

New England HOME

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Cape
&
Islands

ON THE WATER

Sunny Spaces, Seaside Style



For the ocean-facing side of the home, Dan Gordon Landscape Architects engineered wheel blocks into the walkway for quick and easy parking of bicycles. The "Tory chimney" is a nod to the Colonial era when Crown sympathizers communicated their political leanings to passersby. **FACING PAGE:** The bluestone walkway ends at a second gate that opens to an ocean view.

A HANDSHAKE WITH THE PAST

This reimagined version of a Martha's Vineyard landmark does the neighborhood proud.

TEXT BY ERIKA AYN FINCH
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL J. LEE





The original home didn't have a porch, but the reimagined structure includes the perfect spot to sip lemonade from one of the Kennedy rockers. **FACING PAGE:** The screened porch with its teak trim is meant to invoke yacht designer Nathanael Greene Herreshoff. The homeowner loves the seasonal Lexan storm panels that help keep the room warm in the cooler months (a double-sided fireplace helps, too).



In the library, a custom table and side chairs from Woodland Furniture are illuminated by The Urban Electric Co.'s Alexander fixture, while the bookshelves are lit by Visual Comfort picture lights. **FACING PAGE:** The shelves around the living room's wet bar were custom made by local blacksmith Whit Hanschka.



For eighty-plus years, residents of one neighborhood on Martha's Vineyard had been well-acquainted with the imposing home (and reported party palace) affectionately known as Big Bluff. But time and, more notably, nature, had not been kind to the Shingle-style home, and it sat on the market for a long while, intimidating buyers by the amount of work it needed. Those house hunters included a couple from New York. She had been vacationing on the Vineyard since she was a child, and with her husband and three kids, had been

renting the same house for twenty-one years. When it came time to buy their own place, there was no denying Big Bluff's idyllic location. "I wasn't into it at first," she admits. "I knew it was going to be a huge undertaking. But because of the team we worked with, it actually wound up being a very pleasurable experience." The couple purchased the house in 2015 and then spent a year working with Hutker Architects on the design of a new structure that would pay homage to the original—think of it as Big Bluff 2.0. The old building was demolished, and the new eight-bedroom home, which retained the original's footprint, took nineteen months to build. Mark Hutker, principal architect on the



Herrick & White created the kitchen cabinets to look like pieces of furniture. Urban Smokebell pendants from The Urban Electric Co. light up the bar, which boasts a brushed-nickel footrest. The Pratt & Larson Scraffito tile lends the backsplash a mother-of-pearl sheen.



The designers sought to immerse Big Bluff in its late-1920s heritage, which meant using some of the original furnishings and sourcing other pieces, like these kitchen nook chairs, from places such as the Brimfield Antiques Show. **FACING PAGE:** The dining room is the central room in the house, and it includes a table designed by Martha's Vineyard craftsman John Thayer and lighting fixtures from The Urban Electric Co. painted in a custom shade of red.

ARCHITECTURE:
Mark Hutker
and Matthew Cramer,
Hutker Architects

INTERIOR DESIGN:
Mika Durrell
and Ania Siekierski,
Hutker Architects

BUILDER:
John G. Early
Contractor and Builder

LANDSCAPE DESIGN:
Dan Gordon
Landscape Architects

project, calls the new Big Bluff a “stylistic handshake” to the surrounding neighborhood, complete with a gambrel roofline. “Martha’s Vineyard residents love where they live,” he says. “We wanted to immerse this home into that local tradition.”

Hutker accomplished that, in part, by using elements from the old home. The homeowners purchased all of the original furnishings, for instance. Not everything worked, but many of the bureaus were repurposed. So were a copper sink and faucets that moved from a butler’s pantry and powder room, respectively, into the

family room to serve as a convenient wet bar. The beach cobbles from the original fireplace were used to construct the reimagined double-sided fireplace. And new details like the stacked-step interior stairway, Herrick & White kitchen cabinetry, exposed-beam ceiling, upstairs painted-concrete floors, and white “Tory chimney” are all nods to the area’s heritage.

That isn’t to say the house doesn’t have plenty of modern amenities. The walkway behind Big Bluff is outfitted with wheel blocks carved into the stone for parking bikes. Dual entry points, built around a grand dining



LEFT: The master bedroom windowsills are extra deep to accommodate a colorful collection of books left behind in the original house. **BELOW:** The tub in the master bathroom sits on a pedestal crafted from the same oak found throughout the rest of the house. **FACING PAGE:** The home's second level is casual, with painted wood floors, antique bureaus, and closets that are closed off with curtains rather than doors.



space, allow a sightline through the entire house, from the lush garden on one side to the ocean on the other. There's also a new screened porch, a favorite spot of the homeowner. And all throughout the interior, peekaboo pops of red make an appearance as if they are playing hide-and-seek with the more traditional blue and white hues that mimic the sky and the ocean. "If you want to create a timeless space, you reflect what doesn't change in that space, and that's nature," Hutker says.

This summer, Big Bluff's family contemplates a season less filled with the usual extended friends and family waging ping-pong battles in the basement (last year, they had eighteen houseguests in one weekend). But Big Bluff was designed to be a family heirloom that would last multiple generations and be used year-round, so there are many more gatherings to come. "This home has good family space," says the homeowner. "When our kids are older with their own families, everyone will be able to visit without being on top of each other. This house was built to be used, and we absolutely use it."

EDITOR'S NOTE: For details about this home, see *Resources*.

