



Architect Patrick Ahearn Architect | Builder Colonial Reproductions
Interior Designer John Murphy, Tracker Home Decor | Landscape Architect Peggy Schwier,
Schwier Gardens | Interior Photographer Greg Premru | Exterior Photos and Drone Imagery Chris
Rucinski | Writer Maddie Brisbane

Where Time Stands Still

*A grand homestead that
unfolds in layers.*

Where expansive farmland peers over the water's edge, a Martha's Vineyard estate designed by Patrick Ahearn Architect and built by Colonial Reproductions evokes a sense of permanence shaped over generations. Though newly constructed, the coastal country house carries the familiarity of a historic farmstead.

"This is a long-term, multiple-house client of ours. We've done over a dozen houses together over the last 30 years," says Founder Patrick Ahearn. This continuity informed

a collaborative process grounded in trust, allowing the architect to shape a home that feels evolved rather than newly built.

For Norman Rankow, President of Colonial Reproductions, the ease of collaboration stems from a similarly enduring partnership. "We both see with the same eye," he says of his more than two decades working alongside Ahearn. The builder has also constructed a multitude of projects for this particular client as well.



The estate replaces an earlier residence that failed to reflect either the client's lifestyle or architectural sensibility. "It really didn't meet his needs or the preferred architectural expression," Ahearn explains. In turn, the solution was decisive: the original structure was removed and replaced with a home designed to feel as though it had stood on the property since the 1930s.

Set within the larger farm, the site offers both privacy and sweeping views toward the distant ocean. The approach unfolds gradually, guiding visitors through a wooded glen

before revealing stone walls, granite piers, and glimpses of the house beyond.

"There is an element of surprise as you come through the wooded glen," Ahearn says. By the time the courtyard comes into view, the scale shifts from expansive to intimate. "You really feel like you're embracing the house as you pull up," he describes.

That idea of evolution is central to the design. Ahearn's architectural concept of implied history is expressed through



a layered massing strategy in which the main house reads as the original structure while flanking wings suggest additions built over time. Even the porches participate in this narrative, reinforcing the idea of gradual growth across generations.

For the builder, translating that narrative into construction required precision at every scale. "Our job as the general contractor is to make the building believe its own story," explains Melanie Rankow Prescott, Vice President of Colonial Reproductions. Every proportion, transition, and material junction was considered through the lens of

authenticity, ensuring the home feels settled and cohesive rather than newly assembled.

Though the program is expansive, including guest quarters, a separate cabana, and a widow's walk, the architecture resists presenting as oversized. "It never really portrays itself as a large house," Ahearn emphasizes. This restraint is achieved through an H-shaped plan and a nuanced hierarchy of volumes. "It's all about scale," he says, describing the composition of varied forms that work together to preserve a sense of human scale throughout.

“Each space tells its own story, but the materiality keeps everything together.” - Patrick Ahearn





Prescott notes that achieving that balance required constant evaluation from both inside and out. “You’ve got to stand back and say, ‘How does this look from all angles?’” she explains. Smaller moments such as mudrooms, passageways, stone fireplaces, a private library/office, and intimate sitting rooms temper the scale of soaring vaulted spaces and expansive gathering areas, allowing the home to feel grand yet personal.

The exterior palette reinforces the home’s timeless

character. Weathered white cedar shingles, red cedar accents, and blue shutters establish a classic coastal identity, while inside, Ahearn’s signature “Ahearn White” covers the canvas, allowing the interiors to feel crisp in daylight and warm in the evening.

Inside, the material palette is both classic and immersive. “There is zero plaster in the entire house. It is 100% woodwork,” Ahearn notes. “Each space tells its own story, but the materiality keeps everything together.” The interiors



feel crafted rather than finished, including beadboard, antique beams, wide-plank flooring, and built-in custom cabinetry. Thoughtful details continue into the wood-paneled guest suite, where a fully equipped kitchenette and living space are anchored by a beachstone fireplace.

Exceptional millwork coordination and exacting craftsmanship were required to execute the vision. “The millwork is the architecture too,” Rankow says. Throughout construction, the team developed countless mock-ups

to study profiles, transitions, and panel details alongside Ahearn, the decorators, and the client. Every joint and material shift was carefully resolved to preserve continuity and historical authenticity.

Spatially, the house unfolds in layers. Rooms reveal one another gradually, with transitions that feel intuitive rather than prescribed. A custom spiral staircase rises to the widow’s walk, where sweeping views of the ocean open beyond the landscape. Moments of compression and



expansion are carefully balanced so that no single space overwhelms the experience.

Courtyards, porches, and outdoor rooms create moments of pause and connection throughout the property, strengthening the relationship between architecture and landscape. "Sometimes the spaces between the buildings become more important than the buildings themselves," Ahearn observes.

A wraparound porch functions as an open-air living room, while secondary terraces extend the home outward toward the surrounding scenery. Beyond, the pool captures long western views across the horizon, reflecting the changing light and colors at sunset. From cabana to pool and pond to ocean, the landscape unfolds in deliberate layers.

Constructing that sequence required close coordination between architecture, hardscape, and sitework. "All of that is an orchestrated process," Rankow explains, describing the complexity of integrating terraces, retaining walls, wetlands regulations, landscaping, and the pool into a seamless whole.

The historically motivated design ultimately succeeds not through spectacle, but through familiarity, as a home that feels settled into the landscape and shaped by time, even in its earliest days. From its layered massing to its intimate interior moments—and the space between—the project carries the quiet assurance of something that has always belonged. 🏡



A large, two-story house with a gambrel roof and stone chimneys, surrounded by a lush garden and a swimming pool at sunset. The house has dark shutters and a stone chimney. The garden is filled with various plants, including white and yellow flowers. The pool is surrounded by a stone deck with lounge chairs and umbrellas. The sun is setting in the background, creating a warm, golden glow.

“Sometimes the spaces between the buildings become more important than the buildings themselves.”

- Patrick Ahearn