

DESIGN

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NEW ENGLAND

HOUSE *MEETS* GARDEN

A CELEBRATION OF SPRING





THE FRENCH-CANADIAN CHEST in the living room is meant to look like it has drawers, but it actually opens like a cabinet; its original use was to hold priests' robes. A 19th-century Dutch landscape inherited from the homeowner's great-grandfather hangs near a French pine corner cabinet and wing chair (FACING PAGE).

BY THE BAY

A New Hampshire
fishing camp turns into
a seacoast haven of
rich family life
in a simple,
well-edited space

WRITTEN BY COURTNEY GOODRICH
PHOTOGRAPHED BY CARTER BERG



ONE SIDE OF the living area features seating around a Chinese lacquer coffee table that one of the homeowners bought in England. A garden-lined walkway leads to the house (BELOW), which had to be built on the same 24-by-70 footprint of the single-story bungalow it replaced.



It was the deep-water dock that first attracted the couple to their new home on the New Hampshire seacoast. The husband, “a fisherman through and through,” says his wife, spotted the for-sale sign a few years ago while cruising the waters of Little Bay — where three rivers converge and flow to the Atlantic Ocean. Wanting to downsize from their large Georgian-style house nearby, in which they had lived happily for more than 30 years, the couple envisioned building a simpler home with the bay as their backyard.

They also wanted it to be a welcoming place for their family,





ACROSS THE ROOM by the fireplace (ABOVE RIGHT, BOTTOM), furniture includes an 18th-century French chair, a miniature French-Canadian chest, and an antique whitewashed coffee table found in a New Hampshire shop. In the entry (ABOVE RIGHT, TOP), a 7-foot long apothecary is flanked by Chippendale chairs. The oil painting is a 19th-century Dutch landscape.

which includes two daughters and four young granddaughters, to visit.

To carry out this vision, they called on one of those daughters, interior designer Liliane Hart, whose firm, Liliane Hart Interiors, is based in New York, and one of their friends, architect Walter Rous of Durham, New Hampshire.

A one-story bungalow built in the 1930s or '40s was first torn down to make way for the new structure. "When we were designing the house," says Hart, "the largest challenge was that we had to work in the original footprint." The team, which included builder Chris Levesque of Madbury, New Hampshire, created a new 4,500-square-foot house on the long and narrow — 24 by 70 feet — base of the old bungalow.



THE DEN (FACING PAGE) is a cozy room off the living area, where the couple like to retreat in the evenings. A decorative tole table lamp coordinates with the paisley sofa fabric and walls painted Farrow & Ball's Dauphin.

THE DINING AREA (RIGHT) is a comfortable space with bench seating around a new table made from antique pine; the chandelier is made of oyster shells. The kitchen (BELOW RIGHT) is tucked out of view from the living spaces but still feels accessible with two entrances. Drawers on both sides of the buffet store serving utensils and tableware.

With a mainly open floor plan, the first floor is a comfortable space with a sunroom closest to the bay. Hart helped her parents decide which pieces from their beloved antique furniture collection to incorporate into the interior and how best to highlight them. "She knows what she loves," says Hart of her mother, "but she looked to us for this edited version. I love working with things people bring into a project, but if you don't edit, you are just creating a version of what you already had. It wouldn't have had the same visual impact if you just jammed it full of furniture."

So as not to overpower the beauty of the pieces they did select, architectural detailing such as baseboards, trim work, and cabinetry were kept purposely spare. The result, says Rous, is "quite a change" from his clients' previous house, but the juxtaposition of simple lines creates "a nice foil" for the more ornate antiques.

Hart and Rous were precise with the furniture plan, ensuring walls, corners, and windows were placed in locations that accommodate the chosen pieces. For example, the entry foyer was specifically designed to fit a long 19th-century cherry apothecary with 20 drawers.

Fabrics and wallcoverings are a mix of refined and informal. "There are a lot of patterns in the rooms, but they are in really soft tones, so there's subtlety," says Hart. In the sunroom, white wicker furniture is paired with blue striped fabric, while in the living room, a whitewashed antique coffee table occupies the center of a seating area that includes an antique wood-framed chair and a sofa upholstered in linen. "It feels very soft and relaxed, and it allows the forms of the furniture to have a sculptural feel," says Hart.

While the dining and living areas are open to each other, the homeowners requested privacy for the small den, which is tucked beside the living area, and the kitchen, designed by McIntosh & Co. Cabinetmakers of Lewiston, Maine.

"We've always had a tiny, dark room as a den," says the wife. "We never go in it in the daytime, but we love it for the evenings."

As for the kitchen, "Obviously," says the wife, "it's because I'm not a very neat cook." But having two entrances that open to the dining area helps keep the space from feeling too closed off.

The second floor mainly consists of a master suite





with a balcony overlooking the water and a guest bedroom with a bath. A small third bedroom by the staircase, with walls painted blush pink, is where the wife and her granddaughters read together from a collection of children's books that fills the shelves around a cushioned built-in bench, which doubles as sleeping space for the kids.

Outside, among the hydrangeas, peonies, Japanese anemones, and Montauk daisies — "I've always inherited gardens," says the owner, "so it was fun to plant this one from scratch" — a cluster of small out-buildings adds to the fun backyard environment. There's the lobster shack, where "neighbors bring lobsters by and boil them and just eat them there," says Hart. A playhouse is for the granddaughters, while

an art shack and a garden shed are for the wife. Lastly, the hut by the dock holds the husband's fishing equipment and life jackets for the boat. "It's really a great way to live," says the wife, explaining that, otherwise, most of these items would be stored in the detached garage. The kids know they can't go near the water without stopping at the fishing hut for life jackets, so every adventure includes a visit there. "We do a lot of fishing off the dock," she says. "We do a lot of swimming. Or we'll pack a picnic and go out to the Isle

of Shoals, where sometimes we see whales and seals." To their granddaughters, it's just another day in the life their family has created for them. ■

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LOCATED CLOSEST TO the backyard and bay is the sunroom (ABOVE), which is separated from the living room by pocket doors. “Most people when they move to the water, they want the big glass windows, but I wanted some sort of panes on everything,” says the homeowner about the quaint look to the room, which includes wicker furniture and a ceiling painted blue. “I wanted the porch to be a conservatory instead of just being about the view.”



DESIGN DECISION *Little Houses*

“This was one of the last of the old camps,” says builder Chris Levesque about the property, which he describes as being in an area where fishing buildings dotted the coast. Instead of tearing down the backyard’s five outbuildings, erected when the land was multiple small plots (joined legally before this project began), Levesque embraced what he says was “a neat opportunity” to either repair them or replicate them in size.

Family, friends, and neighbors gather at the lobster shack (ABOVE CENTER), while the children’s playhouse (LEFT) is a dollhouse-like structure with a flower-filled window box and a Dutch door. The art shack (ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT), the only all-original structure (“it was the original privy for the house,” says interior designer Liliane Hart), is filled with the wife’s painting supplies, which she mostly uses for art projects with her granddaughters; she stores her planting supplies in the garden shed. Near the dock, a fishing hut (TOP) holds life jackets and fishing gear.

“It’s quirky,” says Hart, “but they have a lot of personality, these little shacks.”