

CHATHAM LIVING BY THE SEA



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The Next Chapter

A new guesthouse written into the landscape of a historic Chatham property continues the story of a beloved coastal home.



BY JANICE RANDALL ROHLF
PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREG PREMUR

EVEN IN A PLACE LIKE CHATHAM, where the ocean is often just a seagull's swoop away, it's a plus to have the option of swimming right in your own backyard. Architect Patrick Ahearn's clients loved their pool but wanted it to feel more connected to both the main house and the guest cottage nearby. "That cottage had no

relationship with the pool," explains Ahearn, "and the pool didn't have a cabana function." An awkward grade change also made it difficult to move easily between the pool and the cottage—for changing, grabbing a cool drink or entertaining.

A New Structure Creates Cohesiveness

To solve the problem, the old cottage and two-car garage were demolished and the site was raised about three feet, bringing it level

with a new Ahearn-designed structure that consolidates several functions. Within roughly 3,000 square feet, the building centers on a new two-car garage flanked by two wings: one containing guest quarters with a bay-windowed bedroom, a full bath, and a two-story galley kitchen with a dining area, the other serving as a cabana. "The garage acts as a buffer between the guest accommodations and the cabana," explains builder Douglas Whitla, a frequent collaborator of Ahearn's.

The new cabana wing's design achieves its goal of being user-friendly while exuding style and warmth. Architect Patrick Ahearn felt that this space, with its wet bar, half bath and relaxing seating area, was missing before.



The new roof deck maximizes the property's stunning views over the Mill Pond and beyond.

Equipped with a wet bar, a sitting area, a half bath, and large French doors that open onto a bluestone terrace, the cabana “has a life of its own,” notes Ahearn. Above it, a generous deck provides the perfect perch for morning coffee or evening cocktails overlooking the pool, with views of the Mill Pond and beyond. “The cabana ensemble is really nice,” says the architect, “and it was missing before.”

Seamlessly Blending Old and New

Although the guesthouse, named High Point, is brand new, the main house a stone's throw away is more than a century old, and it was important to Ahearn that the two structures share a common language. “We wanted to tell the story visually as one thought,” he says, adding that “we purposely developed a design that was indicative of the notion that the building was added onto over time to accommodate the needs of the family.” In other words, the new structure carries an implied history that aligns with that of the antique main house.

“Everything you touch and feel, like the hardware and the doors, feels of an earlier time,” Ahearn observes.

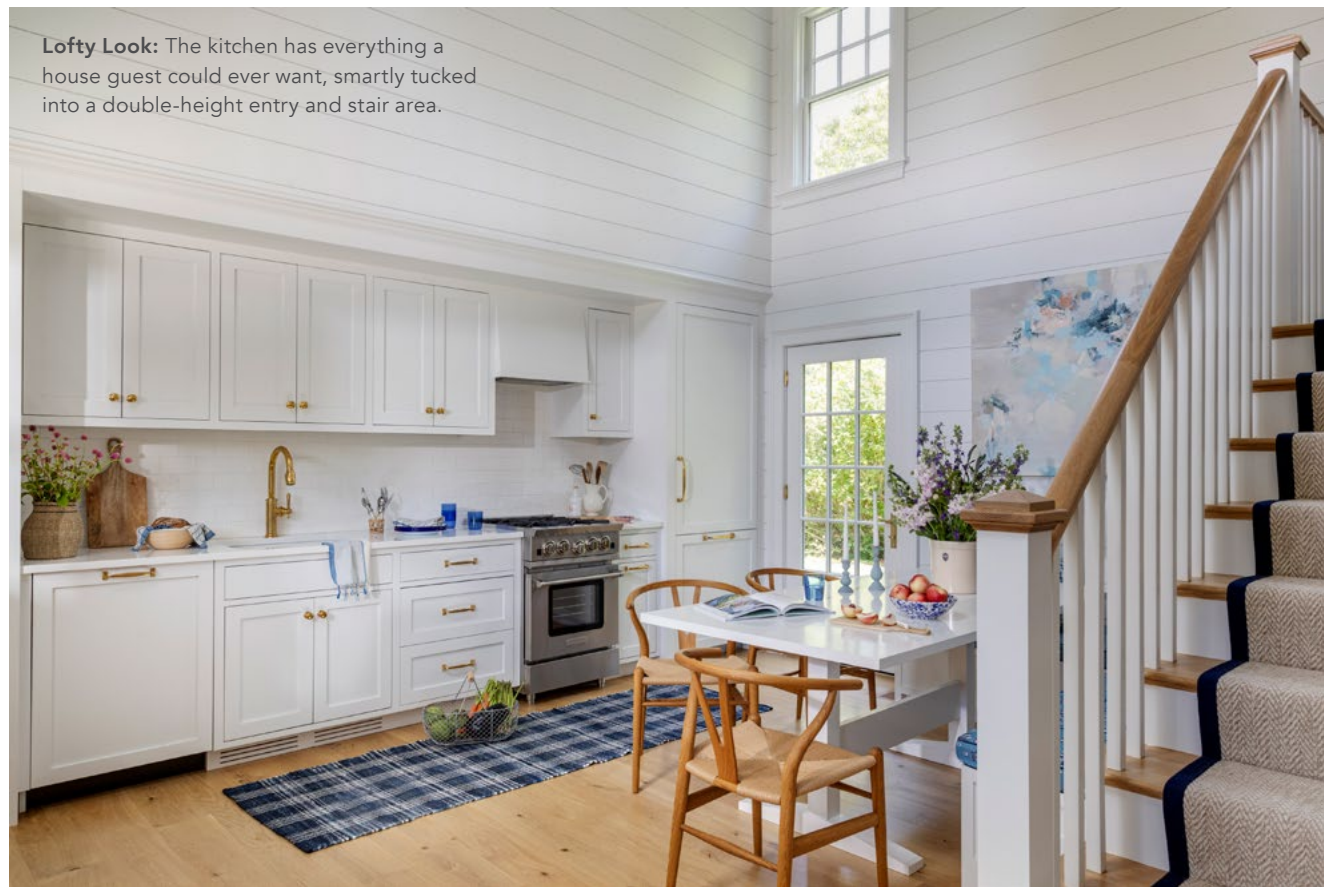
The same sensibility extends to the red cedar roof, the weathered cedar shingles and the copper onion lanterns outside.

