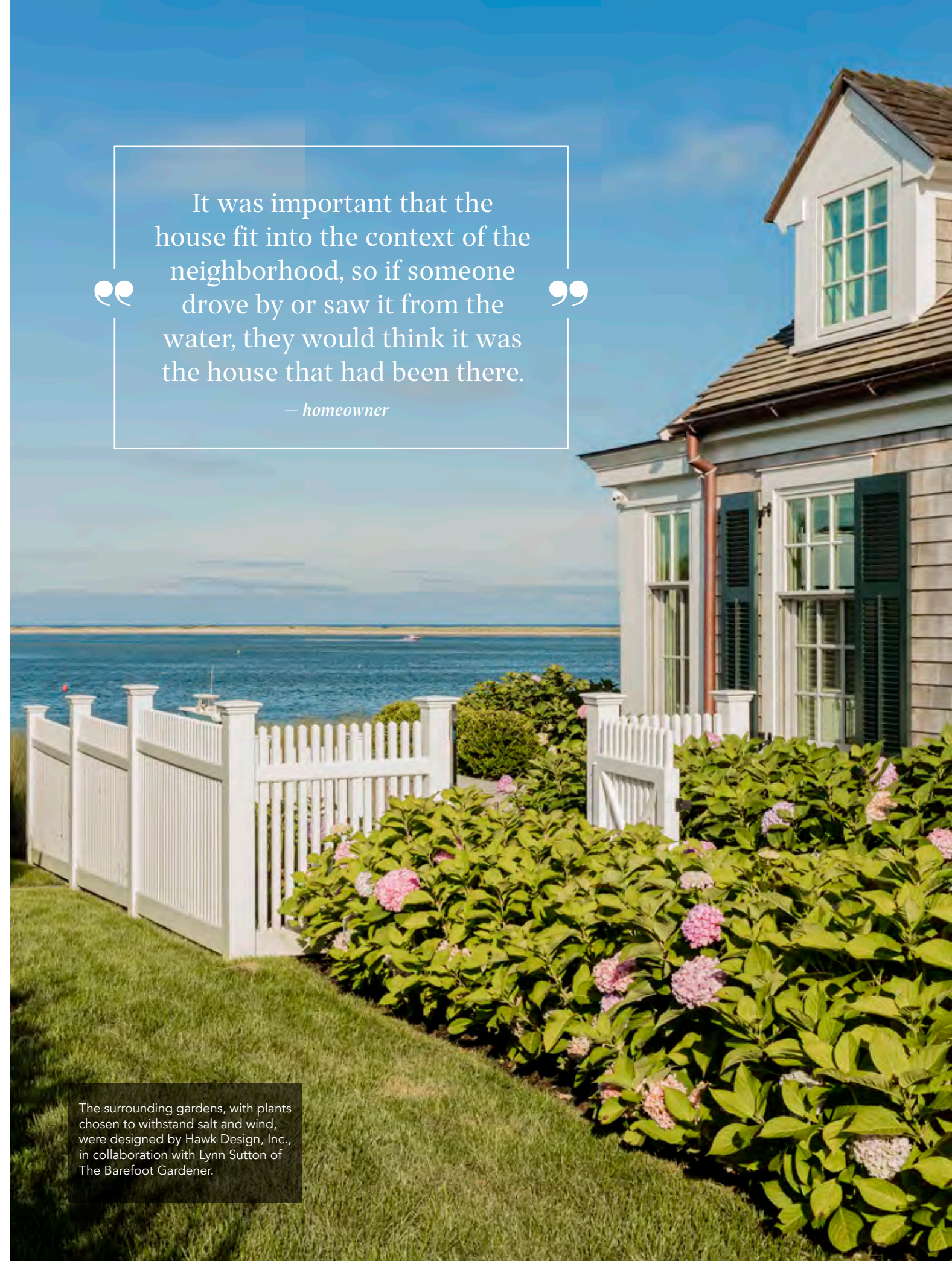
"We agreed to tear it down and donate all of the usable materials," he says.

