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In the Blend

THE BEST COMPLIMENT FOR A NEW HOME ON MARTHA'S VINEYARD?

EVERYONE ON THE ISLAND THINKS IT'S PART OF THE CROWD.

Writer Candace Ord Manroe Photographer Michael Partenio Field editor Stacy Kunstel



It's tough being the new kid on the block. When the "block" is the Massachusetts island of Martha's Vineyard, home to Native Americans and mariners long before it housed rock stars and the rich, the expectations escalate exponentially. Just ask architect Patrick Ahearn. He had the mixed blessing of designing the first home at the Vineyard'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—just to name a few of the hurdles Ahearn was required to leap. But being the first also meant opportunity: He would set the development's tone.

For him, that meant going for an ageless look, a style indigenous to the island since its halcyon days as a

ABOVE Columns, which play a substantial structural role in the house, are repeated on the living room's elegantly detailed fireplace surround. RIGHT The living room's white-covered custom sofas are accented with hand-screened pillows that match the fabric on armchairs (not shown).





whaling hub. "I tried to create a house that might have been there forever," Ahearn says. Interestingly, he didn't simply pluck early design motifs off the pages of history books and piece them together. Instead, he brought the unborn 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," he adds, "and it is extremely well-proportioned. The solid/void relationship between windows and walls is carefully crafted and articulated." This fine balance between opaqueness and transparency,

OPPOSITE AND LEFT The dining room's blue-and-white millwork and chandelier beautifully complement the reproduction table and chairs. ABOVE The family room's cozy club chairs are grounded by a custom wool rug with a raised blue-and-white grid. Pale cotton draperies are accented by a bold blue-and-white plaid taped edge.

THIS PHOTO The kitchen's hood and spice shelves show the home's attention to detail. But the La Corneau range stars. OPPOSITE TOP Countertops are mahogany and carrara marble. OPPOSITE BOTTOM Delft tiles face the kitchen fireplace. Six-inch-wide beaded board enhances the ageless look.



he says, is more responsible for the timeless character of the home than are more easily manipulated devices, such as the shingle siding or gambrel roofline.

Ultimately it is a compilation of elements that imbues the house with its historical character. Ahearn used brick 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 stair hall, 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 the in-law suite. To the right is the formal dining room, which, Ahearn says, "resolves itself in a breakfast room" and kitchen. Beyond is the family room. In the center of it all is the grand staircase, where windows supply dramatic views in two directions: toward the farm, where horses graze, and toward

THIS PHOTO Crisp millwork and a marble top give the master bathroom's whirlpool tub a clean, classic look. OPPOSITE TOP Fabrics in the master bedroom bring the home's dominant color scheme to the upper level. OPPOSITE BOTTOM The master bedroom's wainscoting design extends to a window seat.



Edgartown Great Pond and the Atlantic in the other direction. An elevator ensures that the owners can easily live there for years to come.

Architectural detailing is achieved through beautiful classic millwork that enriches the home's formality. The living room fireplace features a mantelshelf of deep moldings, including dentil work supported by columns. In the dining room, a carved swag on the mantelpiece and scrollwork corbels supporting the mantelshelf add to the elegance.

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 adds. "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's chandelier includes blue prisms among its clear crystals.

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. The living room sofas are serene and sophisticated in white fabric with dressmaker skirts and blue welting, while the room's armchairs wear a subtle hand-screened pattern. In the family room, the patterns are bigger, bolder, and brighter duos of blue and white.

Latticework distinguishes the garden room, which the family calls the summer living room, from other spaces. "This room is off the pool and is a favorite of the whole family," Thomas says. "We wanted it to have a sunny, carefree look." Its coffered ceiling has an airy feel—a

LEFT Latticework brings a fresh look to the garden room, which departs from the home's blue-and-white scheme. Window treatments are pale green striped panels hung from a mottled-green pole by leaf-shape ties. BELOW Wicker furniture makes the garden room the home's most casual space. "The travertine floor is indestructible," the interior designer says.





pleasure, in the middle of a muggy Vineyard summer—because of lattice panels inset between its wooden grids. Walls also get a summer reprieve with an interjection of garden-style latticework.

