





cottage charm

A small 1950s Martha's Vineyard camp is recreated with a cottage-style seaside vernacular in mind.

Off Martha's Vineyard's beaten path, an understated 1950s camp cottage sat quietly in disrepair on Lake Tashmoo waiting for a buyer. Cramped and dark, the building needed a fresh start. A professional couple, realizing the potential of the small, well-sited cottage, purchased the property with a vision.

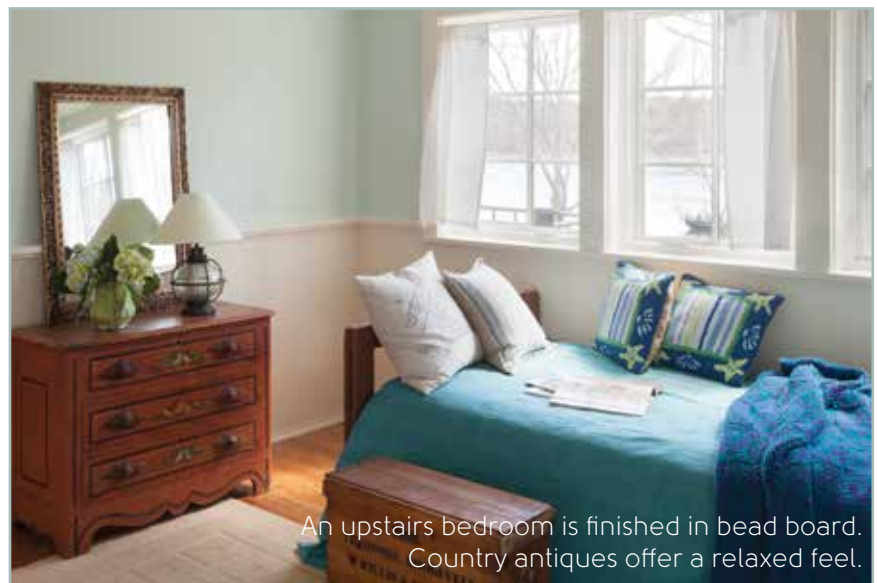
The couple met Sam Sherman, principal of Sam Sherman Associates, and liked his island design philosophy. "I have lived on the Vineyard for 40 years and have a tremendous respect for this place and want to honor its scale in the best way possible," says Sherman. The clients, too, love the Vineyard scale and wanted to renovate the house while maintaining the island vernacular style. They desired a place that was comfortable and easy to maintain with all the charming flourishes of a summer lakeside dwelling. And, most importantly, they wanted to keep its size proportional to its neighbors.

