

# LUXURY HOME

*quarterly*



ACQUA VILLA *An Austin, Texas home remodel transcends into an iconic work of art* p.166

REGIONAL FOCUS: CONNECTICUT *A new attitude drives building trends to embrace classic sensibility* p.108



CLASSIC DESIGN  
Situating a 210-acre oceanside farm, the Herring Creek Farmhouse was designed as a companion piece to the working farm and was developed in the 1700s oceanside Cape Code-style vernacular, relating to another antique Cape structure on the farm.



## Patrick Ahearn

EVERY HOME HAS A STORY FOR THIS NEW ENGLAND ARCHITECT WHO PROSPERS WITH A CLASSICAL-DESIGN AESTHETIC

by David Hudnall

Patrick Ahearn, cofounder and principal of Ahearn | Schopfer and Associates, is one of those designers who tends to think of architecture as more of an art than a science. "I like to create what I call 'scripts' for each of my homes," he says, "so that there's a story about the house that we write before we start designing, and that story helps people understand the aesthetic we're going for. It grounds the house, in a way as we go through the design process."

Ahearn points to a recently completed home on Martha's Vineyard—a locale where many of his designs come to fruition—as an example of this approach. He's now designed four homes on Her-

ring Creek Farm, a 210-acre working farm in the area, his most recent being a 7,500-square-foot shingle-style, classically designed home created to be "communal and private at the same time." The script for this project, based on true events, was that a shingle-style cottage had been built on the land in the late 1890s, but was devastated by a hurricane in 1936. The home was wiped out, but its vestiges, its old bones, still stood erect. Over the next few generations, it remained a part of the family's property, but was abandoned and forgotten. When the estate sold the property, Ahearn's client came along, saw opportunity, and, with Ahearn's guidance, restored it to its former majesty.

### Herring Creek Farmhouse

Martha's Vineyard, MA

Features of Ahearn's Herring Creek Farmhouse include:

- Mouldings by Anderson & McQuaid Co., Inc. [andersonmcquaid.com](http://andersonmcquaid.com)
- Quarter-sawn, random-width oak floors with an English-chestnut finish.
- White oak, antique paneling with a waxed, distressed finish.
- Cabinetry by Triple Crown Cabinet & Millwork Corporation. [triplecrowncabinetandmillwork.com](http://triplecrowncabinetandmillwork.com)
- Fireplaces are made of native New England fieldstone.



## SEASIDE COTTAGE KITCHEN

Ahearn designed Eel Pond's kitchen from what was originally the two-car garage. Dormer-style windows were added to bring in clerestory light and antique beams were included to reinforce the seaside-cottage vernacular.



"It's a very charming, romantic home," Ahearn says. "From various views indoors, the horse fields, ocean, and farmland are all visible. And if I took you to the house and walked you through it, the design would match the story of the script."

Ahearn was raised in Levittown, Long Island, an early template of American suburban design, and educated at Syracuse University (earning both bachelor's and master's degrees in architecture) during the late 1960s. In those days, modernist designs were prevalent, and in his first professional capacities—as project designer/architect for a variety of Boston-area firms—Ahearn spent much of his time converting historic residences into the sleeker, modern styles of the time. But he always leaned more toward traditional designs, and soon after he opened his own shop in Boston in 1978, popular design started trending back toward his traditional aesthetic. Today, the balance of those modern and classic styles is obvious in Ahearn's work. He focuses on historically motivated architecture and interior design for high-end luxury homes in Boston and Martha's Vineyard, though he's completed designs for projects in places like Santa Barbara, Denver, and the US Virgin Islands. (Kevin Schopfer, a room-

*Eel Pond*

Martha's Vineyard, MA

This oceanside elevation includes a covered porch and individual second-floor terraces for the cathedral-ceiling bedrooms. The project was created from the bones of an original boathouse found along Eel Pond, and new structures include a three-car carriage house with guest quarters above, a boathouse shed, an attendant garden, and outdoor entertaining spaces.





### *Edgartown Harbor House*

Martha's Vineyard, MA

This harborside elevation was developed in a gambrel style along with its two-story bay-windowed carriage house overlooking a hidden pool and courtyard garden. The one-and-a-half story formal living room features dormered clerestory windows, a stone-faced fireplace, and antique lantern light fixtures. The room overlooks a covered porch with harbor and ocean views beyond.



*"We want our projects to be timeless in their appeal, intimate in scale, and, after a year, we want it to be hard to tell whether the house is new or 300 years old."*

PATRICK AHEARN,  
COFOUNDER & PRINCIPAL

(Ahearn is originally from Syracuse, joined Ahearn in 1979, and has his own separate studio.)

In Boston, where to date he has completed more than 400 projects, Ahearn often finds himself restoring townhouses and rowhouses, some of which have been converted into multiroom apartments over the years and are being remodeled to please a new owner. He typically prefers to do jobs that are based on historical motivations, rather than formal historic preservation. "I've done some preservation work in Boston, but I like to create a new theme, a new character, in my projects, rather than a literal representation, and you don't really get that as much with a museum house," he says.

In 2000, Ahearn opened a second office on Martha's Vineyard to attend to a growing clientele. "We do a fair amount of millwork on our homes in Martha's Vineyard—there's very little drywall that's left raw," he says. "We tend to create a high degree of fit and finish, finding the most appropriate hinges, door-knobs, doorknockers, and such, so that everything works thematically."

Given Ahearn's cerebral approach, it's perhaps not surprising that he has taught at such places as the Boston Architectural Center, Harvard's Graduate School of Design, the Rhode Island School of Design, and the Syracuse School of Architecture. He espouses what might be referred to as a 'building first' philosophy: make the designs about the building, not about the architect. "These classic buildings we work on, whether on the Vineyard or in Back Bay, are beautiful enough as they are," he says. "By messing with them too much, they can lose their timelessness."

"I think when we're working in historic fabric, be it in a city or historic district, we want to see the greater whole," he continues. "We want our projects to be timeless in their appeal, intimate in scale, and, after a year, we want it to be hard to tell whether the house is new or 300 years old. Well, at least until you open up the door." ■



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