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by elspeth pierson | photos by jeff allen



THE NANTUCKET ARCHITECTURE GROUP AND J. BROWN BUILDERS CREATE A WONDERFUL GETAWAY FOR A GROWING FAMILY.

ACCORDING TO NANTUCKET BUILDER JOSH Brown, the house on Eel Point Road on Nantucket is not your average summer home that gets used maybe two weeks out of the year and then sits vacant. Instead, what sets this house apart for Brown is the family's commitment to it. "Typically, we build homes for people that will come down for a few weeks in July, maybe again in August, and a week in the fall," says the owner of J. Brown Builders, Inc. "The houses sit empty."

But not this house. It is a much-loved home, designed for and around family and filled with them constantly. "Usually, there are whole wings in these summer homes that never get used," explains Brown. "This house was designed around family, and every square inch of it gets used to its full potential."



The Shingle-style home on Eel Point Road on the island of Nantucket is a real dream house getaway. The Nantucket Architecture Group and J. Brown Builders worked closely together to create impressive exterior trim details (shown opposite).

Architect Steve Throux, of Nantucket Architecture Group, set the tenor for experiencing this wonderful home at the entrance. "When you walk up to the door," he explains, "we want you to say 'Wow!'"

You do. The door opens into a vestibule, which leads to the central room of the house: a living space accented with post-and-beam framing, a vaulted cathedral ceiling, and a massive stone fireplace. The ceiling boards are reclaimed wood from a Baltimore barn floor, planed down to leave some of the original finish. The fireplace is fieldstone, carefully stacked by local mason Michael Craddock into a tower of perfectly interlocking pieces, surrounded by slate banding.

From this great room, the house opens into two sides. To the left are the kitchen and breakfast nook, to the right is the dining room.

Playtime happens on the lower level, which houses two guest bedrooms, an in-home movie theater, personal gym, sauna & massage room, wine cellar, and children's play space. "It made sense to group activities together on the lower level," explains Throux. "The family can go down and work out, use the sauna, or watch a movie while the children are playing. It gives each member something to do, while allowing them to be together doing it."





The movie theater is the highlight of the lower level; covered in deep scarlet carpeting, with elegant wood trim, and three rows (with 15 chairs total) of theater-replica seating, it is easy to imagine it hosting a gathering pleasing to children and parents alike.

Next door, the one-of-a-kind wine room was built by hand using reclaimed casks. "When you walk into the room, it is already impregnated with the aroma of red wine," says Brown, pointing out the aromatic effect of the design.

The rest of the house emits a similar antique-yet-contemporary feel. A spiral staircase on the right side of the house, built by "a true Old World craftsman," Dave Renner, leads

up to the master suite (complete with bedroom, office, and bath). "Dave Renner sees the world in three dimensions," says Brown. "People think there must be some factory, but the trees grow straight and you've got to have a knack to do it." Renner showed up at the job with no plans or paper, only a pile of straight boards and a knack for twists and curves. Several weeks later, the beautiful spiral of steps was complete.

The other (straight) staircase leading up from the kitchen to the children's bedrooms, Brown did himself. Equally beautiful in its design and build, it heads to the four smaller children's bedrooms and their shared playroom. The mas-



The main living space of the house is accented with a stone fireplace and post-and-beam frame ceiling. Top: The dining area bay window looks out to the lush lawn. Right: The kitchen has a large center island with a mahogany countertop and white beadboard cabinetry.



This page: Craftsman Dave Renner built the dramatic spiral staircase that leads to the master bedroom wing—complete with master bath and home office (opposite). The straight staircase leads to the children's rooms.



ter suite attaches via a catwalk, which looks out over the vaulted living room. "You see these sorts of connections all over the house," says Brown, "because, again, it is designed to be family oriented."

Outside, the focus is on time spent together as well. A large in-ground pool sits beside the house, facing back toward it with a view of the ocean. An elevated hot tub, which cascades hot water into one corner of the pool, looks out over the edge of the bluff.

A delicate stainless steel cable fence works to give the enclosed swimming pool, stone patio, and cabana an open feel, while an outdoor pizza oven and barbecue make the area ideal for outdoor lunches and entertaining. The cabana itself is 450 square feet and features a wet bar, sitting room with fireplace, and separate lavatories and changing rooms.

While offering stunning vistas, the bluff-side location made the job challenging at times. "Everything had to go through the Conservation Commission," explains Brown,

"every change and question." Beyond working to comply with wetlands protection, the builders also found a small patch of endangered Nantucket shadbush when clearing the site, which they moved in cooperation with endangered species officials to a fenced-in location on another part of the roughly 173,000-square-foot lot.

Complying with the island's Historic Commission building guidelines threw in another challenge, but one that both Brown and Throux are well used to. "Our hands are pretty much tied here on Nantucket," explains Throux. "The five-member panel determines whether or not a design meets a particular criteria," a set of standards Brown describes as "the nineteenth-century look" that covers the entire exterior from roof lines to windows to shape and height.

Despite these regulations, the tennis court was allowed a more modern design. The standard-sized court, which sits on the left side of the driveway on the approach to the house, is sunk down 5 feet into the ground, so as not to be so visible from the surrounding land. "That way, the




Outdoor living spaces in the form of porches and patios take in views of the extensive lawns and the ocean beyond.



fence didn't have to be so tall," Brown explains. The builder also was able to use interlocking 12-by-12 inch sports tiles, which snap together in a grid pattern so that the rain falls through them, for the court. In addition to adding drainage, the tiles also mean repairs can be isolated.

A full guesthouse is tucked in near the court, offering privacy and a separate entrance to friends and family visitors. "The house is always full," says Throux, who designed the three-bedroom miniature home in the same style as the main home. "When you're dealing with a property of this size, to accommodate the owners' needs, and the guests' needs, and the children's desires, and to get it all to flow properly, is a really big accomplishment. We're very proud of it."

With good reason. From start to finish, the design and building of the home took three years. "It's a constant give-and-take," says Throux. "We refine our approach, working with the builder, the owners, and the town. We want everybody to be thrilled."

A year after completion, it seems all involved are absolutely thrilled, and then some. 

Elsbeth Pierson is a freelance writer living on Cape Cod.

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"This house was designed around family."