by nancy e. berry • photos by eric roth

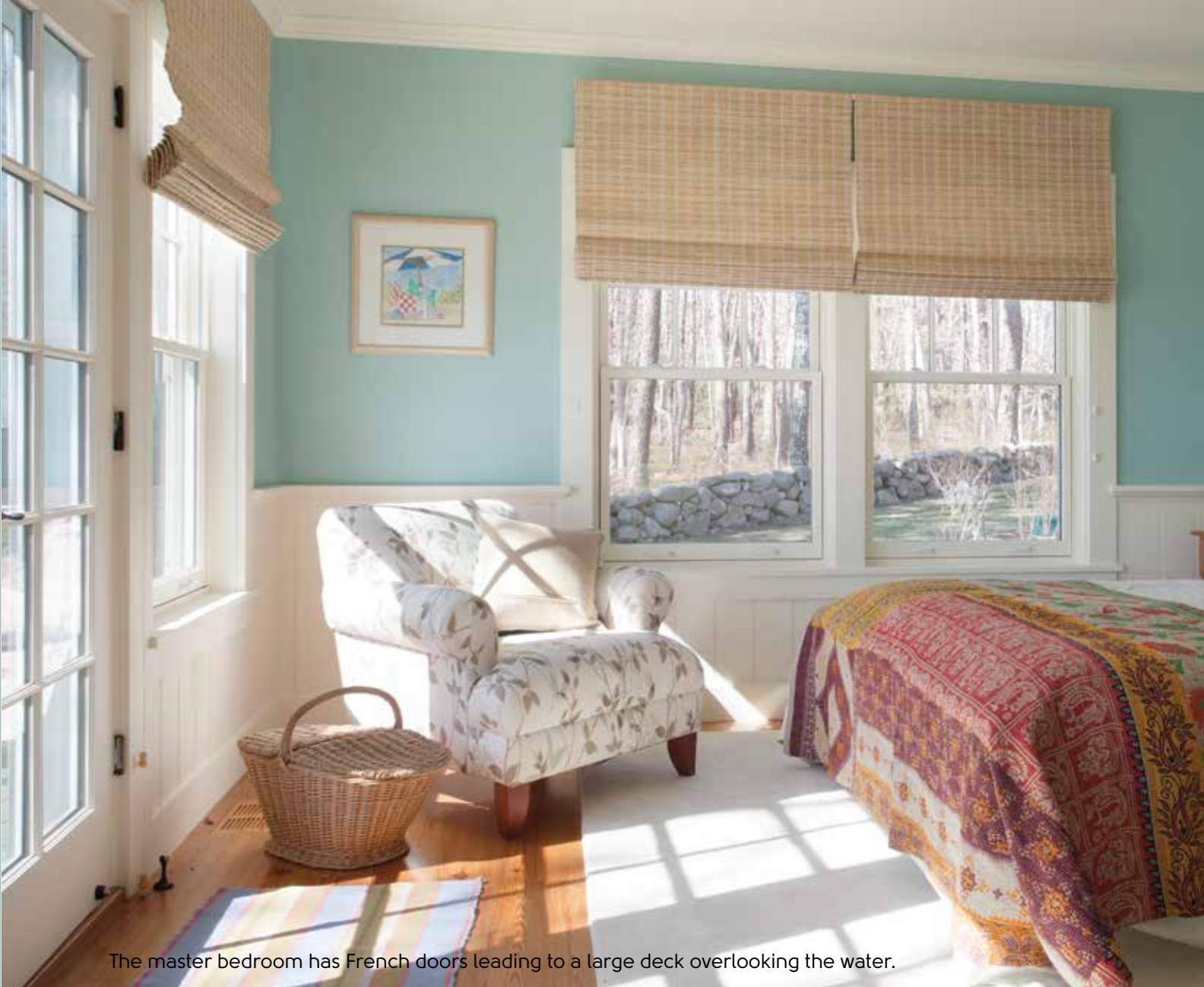
The charming entry porch is in keeping with the island's cottage vernacular.



Because of setback requirements, a nonconforming lot, and its close proximity to the water, the house footprint could not change drastically. “Even if we could expand, we wanted to keep the house small,” notes Sherman. Although the house was to remain on a cottage scale, the couple still needed additional bedroom and living space for their college-age children. There was only one small bedroom upstairs. To remedy the cramped quarters, Sherman built upward. Lowering the original cathedral ceiling in the living room to a standard height, he was able to create additional space on the second floor, which now accommodates two bedrooms, a full bath, and two sitting areas. The new lower coffered ceiling in the living room creates a cozy cottage feel.



An upstairs bedroom is finished in bead board. Country antiques offer a relaxed feel.



The master bedroom has French doors leading to a large deck overlooking the water.



