



Cottage Swap

A family beach cottage is razed and remade into a comfortable retreat that feels far larger than it really is.



Above: This Harwichport cottage, built on the same footprint as its predecessor, is only steps away from the beach.

Facing page: Beadboard walls pair perfectly with reclaimed antique heart pine floors for a classic beach cottage kitchen.

MAYBE THERE'S A SPIRITUAL PULL to this Harwichport cottage that began life around 1900 as part of a religious campground. Or maybe, it's simply the spectacular oceanfront view. Either way, the allure is strong enough to draw the owner to this beachy getaway every chance she gets.

"I'm here as often as possible in the summer and three out of four weekends in the off-season," the owner says. "I love [the] off-season on the Cape." Her two teenage children join her whenever their busy schedules allow.

By Lenore Cullen Barnes • Photography by Dan Cutrona



A center wall with a built-in gas fireplace partially separates the living room and the kitchen-dining area while also providing much-needed storage space.



Making Tough Decisions

When she purchased the home, compact at just under 1,200 square feet, it was a true cottage, without insulation or heat, and sporting plumbing that clearly had been added as an afterthought.

"The shower and bathroom were right in the middle of the kitchen, separated by the refrigerator," says the owner. "But we did some light cosmetic work and summered here for five years." When the owner decided it was time to winterize the existing cottage, she surveyed builders and it quickly became apparent that renovating wasn't a viable option.



A built-in hutch in the dining room.

"It needed a major redo so we started from the ground up," she says. "I tried to save it, but every builder said don't. There were so many obstacles and it wasn't worth it financially."

She was referred to architect Steve Cook of Cotuit Bay Design, LLC, whose design kept the four bedrooms and added two full bathrooms plus a roof deck—all while fulfilling the owner's goal to honor the original cottage.

Devising a Plan and Building a Team

She then enlisted Encore Construction to execute the plan.

"I think she chose us because of the level of service we provide," says Dale Nikula, president and CEO of Encore. "We help our clients with every aspect of the process to create their vision. We listen to their design ideas and blend that with our experience."

Encore's interior designer, Susan Gerlach, worked with the owner on everything from selecting the plumbing fixtures and tiles to the floors, furniture and overall décor. "We approached it like a ship," says the owner. "We used every square inch possible."

The owner and Gerlach made an easy, effective team.

Inspired by a project featured on Houzz.com, the homeowner asked for a custom v-spindle staircase.



A built-in ladder in the master bedroom leads up to the roof where breathtaking views of the Atlantic Ocean can be seen for miles.

"We have similar personalities," Gerlach says. "I got to know her ideas and final vision for the house. She wanted to maintain the cottagey feel in the structural elements and balance it with contemporary features. Because we wanted to get the absolute most out of the space, we tucked a cabinet or built-in anywhere we could. We also applied what I call 'smoke and mirrors,'" says Gerlach. To create the illusion of a larger master bathroom, striated tile was installed from left to right, and the coffered ceilings were painted for the same effect.

Compact Solutions

The first floor centers around a three-sided gas fireplace, with the living room on one side and the dining area on the other. Aiming to fully utilize every square inch, Gerlach suggested making the center wall all built-ins. Now, one side features a hutch for the dining area and the other conceals media components.

The staircase, relocated from the center to the right side of the home, houses built-in bookcases. Custom details, like the v-shaped spindles on the stairs, add modern flair and interest.

Reclaimed antique heart pine floors, from Stonewood Products of Harwich, are perfect for sandy beach life. The owner loved the original beadboard walls and wanted to replicate them; Gerlach recommended using a v-groove beadboard versus the traditional version to achieve wider, cleaner lines.

"I try to push clients outside their box," says Gerlach. "With the owner, the more she pushed outside her box, the more she opened up to all the possibilities."

Beach Cottage Chic

The overall color scheme was inspired by the ceiling hue, Dew Drop by C2, which Gerlach terms a "magic color" because it morphs from green to blue, depending on the light. Geometric designs on the reupholstered swivel chairs and an animal print on the ottoman inject a contemporary element.

A traditional round, wood dining table gained panache by painting it white (and its clawfoot toenails red!), and surrounding it with upholstered benches and clear acrylic chairs that don't interrupt the ocean view.



Above: Built-in storage and beadboard walls are employed throughout the home, including in this cozy bedroom.

Left: The backyard is the owner's tiny, hidden oasis.

Neutral tiles by Cloutier Supply Company of Harwich carry the cottage feel throughout all three baths. The shared bath upstairs has white subway tiles on the wall and small hexagon tiles on the floor that are complemented by faucet fixtures in bronze with an oil-rubbed finish. "We bumped it up a notch with a tile border composed of gold-toned glass with embedded natural shells [on the wall]," says Gerlach.

"It was a fun project," reflects Nikula. "I applaud Steve's initial design. He worked with limited space to create great living areas. The house doesn't feel congested. It has volume and beautiful light because the space is used so well. It represents a great collaboration, great creativity."

And great pleasure for the owner and her family. 