

Respite *by the* Sea

A teardown in East Sandwich gets a new lease on life as a family's special retreat.

By Lenore Cullen Barnes
Photography by Dan Cutrona

The pirate-style skull-and-cross-bones emblem on the screen door hints at the breezy, beachy vibe that prevails inside this East Sandwich gem. One meaning of the skull is “rebirth,” and this one signifies the rebirth of a teardown and the revitalization it brought to the family that owns it. Chuck and Laurie Lopresti discovered this waterfront property on a serendipitous drive one afternoon. It was during a particularly trying time in their lives, and as Laurie says, “We needed a respite, a place to escape to.”



There is no shortage of views at this 1,200-square-foot beach cottage that overlooks a marsh, creek and Cape Cod Bay.

ARCHITECT: Anne Michniewicz
BUILD: Structures Building & Remodeling

TEARDOWN

“We didn’t really know East Sandwich,” says Laurie. “We drove by this beach and saw the cottage for sale. It was probably the craziest thing we ever did.”

Here, the Loprestis found just what they needed – an abundance of water views, sand dunes and sea breezes. The front door and kitchen window look out to the marsh; a creek that meanders along the right side of the property, trailing into Cape Cod Bay provides a spectacular vista from the back of the house.

White tongue-and-v-groove walls and random-width antique white oak flooring sets a clean, nautical-rustic tone.



The kitchen has a contemporary edge with grey soapstone counters contrasting against crisp white Elmwood cabinetry and a glossy subway tile backsplash.



Above: Space was maximized with built-in shelves; a window seat doubles as a bench for a dining table of reclaimed wood made by West Barnstable Tables.

Making Room for Family

Two years ago, the Loprestis began the teardown and reconstruction to gain the square footage needed to accommodate their three children and two grandchildren. They “jumped through hoops,” according to Laurie, to secure the necessary permits, and the house was raised on pilings to meet flood zone code. The original structure was an L-shaped, 500-square-foot ranch built in 1955. The Loprestis hired architect Anne Michniewicz to design an expanded, more livable, but still simple version of the structure. Michniewicz introduced them to Chris Dougherty, president of Structures Building & Remodeling, based out of Sandwich, who brought Laurie’s vision to life in the form of the now two-story, 1,200-square-foot home.

“Laurie had a folder of photos with design elements she liked,” says Dougherty. “I filtered through them and figured out what works here. I helped pick out materials and size things appropriately.”



The nautical theme carries over into the master bedroom with chic shiplap ceilings.

Making the most of every inch, a window seat in the master bedroom offers extra seating and spectacular views.



Nautical Yet Rustic Design

Materials like random-width planks of antique white oak on the floors, random-width tongue-and-v-groove walls painted Benjamin Moore White, and shiplap ceilings set the clean, nautical-rustic tone. White Elmwood cabinetry with antique nickel hardware, narrow subway tiles on the backsplash and grey soapstone counters introduce a contemporary element in the kitchen. In the first-floor bath, a glass shower features a river stone floor and subway tile walls.

Sliding doors and a wall of windows across the back of the house focus one's view on the dunes and water just steps away. Above the sliders hangs a large oar, a carry-over from the original cottage. A guardian angel, hovering over the front door, also graced both houses, along with a set of buoys hanging from the front railing. Laurie kept the décor simple, with a sofa, club chairs and ottomans slipcovered in neutral tones.



Replacing the original 500-square-foot cottage is a much more livable 1,200-square-foot summer home. The cottage rests on raised pilings to meet flood zone requirements.

Built-in shelves with a cabinet below are tucked just inside the front door, housing the microwave and other kitchen accessories. Another set of built-in shelves flanks one end of the window seat paired with the custom dining table of reclaimed wood by West Barnstable Tables.

“We used every square inch we could,” Dougherty says.

180 Degrees of Blue

Upstairs, in the master bedroom, another window seat is tucked into a niche overlooking the creek. Windows on all four sides of the room provide panoramic views, but the bank of nine windows directly opposite the bed bring the wow factor – 180 degrees of beautiful, blue bay. Board-and-batten wainscoting extending to the tops of the windows and the shiplap ceiling further enhance the seaside ambience.

Teal penny tile shimmers in the upstairs bath, which features a soapstone counter on the vanity, shiplap ceiling and more tongue-and-groove wainscoting on an accent wall. A loft completes the second floor and provides additional sleeping space when family and friends visit.

A Happy Outcome

While Laurie acknowledges the process was more challenging than anticipated, she couldn’t be happier with the outcome.

“I’m pretty impressed,” says Laurie. “It was a lot of work, but I didn’t want to use a decorator. I was afraid if I doubted myself I’d let (the decorator) take control and then the house wouldn’t be me.

“I can’t say enough about Chris. Obviously he’s talented and skilled, but he also helped me with my vision. I was going out of my mind with all the decisions and he kept coming up with good ideas and solutions. I felt like he felt like it was his house too. He put his soul into it.” Along with a special feature – the stair railing was crafted from a piece of wood Chris brought from his 1800s barn.

“That was his gift to me,” Laurie says. That and a house full of well-chosen materials and thoughtfully designed features that establish the perfect seaside escape for three generations to treasure. 🏠