A PLACE OF PEACE

A rustic cottage in Orleans is transformed into a modern farmhouse with an open floor plan.

BY LAUREL KORNHISER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC STRIFFLER

A century ago, the Cape had as many farms as fishing piers. Today, with farming more often a consolidated business and fewer people cutting trees for fuel, the landscape has filled in with flora, and farms are fewer and farther between. Here and there, though, properties with fields and open space recall those earlier times. Such is the case with a homesite in Orleans. The clients asked Polhamus Savery DaSilva Architects Builders to design a farmhouse to replace a rustic cottage on the land. "There is a farm next door," says architect Sharon DaSilva, the designer of the home, "and the client had spent time on a farm that was quite special to her." With its friendly wraparound porch, simple gables, and shed dormers, the home sits comfortably on its minimalist site.

Though the original cottage sat in the midst of a grassy field bordered by trees, it did not ignore its proximity to the sea, sporting a small tower that looked like a lighthouse. The new farmhouse pays homage to this feature both inside, with a staircase newel post, and outside with a tower structure rising from one corner. "The tower was inspired by nostalgia for the one that was part of the original cottage," DaSilva says. A weathervane, designed by DaSilva based on the client's specifications, tracks the breeze from atop the tower. Written in ancient Sanskrit is the word "peace," fitting for a house and setting that seek to provide just that.

A screened-in porch on the first floor offers views of the pool house/guesthouse. The tower in the Orleans farmhouse, below left, also features a treetop sitting area off the master bedroom.

The blue travertine stone around the fireplace inspired the home's calming palette. To achieve a more-lived-in look, designer Kyle Timothy Blood favored countertops made of synthetic material and counter-stools upholstered in outdoor fabrics to accommodate those returning from the beach.

The lower, which houses a screened-in porch on the first floor and a treetop sitting area off the master bedroom, shifts the home just a bit from full fidelity to farmhouse vernacular. "With the tower, it feels a little more like a shingle-style cottage," DaSilva says. Inside architectural elements, like the crown molding, v-groove paneling, and raised fireplace panel continue the cottage-style connection.

Though the former cottage suggested some elements for its successor, it was the landscape itself, particularly a prominent maple tree standing alone, which became a natural focal point for the home's design. For the 14 years that the clients rented the cottage originally on the site, they went without air conditioning, so on hot summer days, they would sit under that maple, where there was always a breeze. When the new house was built, they wanted all open living spaces in the house—the living

One of the husband's request: a Moroccan tile master bathroom. Although initially resisted by the design directive, designer Kyle Timothy Blood researched Morocco extensively and realized it's all about balance: of scale and proportion, texture and color. The junior master suite, below, achieved edges the sea with recurring waves in the tiles.

room, dining room, and kitchen—to be accessible to and oriented toward their favorite tree. "The house had to have a relation to the tree. The tree was part of the enjoyment of the outdoors and keeps the house connected to the landscape," says DaSilva.

Like the idealized version of farm life, this house and its sister pool house/guest house were meant for simple pleasures and designed for summer ease. Open, bright, and serene, the spaces breathe. "The client was clear, 'Do not make this precious. I don't want just a pretty house. I want a house I can live in,'" says Kyle Timothy Blood, the home's interior designer, who also served as the owners' representative during construction. To that end, rather than using high-maintenance marble or granite in the kitchen, Blood recommended countertops made of a synthetic material. The Christian Liaigre dining chairs and Donghia kitchen counter stools are upholstered in outdoor fabrics, perfect for accommodating those returning from a day at the beach.

Though a farmhouse, the nearby sea is everywhere acknowledged, through seascape paintings, fabrics featuring fish and coral, recurring waves (in the junior master suite tiles, kitchen backsplash tile, and in the living room rug), as well as in a palette that evokes sand and sea. As he does with all of his projects, Blood derived the home's palette from a singular inspiration, in this case, the blue travertine stone around the fireplace. "Upon seeing the stone and knowing that it would be central to the hearth, I expanded upon it, incorporating blues, grays, taupes, and creams."

