

New England HOME

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Enduring Charm

Timeless elegance meets present-day panache





Summer by the Sea

A beloved coastal cottage receives a gentle but thorough reinvention to accommodate a family of seven.

Text by BOB CURLEY
Photography by NAT REA



A Dutch door allows sea breezes to flow through this compact cottage thanks to an interior redesign featuring a new floor plan that retains classic architectural elements—like porthole windows—and the home's original footprint.

A coastal Rhode Island vacation home with a long history of change has emerged from its latest makeover with an open floor plan, a spacious new kitchen, and easy flow to outdoor spaces, all tailored to fit a large family content to spend their summers by the sea.

Built in 1910, the 2,400-square-foot house in Little Compton started as a simple, square summer cottage with exposed studs, lime-washed walls, and tiny rooms. But 100-plus years and a variety of owners had left a mark.



ABOVE: The entry doubles as a mudroom with a durable brick floor inlaid with pine—a material used throughout the home—for a warm and rustic look. The round window was left over from a powder room that once occupied this space. **LEFT:** The design team refaced the original living room fireplace with V-groove paneling and capped it with a reclaimed barnwood mantel that pairs nicely with the owners' vintage telescope collection.



“When we got there, what caught my eye was how many iterations of this house there had been over the years,” says Wade Paquin of WKP Construction. “There had been at least six modifications, which is why it ended up so chopped up.”

The current owners tasked Paquin and interior designer Patti Watson of Taste Design with yet another update, this time to provide better access to the recently added pool, bring cohesion to the second-floor bedrooms, and replace a dark and narrow kitchen that had been shunted to the middle of the house and sat smack in the home’s highest traffic area.

“The kitchen was basically in a hallway that was the main access to the new pool,” says Watson.

Working within the home’s existing footprint, Watson developed a new



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—Builder Wade Paquin

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Space-saving armless chairs and a built-in banquette provide seating for seven in the dining area. The bar and leather-upholstered stools were part of the homeowners' existing antiques collection. A former guest bedroom transformed into an open kitchen with views of the pool and, from the porthole window in the custom backsplash, the ocean.





layout that saw Paquin knock down several interior walls and convert the former first-floor guest bedroom—which featured the best water views in the house—into a spacious new kitchen.

“The owners really love the size of the home; they were not looking for an expansion, just an improved floor plan,” she says.

It was also important to the owners

The primary bedroom blends existing elements, like the wood-paneled wall that opens onto the deck, with new built-ins that make up for the room’s lack of closets. The designers added a fireplace to keep the room cozy on cool evenings—and during the occasional winter retreat.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: The girls' bedroom is a study in maximizing space: the ceiling was opened up to accommodate the bunk bed, and built-in cabinets provide storage while mitigating the need for bulky furniture. The home's added second bath fits into a tight space thanks to more custom cabinetry and a trough sink that allows siblings to share while keeping the space below feeling open and airy. The custom vanity in the primary bath resembles a vintage bureau.





Three boys share this reimagined second-floor bedroom. When the trio demanded bunk beds to match those in their sisters' room, interior designer Patti Watson opted for a stowable rope ladder to save space in the tight confines. The room utilizes an antique brass bed and a glass-sided cabinet from the owners' collection.

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to retain the home’s original charm and character, from design to construction. “We intentionally didn’t make everything plumb and level,” says Paquin. Watson’s interior design focuses on traditional elements like V-groove ceilings, barnwood beams, and cherry furnishings while also incorporating the owners’ extensive collection of American antiques and art.

“Working antiques into a useful home for a family of seven was a tough balancing act, but the art and accessories were all well-chosen, and we spent an entire workday observing how the home—and antiques—were used to design a plan that reallocated space to meet the needs of a busy family,” Watson says. Summer never looked sweeter.

EDITOR’S NOTE: For details, see Resources.

The recently added pool, cabana, and carriage house helped drive the need for an interior that allows better access to these oft-used outdoor spaces.

INTERIOR DESIGN: Taste Design
BUILDER: WKP Construction