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SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2006

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AMERICAN IDYLL

On an island off Cape Cod, a new home in the classic Shingle style is the perfect starting point for a family's next generation to create their own happy memories.

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LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE:
CLARA COURIC BATCHELOR

Historic art and colors of Cape Cod shine in the rooms of a house inspired by personal history. The evocative interior owes much to a lasting style developed by mid-century designer Sister Parish.

An antique gray-painted Swedish secretary with a clock displays pink lusterware in one corner of the living room. The simple proportions and pale, chalky colors of Gustavian furniture are especially comfortable in a New England seaside house.





FOR THREE GENERATIONS, THE ISLAND OFF CAPE COD HAS BEEN THE FAMILY'S DESTINATION FOR FUN AND TOGETHERNESS. "MY HUSBAND WOULD

come here during summer vacations when he was a kid," says the young wife and mother. "They'd go swimming and fishing and sailing and beachcombing, and there'd be lots of cousins, uncles, aunts, grandparents—all kinds of extended family. He loved it, of course, so when we had boys of our own, it was very important to him that his children have the same experience."

That's the story behind a house that doesn't really need any *raison d'être*: a graceful, shingled two-story structure nestled into the earth close to the water. Facing the road, but screened from view by vegetation, is an entry courtyard created by a guest wing on one side and a freestanding garage on the other. It is an embracing, informal space softened and enlivened with sun-loving perennials; it focuses attention toward the round stair tower, gently curved, turreted and near a simple front door. A flair at the bottom of the bell roof further softens the mass and makes the 4,300-square-foot building look smaller. After dark, lights mounted in the peaks of the garage and the guest

wing act like lighthouse lanterns, illuminating the courtyard, highlighting the tower and guiding travelers into home port. Only at the house's north-facing rear, where an expansive porch and pairs of double-hung windows gaze from the kitchen, living room and upstairs bedrooms toward a glorious water view, does the true size of the house become evident.

"We had an acre of land and we knew we loved the classic Shingle style," says the homeowner. "But we didn't have a lot of preconceptions when we started—we just had a very old magazine picture of a house that we liked."

The house in the magazine was designed by the Boston architectural firm Albert, Righter and Tittmann. "We called them," recalls the homeowner, "and started the conversation by saying, 'we have a piece of property in a place you've never heard of...'"

Not only had the architects heard of the island, it turns out that John Tittmann had been a project architect for the remodel of an uncle's house on the same island. "It was



Every side of the house offers an outdoor spot for rest and relaxation. ABOVE: The north-facing porch provides water views and shaded comfort for lounging, reading or watching children play on the grass below.



meant to be," the homeowner says. "The Shingle style is one of the things they do best. And Jacob Albert, who designed our house, perfectly understood the possibilities and the limitations presented by building on a small island whose population is deeply rooted and eager to maintain the sense of peace and the water views."

"There are houses on the island that date to the 1920s," Albert says. "They're very simple and modest, intended for summer use only. The place is meant to be very low-key, so the building guidelines stipulate that houses not be seen from the road, not stick up high on the horizon, and, though they don't mandate materials or styles, they strongly encourage wood shingle roofs. This house, completed just last year, blends right in and looks as though it belongs there."

EARLY IN THE DESIGN PROCESS, ALBERT AND THE homeowners consulted Boston-based landscape architect Clara Couric Batchelor. She gave the front courtyard structure and form by installing raised beds planted with rugosa, Russian sage, perennial geraniums, hydrangea, coneflowers and other hardy sun lovers. "There are big sweeps of things that will get bigger and better with time," the homeowner says. "Care is very easy, which is important since we're not here all the time. The plantings frame the edges of the buildings and unify everything, without the stuffiness of those commonplace 'foundation plantings.'"

At the water-facing rear of the house, the land's natural slope toward the water elevates the porch floor several



feet above ground level. (This gentle change in elevation also provides stellar views from north-facing windows.) A lawn, partially enclosed by existing woodland, is the children's play area.

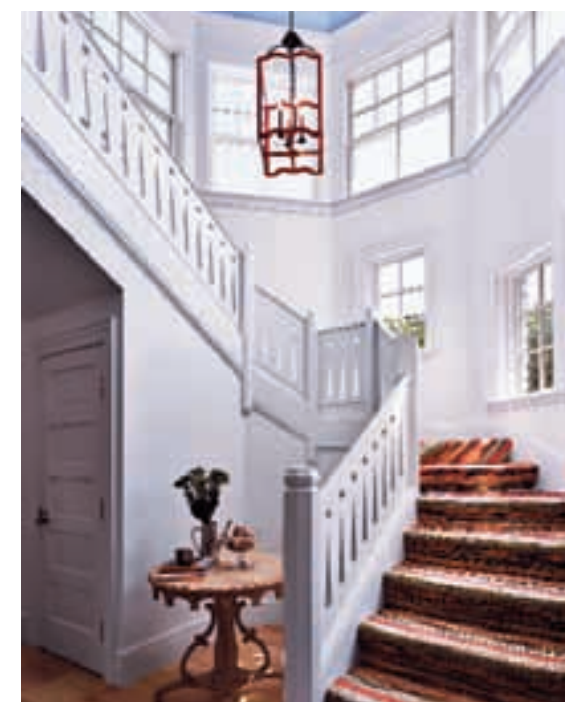
"An important environmental goal was the conservation of water," Batchelor says. "We kept lawn to a minimum and used no impervious paving, opting instead for pea stone installed on compacted gravel, graded so that rainwater returns directly into the ground. A significant portion of the existing vegetation was preserved and new plant material was selected for its minimal irrigation requirements."

BECAUSE THE MAIN BODY OF THE HOUSE, APART FROM the guest wing, is just one room deep, the rooms are full of light, just as the homeowners wanted. "Also, the interior had to be comfortable and child-friendly," says the wife. "We entertain a lot, so, while we want intimate spaces, we also need room for lots of people."

"We're geographically isolated," she continues, "and that means there are always lots of guests. When you invite someone on the island for dinner, they usually have guests staying with them. You may start out inviting six but end up seating eighteen for dinner."

An expandable dining table that always seems to be able to fit one more person solves the potential seating puzzle. Large rooms make for comfortable lounging and expansive

LEFT AND ABOVE: Horizontally applied paneling, stained to resemble driftwood, warms the library.
BELOW: Traditional Swedish cutwork informs the wood railing in the dramatic stair tower.





"I spend a lot of time in the kitchen," says the homeowner. "I used to cook professionally, so I created a great work space where we also lounge in comfortable wicker chairs."



Second-story bedrooms provide serene views of water and distant land. Rag rugs and quilts testify to Sister Parish's influence, while the wicker furniture speaks of a collection the homeowner began in her teens.



views, with lots of private nooks and window seats just right for curling up with a book. Wicker furniture, collected by the owner since she was a teenager, is freshly painted in cheerful colors and scattered throughout. It mixes with early

American furniture and painted antique country pieces with a decidedly Scandinavian sensibility. Handwoven rag rugs in soft stripes cover pickled hardwood floors; lighting fixtures tend toward charming wrought-iron pieces that might have been used in an original Shingle-style house a century ago. The overall effect is fresh, light, cozy, unpretentious and very New England. It certainly doesn't look new.

IN FACT, WHEN PRESSED, THE HOMEOWNER admits to a penchant for the refined charm that was a hallmark of the famed American interior designer Sister Parish. "I love the family references, the quilts, the pretty colors and the mix of old and new. I think that's what we've tried to achieve here." **NEH**

RESOURCES For more information about this home see page 271.