Since there was no historical incentive to preserve the house, they decided to honor the design and footprint and rebuild to modern standards. "It was important that the house fit into the context of the neighborhood," says the homeowner, "so if someone drove by or saw it from the water, they would think it was the house that had been there."



An allée situated between the garage and the extended wing of the house leads to a traditional entry with sidelights.

Ahearn's goal was to maximize the interior space despite the height restriction as well as to improve the flow both inside and out. Working with Hawk Design, Inc., a landscape architecture firm based in Sagamore, he reorganized spaces outside and added a one-car garage. Designed to look like a fisherman's shack with antique brick floors and storage space underneath, the home is accessible from the street and approached by a shell driveway. An allée situated between the garage and the extended wing of the house leads to a traditional entry with sidelights. "It is a fairly dramatic sequence," Ahearn says of the approach. Inside, surprisingly expansive spaces unfold. "We couldn't build up," says Ahearn, "so the creativity came from higher ceilings." On the water side, a wall of nearly floor-to-ceiling windows with cottage sashes captures views of the added pool and glimmering ocean.



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 — homeowner

The surrounding gardens, with plants chosen to withstand salt and wind, were designed by Hawk Design, Inc., in collaboration with Lynn Sutton of The Barefoot Gardener.



Built on a hand-cut fieldstone podium bounded by conservation land, the pool blends into the landscape and gives the illusion of an infinity edge. In addition to the pool seating, there is an outdoor dining area and a fire pit for nighttime gathering. Hawk Design, Inc., a landscape architecture firm in Sagamore, designed all of the exterior spaces.

To gain interior space inside, Ahearn designed a roofline that is an energetic interplay of gables, single dormers and Nantucket dormers. This allowed the living and kitchen spaces, he says, "to be open and airy, with the articulating shapes of the roof expressed inside." Stephanie King, a designer for Heather Wells Inc., handled the interior details. "The clients wanted an open-concept house that flowed," says King. "We did a very large kitchen that encompassed the dining area and this flows into the main living space." The kitchen is bright white with planked wood ceilings and walls, and sleek lanterns hang over the white marble island. Fabrics and furnishings in

taupe, gray, white and punches of tie-dye blue extend the natural seaside palette to the living and dining areas.

This is a house to be enjoyed without fuss or fear. Dining chairs are molded plastic to accommodate wet bathing suits, the beautiful white oak floors stand up to sand and fabrics are family friendly. "We didn't want the house so precious that the family couldn't enjoy it," says King. "They wanted something that represented summer energy, a place where they could let their hair down and relax."

Modern architectural lighting fixtures in nickel and silver, such as the bubble fixture in the living room and the long



PHOTO: BRIAN VANDEN BRINK



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The garden terrace, a sheltered spot with Adirondack chairs, is perfect for reading or relaxing with friends and family.

lighting bar over the dining table, chosen in part because it would not interfere with the view, add more visual interest.

The family uses the house year-round, and in the off season, they enjoy the living space in the added basement, featuring a gym, home office, shuffleboard and bar-height table—perfect for cards and board games. During the summer, most of the living happens outside, with the pool predominating.

Built on a hand-cut fieldstone podium bounded by conservation land, the pool blends into the landscape and gives the illusion of an infinity edge. The outdoor fire pit frames the lounge seating for the pool terrace and the adjacent dining terrace is anchored by a custom-designed outdoor kitchen that is seamlessly built into the terraced wall. Just outside of the dining terrace, beyond the pool

gate, lies the garden terrace, a sheltered spot with Adirondack chairs for reading. Hawk Design, Inc., designed all the exterior spaces, including the aesthetic landscape lighting. The surrounding gardens, with plants chosen for their ability to withstand salt and wind, were also designed by Hawk Design, Inc., in collaboration with Lynn Sutton of The Barefoot Gardener. From the water or street view, the cottage looks at home, with its wooden shutters, copper gutters, weathered shingles and compact design, all executed by Doug Whitla of Whitla Brothers Builders, experts in historic preservation and custom building. Ahearn is pleased with the result. “We kept the scale—a simple fisherman’s cottage by the shore,” says Ahearn, “but we made it a modern beach house.” To achieve this, Ahearn says, “I used every trick in the book from 47 years of doing this.” ▲

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