



Pick of the Vineyard

Eighty pages of design covenants didn't stop this pampering retreat from becoming one of the most alluring homes on Martha's Vineyard.

Although newly built, this home on Martha's Vineyard looks as if it has always been part of the scenery. Cedar shake siding is purposely finished to look weathered. A center gambrel-roof gable ornamented with a false balcony denotes the front entry.



The living room's white-covered custom sofas are accented with hand-screened pillows. Pale yellow walls reflect sunlight from the expanse of glass (not shown) that faces the rear of the house.

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Being the new kid on the block is tough—especially when the “block” is Martha’s Vineyard, the Massachusetts island that was home to Native Americans and mariners long before it housed rock stars and affluent residents. Architectural expectations here escalate exponentially. Just ask architect Patrick Ahearn. He had the mixed blessing of designing the first home on the island’s newly developed Herring Creek Farm—a 200-acre horse property overlooking Edgartown Great Pond and the ocean beyond. “Just to begin, there were 80 pages of design covenants and restrictions for Herring Creek Farm,” the architect says. “Then there were the town restrictions. Edgartown (the closest town) had to review everything.”

The house had a 26-foot height restriction, a 7,500-square-foot living space restriction, and a conservation restriction on the size of the lawn—to name just a few of the hurdles Ahearn was required to leap. But being first also meant opportunity: He could set the development’s tone.

For Ahearn, that meant going for an ageless look, a style indigenous to the island since its early days as a whaling hub. “I tried to create a house that might have been there forever,” he says. Interestingly, he didn’t simply pluck early design motifs off the pages of history books and piece them together. Instead, he brought the house to life with a rich history, which he totally fabricated. “I wrote a script,” Ahearn says. “I envisioned a house built in 1895, which had been abandoned. A hurricane had trashed it in ’34. My clients came across the grand old Shingle-style house and wanted it restored.” The denouement of his fictional tale is a sprawling, H-shape, shingle-clad cottage with a repeating gambrel roof.

“It is timeless, not trite,” Ahearn says, “and it is extremely well-proportioned.” Ultimately, it is a compilation of elements that imbues the house with its historical character. Brick was used for the foundation, for instance, so there is no “giveaway concrete” to show the young age. Likewise, alabaster paint conceals the exterior’s newness beneath what appears as weathered patina. Even the windowsills feature copper window boxes “to increase the cottage vernacular,” he says.

Though it wears an old-island look, the house has a modern flow. At the center is a foyer, which runs from front to back, spilling out to the gardens. To the left are the living room, the library, the garden room overlooking the pool, and an in-law suite. To the right are the formal dining room and kitchen. Beyond is the family room. In the middle is the grand staircase, where windows supply dramatic views in two directions: toward the farm, where horses graze, and toward Edgartown Great Pond and the Atlantic in the other direction. An elevator ensures that the owners can easily enjoy both levels of the home for years to come.

Architectural detailing is achieved through beautiful classic millwork that enriches the home's formality. The living room fireplace features a mantel shelf of deep moldings, including dentil work supported by columns. The dining room's raised paneling is articulated in crisp white, contrasting with the upper walls' iridescent blue, decoratively painted in a subtle striated pattern. "All of the wall finishes are very translucent because they are glazes," interior designer Cynthia Thomas says. "That makes a big difference in giving a room dimension."

"We were very lucky to find this wonderful shade of blue,"

she says. "It allowed us to use the blue-and-white palette that's prevalent on the Vineyard, but with a less traditional, less country look." Every room except the garden room, which replaces ocean blue with leafy green, sports blue and white. Even the dining room chandelier includes blue prisms.

Avoiding sameness from room to room is one secret to creating what appears to be a naturally aged home. For an idiosyncratic flavor, Ahearn says, "we modulated the height of the wainscoting between rooms." Thomas, in turn, tweaked her array of blue-and-white fabrics, varying formality, scale, and shade.

Six-inch-wide beaded-board paneling countrifies the kitchen, with a little help from the cobalt-color range, delft backsplash tiles, and collections of blue-and-white pottery.

"The house has an intimacy and warmth," Ahearn says, and it's not only because of the eye-pleasing palette. "The character and theme of a true family house are also found in the architecture's understated scale and proportions," he says. So much so that although the house has one-of-a-kind character, its grandest achievement is fitting in—no small feat on an island where history is everything.



OPPOSITE: The dining room features sparkling white millwork and a classically styled stone fireplace.

LEFT: Double-hung windows give the home's tall expanses of glass a look of longevity.







LEFT: Latticework on the ceiling and walls brings a fresh look to the garden room, which departs from the home's blue-and-white scheme. Striped panels at the window are hung from a mottled-green pole with leaf-shape ties.

ABOVE: Wicker furniture makes the garden room the home's most casual space. "The travertine floor is indestructible," interior designer Cynthia Thomas says.



ABOVE: Sloping walls in the master bedroom create the illusion that the suite was once an unfinished attic.

RIGHT: Crisp millwork and a marble top give the master bathroom whirlpool tub a clean, classic look.



All Decked Out

Design your outdoor living spaces with the same care and consideration you give your indoor ones.

- Choose low-maintenance surfaces such as composite decking that never needs staining or natural stone or stamped concrete that can easily be swept or hosed down.
- Select sturdy furnishings that won't blow away in a strong wind and fabrics that resist fading and mildew.
- Include built-in storage benches with hinged lids for stowing cushions and other outdoor decor while you're away.

This home features two covered porches on the main level and two balcony-style decks that extend from upper-level suites. One of the main-level patios offers a fireplace to take the chill out of the air on cool evenings. The other patio provides an outdoor cooking area.



ABOVE: Spacious furnished porches and balconies branching off the ends of both rear-facing wings offer ocean views.