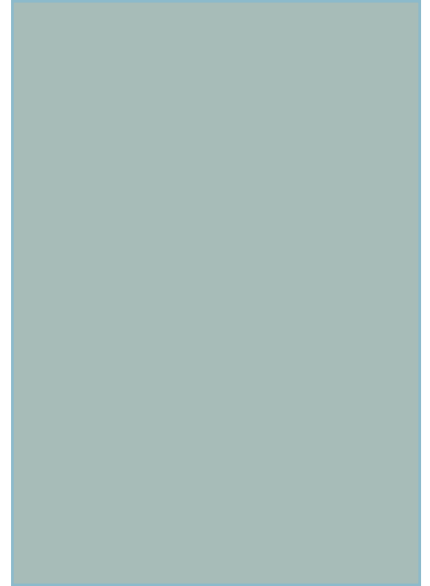
To bring additional light and headroom into the upstairs, Sherman—who is a firm believer that houses should have as much natural light as possible—introduced dormers. “During the day you shouldn’t have to turn on a light in a room,” notes Sherman. “It’s like good lighting in a theatre—when it is done properly you don’t notice it, but when it’s awful, you can’t help but notice it.”

Although the upstairs received more floor space, the downstairs layout remained basically intact. An existing fieldstone center chimney, in good condition, anchors the main living area. “We relocated the staircase to an outer wall—moving it back just a few feet—to create more floor space,” notes Sherman. The geometric Arts and Crafts stairs offer a bold architectural component to the space. For the stairwell, Sherman designed a large arched operable window, which fills the stairwell and upper level with sunlight and, when open, cool island breezes.

Sherman incorporated built-in shelves to showcase collectibles.




A mudroom offers plenty of space to store boat gear.



Other space-making opportunities came in the form of built-ins. “When you have limited space, you approach the design process much like you would if building a boat. Built-in storage and furniture—even beds—become essential,” he says. Sherman borrowed space from eaves to incorporate storage into the bedrooms and cubbies in a small “boat room” off the living area. Built-in bookshelves in the living room offer places for sea-inspired accessories.

Because this is a summerhouse, outdoor spaces for cooking, dining, entertaining, and relaxing were a design must. “We added a screened porch off the living room so the homeowners could enjoy the evening air even when the mosquitoes are biting,” notes Sherman. Doyle Construction, the general contractor on the project, rebuilt the mahogany deck, which spans the length of the water side of the house. “Mahogany is a hardy wood that stands up to the elements,” he says, “while the bronze railing is another low-maintenance option.” Sherman also introduced a second-story Juliet balcony off a small sitting area for additional open-air living space.





The farm-style cabinets by Crown Point Cabinetry create a relaxed aesthetic in a kitchen designed by Elizabeth Swartz, ASID.

The handsome yet cozy farm-style kitchen, designed by Elizabeth Swartz, ASID, of Elizabeth Swartz Interiors, opens to the living/dining area, but is physically separated by a peninsula topped in cherry. The cabinets, custom built by Crown Point Cabinetry, are painted a stone blue. Swartz chose a Costa Esmeralda Bianco marble counter top and Akdo frosted blue glass tile backsplash to enhance the seaside aesthetic of the kitchen. A raised ceiling with exposed support beams enhances the cottage feel. At the client's request, an interior window looking into the screen porch allows additional light into the space and doubles as a pass-through for family meals. Sherman transformed a mudroom into a pantry, creating a perfect spot for a large stainless-steel refrigerator.

Throughout the house, Swartz was responsible for finishes and materials choosing tranquil blues and greens to create a coastal-hued effect. Swartz worked with the clients to define the feel of their island home, partnering with Sherman's team on many details. "Location of the walls in the master bedroom, bath, and closet as well as the second floor bedrooms and bath, contributed to the spacious, airy feel of the rooms," says Swartz. "Continuing with this airy intent, I suggested we open the new stairwell to the lower level and make the family room more a part of the whole house."

Swartz notes that the cottage's window selection and placement were also key. The house's non-water views are all of island woods, with lots of windows letting in an abundance of light throughout. "The desire was to keep the home small and casual," Swartz explains.

The cottage's new family are thrilled with the outcome of their island retreat. A relaxed, inviting vibe fills the house, and its design pays homage to the island's modestly scaled, cedar-clad dwellings.

Accessories from Bespoke Abode, Vineyard Haven, were featured in the photo shoot for this story.

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