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PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAN CUTRONA

Pond Side TIMBER FRAME

Construction: MCPHEE ASSOCIATES
Design: DAVIS FRAME CO.



The living room features a two-story fieldstone fireplace and cathedral ceiling.

From top: The dramatic cathedraled ceiling in the main living area. The exterior of the home has a classic seaside feel. A baby grand piano is tucked into a nook in the den.



A love of natural wood and a desire for an energy efficient home leads to a soaring timber frame home in Harwich Port.

It was all about location for the homeowners of this Harwich Port home. The Harvard couple had long ties to Cape Cod. He grew up in Falmouth and she summered every year on Pleasant Bay. As soon as they saw the pond-side one-acre estate just a short walk from Nantucket Sound, they knew they had found their own perfect piece of the Cape. The only problem was the existing house had been left in disrepair for too long and could not be salvaged. So they decided to tear it down and design their dream home and hired custom builder Rob McPhee of McPhee Associates of Cape Cod to build it.

A love of nature leads to several green components

“They love natural wood and they wanted something energy efficient so they went with a company in New Hampshire called Davis Frame Company,” McPhee says. “Davis Frame does the design and puts the materials together for the timber frame portion. They supplied those products to us and we put it all together and built it all for them.”

One of the homeowners’ missions was to make the house as sustainable as possible. The timbers in the post-and-beam frame are made from Douglas fir, which is a sustainable wood and the structurally insulated panels that form the walls are very thick and energy efficient. Solar panels on the roof provide all the hot water and floors throughout most of the home are reclaimed random-width southern pine from old mills in Massachusetts.

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Reclaiming some childhood memories

In addition to energy efficiency, the couple wanted to include elements from other houses they had lived in and loved over the years and to reflect their unique personality. The Dutch door that leads from the kitchen to a first-floor screened-in porch is reminiscent of the wife's childhood summer home. The second-floor screened-in porch has half walls with the intention of adding beds so the grandkids can sleep outdoors in the summertime just like she did.

"The house was really designed with our family in mind," the homeowner says. "We have three children and they all have children. When we're all together we just love to have a good family time."

In keeping with that mission, the main living areas of the house are all open. The great room has a sweeping cathedral ceiling that is open to a loft above. The chimney of the massive stone fireplace with woodstove insert draws the eye up to the ceiling gables and can be enjoyed from the attached dining room as well.

The kitchen with its red birch cabinets and granite countertops is designed for an efficient flow of traffic, with a center island that has a Thermador stovetop in the center and a raised seating area with three stools so the family can chat while meals are prepared.

For times when a bit more solitude is desired, family members can relax with a book in the solarium off the great room or take in a movie in the front media room/library.

A walk through laundry room and charmingly old-fashioned full bath complete the first floor. The bathroom has bead board accent walls and includes the antique half claw foot tub and wall sink that were reclaimed from the original house.

Carving out space for both privacy and family

The staircase to the second floor is divided by a landing with a bench seating area and shelves for storage and collectibles. Upstairs, the master suite has a lovely deck and a private master bath.

The master bathroom has a new claw-foot tub set next to windows overlooking the pond. A massive glass enclosed shower stall has ceramic tiles that mimic a stormy sky with two walls painted blue to accent the cerulean impression.


The grandchildren's room has a delightful sleeping loft accessible by ladder and its own bathroom. Two other guest rooms share a bathroom that has sand colored ceramic tiles bordered with real stones. Handmade accent tiles made from real sea creatures complete the beach effect.

All of the rooms are painted a neutral white to allow the gorgeous wood throughout to take center stage. And it does, in dramatic yet cozy ways. Real pegs secure the timber frames. Pine ceilings create a warm glow. Windows and doors frame the expansive pond views and entice one to step outdoors, where brick patios and bluestone walkways lead to an outdoor stone fireplace and extensive gardens.



Making the most of an exquisite location

The exterior of the house is covered with white cedar shingles, pre-dipped in bleaching oil. PVC trim keeps maintenance at a minimum and mahogany decking stretches out from all the entrances to invite exploration of the beautifully landscaped lot that includes many mature plantings that were salvaged from the original property.

“Our real goal in designing the house was to bring the outside in with the openness throughout, especially capturing the tranquil water views from almost every window, and yet to maintain the classic feel that would fit on that site at the Cape,” the homeowner says. “Rob was amazing in helping us manifest our vision. I can’t imagine it coming out any better.”  HOME



A sleeping loft in an second-story bedroom is a favorite spot for the homeowners' grandchildren.