

A CHATHAM HOME CHANNELS ITS DREAM-LIKE SURROUNDINGS

LIVING WHERE THE SEA meets the sky



Aptly named by its owners, “Sundowner” in Chatham is perched on a sand ridge overlooking Nantucket Sound and against a golden backdrop of refracted light when day comes to an end. With sea grass lapping the rise of the manicured green that meets the stone patio, the full breadth of this amply windowed home greets the vista with crisp, white defining edges in the form of well-placed trim boards and columns. Broad porch overhangs act as open arms to the sea. A fire pit fashioned in the shape of a globe invites late afternoon guests to gather round on the terrace and watch the sun sizzle into the vast waters beyond.

Sundowner—with its broad, flat columns, large muntins (ridges that separate and support panes of glass), triangular roof peaks, and a flaring copper chimney cap—captures the dreamy quality of its surroundings in its whimsy and has the “happy, iconic character of a home that a child’s drawing might evoke,” says designer John DaSilva of Polhemus Savery DaSilva Architects Builders (PSD). “Slight exaggeration combined with traditional forms make the house feel familiar but different, timeless but unexpected, inviting but bold,” DaSilva adds. The home was completed in early 2016—just in time to enjoy the summer season.

Owners Heidi and John Fahey, whose main residence is in Washington, D.C., hired PSD on the recommendation of a friend in their new neighborhood. “They had a good reputation and made it easy with their all-in-one design and build,” Heidi Fahey says. “When you’re new to the area, it’s best to stay with people who are highly recommended, and we could not have been happier with our choice.”

BY CARLA BELKIN · PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN VANDEN BRINK



The PSD team—which also includes architect Peter Polhemus and builder Aaron Polhemus—made placement of this 3,200-square-foot home on an 18,400-square-foot lot its number one priority. The one and a half stories facing streetside flow seamlessly into two stories on the ocean side, allowing for full water views and avoiding any full-on views of neighboring structures. The lack of outbuildings or a garage allows the house to fill the vista.

“In order to maximize the ocean view, we had to pay attention to all orientations to the view,” DaSilva says. “We put windows on multiple sides of rooms so that the amount of direct sunlight coming into the room is expanded—in addition to the view.”

The kitchen brings particular joy to the homeowners, since both love to cook, as do their children. The marble-countertop island in this open-concept kitchen/dining space offers seating for three, and the dining area seats eight comfortably. Heidi Fahey had a farm outside the nation’s capital, and she provided vegetables to a restaurant in the D.C. area. Raised beds outside this new home are destined to produce more homegrown delicacies for the couple’s Cape Cod table.



DaSilva says the kitchen and dining space are essentially one, separated by the kitchen’s large island. “You don’t feel like you’re dining in the messy part of the kitchen, so to speak,” he says, “but they are visually open to one another, so socializing is easy.” This area is largely open to the living room but is separated by a large cased opening. “You can see through and hear through, but you do feel like they are separate spaces,” DaSilva says.

In addition to the kitchen and dining space, the first floor also features a living room—complete with a fireplace in its center—and a master bedroom suite, which is accessed from the foyer. A “his and hers” office, with two built-in desks, is located off a small hallway to the left of the main entry, and a laundry/mudroom can be found off to the right of the entrance. Beyond that, the living room’s focus is the vista, as windows on three sides offer views to the west and south. The space is arranged in an “L” shape, so the room spans the depth of the house from front to back.

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“The living room gets all-day sun,” DaSilva says. “We had to be cognizant of not just the path of the sun, but also the location of the neighboring houses. We can’t block [out] the neighboring houses completely, because you don’t want to close the house in that much, but we at least minimized them.”

Beach-y bright blues and the greens of the marsh grass define the home. Designer Susan Tuttle of Surroundings Custom Interiors of Orleans helped the homeowners choose colors and interior furnishings. Tuttle took an understated approach to color in the kitchen/dining room area. “The gray-green cabinets weren’t the exact same color as the adjacent wall,” Tuttle says, “so I used wallpaper in a light gray-green to make it blend. I didn’t want to make it too bold, but rather textural.”

The homeowners were pleased with Tuttle’s suggestions. “We were so happy to have worked with Susan,” Heidi Fahey says. “She helped choose the right lively colors and fun fabrics. When we came to the house, we realized that the surroundings overwhelmed us when we looked outside. Even bringing in colors would fight with the view, and it was important to respect the marsh.”

The second floor of the home features three guest bedrooms, each with its own seaside vista and private bath. There’s also a communal sitting area at the top of the stairs, inviting guests to gather for a quiet evening’s chat. The back porch, which leads out onto the terrace, is, as DaSilva puts it, a



“transitional zone” from the inside to the outdoors. “You don’t just step from the inside space directly onto the terrace,” he explains. “Because it’s a relatively tight waterfront site, the amount of footprint available for the house was limited, so the porch had to be judicially designed so that it gave you the sense of a porch. There’s a small area where you can actually sit on the porch, but mostly it’s there to give you a sense of transition from the interior to the exterior, rather than an abrupt jump.”

The mahogany decking echoes the wood flooring found throughout the home’s interior, DaSilva says,



“This is a happy house.”



and the porch’s v-groove cedar walls are smoother than the more textured shingles of the home’s exterior but not as smooth as its interior plaster. “Again,” he says, “this makes the porch feel like it’s a transition space that is both part of the exterior and the interior.”

The Faheys could not be happier with their new home. “The Cape on its worst day is better than D.C. on its best day,” Heidi says. “My husband spends his days on the Cape swimming every other day, biking, or walking to the lighthouse. I have wondered whether there is something in the water on the Cape, because it makes us so very happy to be there. This is a happy house.”

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Carla Belkin is a recent “washashore” living in Barnstable Village. She has spent most of her career in the home furnishings industry in New York City.

Cape Cod Life Publications’ staff writer Haley Cote also contributed to this article.