Color it Cozy: The Interior design strikes a balance between sweetness and stylish durability

The historically inflected exterior belies the sense of volume within. “It feels very cottage-like on the outside, but there's some big, dynamic space on the inside,” says Ahearn. That contrast was one of the challenges interior designer Annsley McAleer addressed with finesse. “We wanted the guesthouse to have a sweet, intimate feel, similar to the main house,” she says. In the bedroom, she wallpapered the entire room. “The ceilings are so high that this [technique] helps make the space feel cozier.”

The practical reason for the double-height ceiling was to accommodate a stair leading to a second-floor lounge area that opens onto the sundeck. But the vertical volume also creates a lofty setting for a full kitchen that allows guests to enjoy the autonomy of cooking for themselves during their stay.

Lofty Look: The kitchen has everything a house guest could ever want, smartly tucked into a double-height entry and stair area.



Over by the pool, in the cabana, the durability of the décor was key. “Everything is meant to be pretty bulletproof,” notes McAleer. “All the fabrics and the rug are indoor-outdoor because we anticipated so much coming and going to and from the pool.” In the guest

wing, however, the approach is more decorative. “We leaned in quite a bit to fabrics with patterns and color. Because there was a lot of architectural detail with the millwork, we used the fabric as an opportunity to bring things to life.”



Interior designer Annsley McAleer’s goal of creating bedrooms that have a “sweet, intimate feel” was achieved through using smaller scale patterned wallpaper on all walls.



Thoughtful changes, both large and small, brought about a veritable sea change in the homeowners’ summer days in Chatham. “This completely changes how they use the house,” asserts Ahearn. “Neither the old cottage nor the house had much engagement with the pool. This new structure really enhances, on many levels, the quality of life for the whole property.” ▲

RESOURCES

Architect:
Patrick Ahearn Architect
patrickahearn.com

Builder:
Whitla Brothers Builders, Inc.
whitlabrothers.com

Interior Designer:
Annsley McAleer
annsleyinteriors.com

DRIVEN *The Road to Iconic Design*

By Patrick Ahearn
Published by ORO Editions, 2026

ARCHITECT PATRICK AHEARN’S upcoming coffee table book is a love letter to his dual lifelong passions: classic architecture and classic automobiles.

Ahearn, whose timeless designs have transformed dozens of homes in Chatham, says his work here plays a big role. “The book includes a whole section of *Cape Classics*, and it’s no surprise that three Chatham projects are featured,” says Ahearn. Inside you will find High Point (See “Next Chapter” starting on p. 150), a bespoke new carriage house featuring guest quarters, garages, and pool cabana with views to Mill Pond. A 1971 sunshine-yellow Volkswagen Beetle greets you in the driveway with a Bill Reid custom surfboard in the back seat.



“Chatham as a town offers some of the best vernacular architecture on Cape Cod,” says Ahearn, who will receive two new preservation awards in Chatham this year. “The historically sensitive work we’ve done here is an important part of upholding the town’s architectural narrative.”

The book features more than a dozen Ahearn projects, all carriage houses, whether freestanding or seamlessly connected to a main residence. A nod to the past, these exquisitely crafted structures also fulfill modern needs for their owners, not just housing cars, but collector’s galleries, guest quarters, and elegant entertaining areas.

“*Driven* might be my most personal book to date,” shares Ahearn. “I’ve featured more than a dozen projects including my own car barn, carriage house, and car collection, and share additional anecdotes from my past that haven’t been published before.” ▲

PATRICK AHEARN

ARCHITECT