The home is also designed to make sure that family and friends stay connected to each other. Absent from the living room is a media center. DaSilva found this refreshing: "It is always a struggle to make something really nice with a television in the center, so without having to accommodate a TV, we were able to make the fireplace bigger. "Instead of streamed entertainment, the living room provides for intimate

conversations with seating clustered around a circular Joseph Jeup coffee table, all oriented toward the fireplace. In one corner sits a card table, perfect for a rousing game of poker or a competitive game of cribbage. "The client wanted people to visit and talk while they were together. She felt strongly that family and friends don't visit enough in the 21st century," says Blood. If family or guests are looking for solitude, a walnut-clad library provides just the right atmosphere. Studious but not stuffy, weightier but not weighted, the room offers shelves of books and plenty of comfortable seating for an evening's worth of reading.

One room that takes its cue from a different source of inspiration is the master bathroom, a colorful affair of varied mosaics. "The husband had two requests: a California king bed and a Moroccan tile bathroom," says Blood, who admits to being "daunted" initially by the latter design directive. After a good deal of research about Morocco, Blood realized, "It's all about balance: of scale and proportion, texture and color." Once he found a true Moroccan tile source, Mosaic House of Manhattan, he divided the bathroom into a series of rooms that unfold into each other, a staple of Moorccan design: "The tub with the tableaux is one room, the shower is another, the water closet with the swinging doors is a third, and the vanity is a fourth." Though each space is distinctive, similar coloration, patterns, and borders unite them.

After creating complex configurations in tile, Blood's next challenge was to tie the brightly colored Moroccan bath to its master bedroom. "I needed to bridge Morocco and Cape Cod," says Blood, "and I did that through the aesthetics of the master bedroom: the Moroccan-style headboard, the medallions in the window treatments, and the side tables, which are made of oak, a Cape Cod staple, but have stamped metal fronts." Blood wanted the master bedroom to connect with the home's beach motifs while creating a smooth transition to the Moroccan bathroom, making it a welcome, yet soothing surprise.

Creating bridges between spaces was important outside as well, accomplished

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A weathervane, designed by Sharon DaSilva, tracks the breeze. Written in ancient Sanskrit is the word "peace," fitting for a house that seeks to provide just that. Below and far left, the designer tied together the brightly colored Moroccan bath to its master bedroom with medallions on window treatments and oak side tables with stamped metal fronts.

through the landscape design of Clara Batchelor, of CBA Landscape Architects in Cambridge. Paths of bluestone squares set in the grass connect the major sites on the property—parking areas to the home and pool house/guesthouse, guesthouse to the main house. The same stones planted in the grass serve as the patio for the wading pool/hot tub. "Using an aggregate of steppingstones is softer than using a solid patio or pool deck," Batchelor says. "It allows the paths to flow more gracefully."

While many seasoned Cape homes are designed to maximize expansive views, this one, says Batchelor, has "primary views that are inward. It is an inwardly focused landscape, and so we created places that were totally self-contained." To insure privacy and to give texture to the edges, Batchelor added evergreens as well as

The broad porch welcomes visitors and offers a sense of comfort. The home, which features simple gables and shed dormers, sits comfortably on its minimalist site.

various flowering shrubs to the perimeter, providing an ever-changing palette of color from spring through fall. Simple plants, perennials, and grasses act as foundation plantings for the house itself. The landscape is deceptive. "There was a significant amount of planting for such a simple landscape," she remarks. The drive up to the house, too, has its surprises, including being welcomed by a lovely, large Japanese maple, an addition Blood suggested. "The idea," says Batchelor, "was to maintain privacy, so when you drove up to the house, you didn't say, 'Oh, here's a brand new house.' If you don't see everything at once, you have the process of discovery."

Though no farming is done on this property, it evokes the best of the tradition. The broad porch welcomes visitors and offers ease and community. The open landscape fosters expansive vistas, while the focal maple tree adds beauty and serves as a reminder of longevity and stability. Let the world be busy and cluttered, this home says. Here you will find peace.