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 due to 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. **BH**

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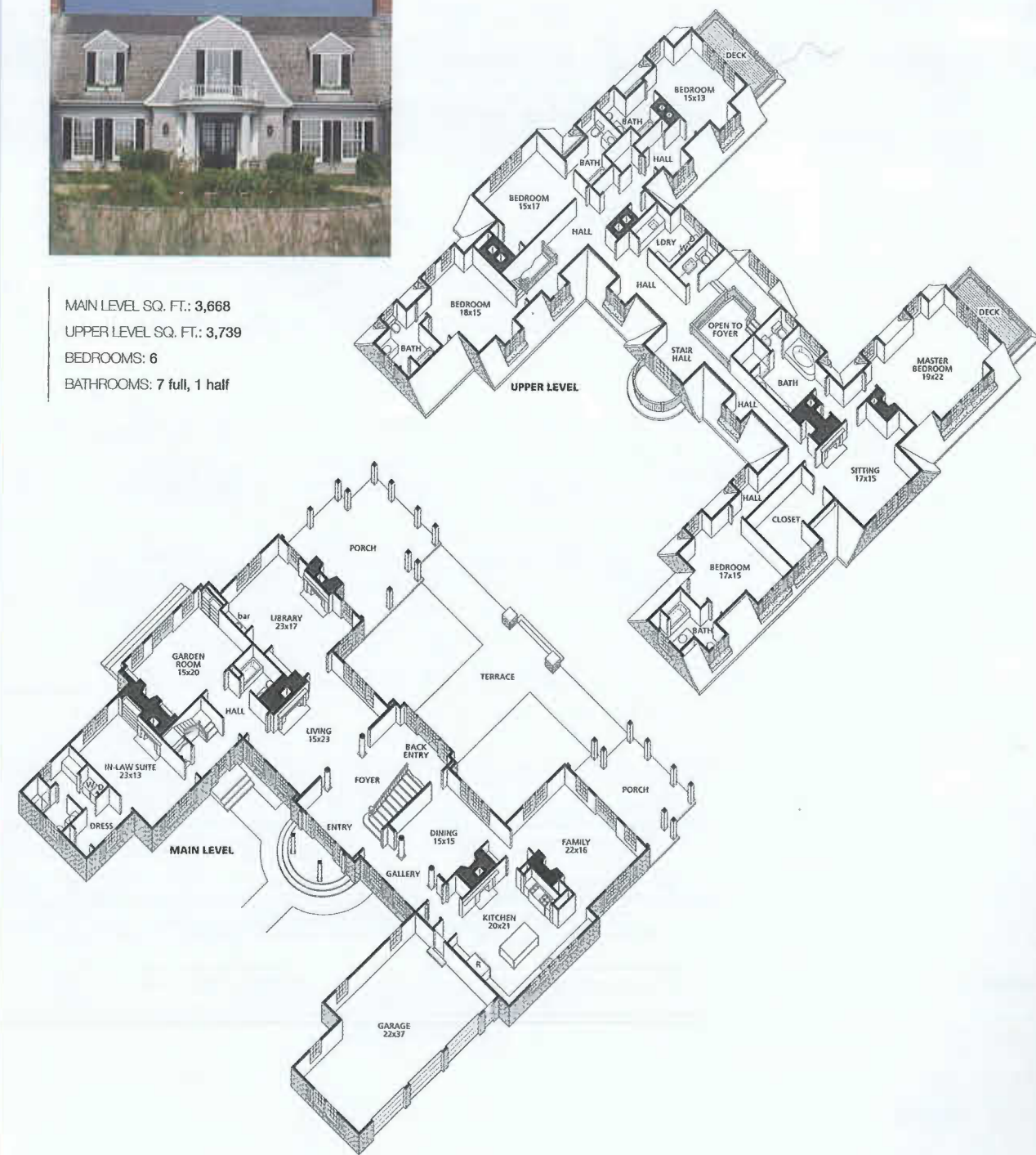
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ABOVE Spacious furnished porches and balconies branch off the ends of both of the home’s rear-facing wings. All enjoy ocean views. LEFT A center gambrel-roof gable ornamented with a false balcony denotes the front entry, as does the landscaping’s circle of green.

PAYING MIND TO lovely natural surroundings and complementing the local vernacular allowed this home’s design team to build at Martha’s Vineyard. Although the Shingle-style home is large, boasting a host of guest suites, its low height and classic detailing are sensitive to the environs.



MAIN LEVEL SQ. FT.: 3,668
 UPPER LEVEL SQ. FT.: 3,739
 BEDROOMS: 6
 BATHROOMS: 7 full, 1 half



Architect **Patrick Ahearn** Interior designer **Cynthia Thomas** Builder **Colonial Reproductions**