

playing with tradition

the design of a coastal rhode island house is inspired by sandy toes and shingle style architecture

Written by **JILL CONNORS** • Produced by **LYNDA SUTTON** • Photography by **ERIC ROTH**
Architecture by **ANDREOZZI ARCHITECTS**

MOST OF THE FURNISHINGS in the living room are oriented to the sea view. A fireplace with a hearth shelf extends to form a window seat. Custom-designed window and door casings inject traditional architectural detail into the new house. The trim color of the house (FACING PAGE) blends with the hue of the dazzling salt pond. New England vernacular elements include cedar shingles, mahogany railings, and copper post caps.

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LOCATION MATTERS IN ARCHITECTURE, NO more so than when the setting is spectacular, as in a pie-shaped piece of land whose “crust” lies along a salt pond a few hundred feet from the Atlantic Ocean. In 2000, a Connecticut family of five, which had vacationed in southern Rhode Island for years, bought a 1960s house in Westerly, along Quonochontaug Pond. They used the existing house (“little more than two-by-fours and plywood,” the homeowner recalls) for four summers, gauging their needs and getting a permit to build a dock.

When it came time to build a new summer home, they called on David Andreozzi of Andreozzi Architects in Barrington, Rhode Island. What they wanted, they told him, was a house that was “traditional but fun.” A simply stated wish, to be sure, but fulfilling it meant triumphing over a number of pesky complications. “There were myriad restrictions — from flood zoning to limitations on the volume of the house,” says Andreozzi, who knew that optimizing the view was his most important mandate. “Being on that salt pond is so special,” says Andreozzi. “The plan was all about exploding the view.”

With geometry as his muse, Andreozzi developed a floor plan that was inspired by the triangular lot. His original drawings pinpointed a spot, just inside the front door, from which all sightlines radiate, capitalizing on the water view and resulting in a fan-shaped building.

Given the coastal restrictions and setbacks (including septic) of the half-acre lot, the only way to accommodate the four bedrooms, four baths, kitchen, dining, media, and living spaces that his clients wanted was to make the house at least three stories. An unconventional upside-down layout made sense because it gave the primary gathering spots better vantage of the pond. The kitchen and living room occupy the house’s second story; the master suite and study take command of the third floor, while three bedrooms for children and guests occupy the first floor — with the consolation prize of a deck outside each room.

As for the traditional-yet-fun request, Andreozzi envisioned an architectural style that incorporated vernacular and Shingle Style elements such as cupolas, columns, porches, cedar shingles, and copper roofs, but also conveyed a contemporary ethos. Thus, the cupola has stylized brackets projecting from its top, painted a seafaring azure, and the brackets are repeated as rafter tails along the span of windows encircling the kitchen and dining areas. A barrel roof distinguishes the master-suite portion of the third floor, giving extra ceiling height to the lair. Instead of six-over-six double-hung windows (too traditional) or windows with no mullions



(too contemporary), Andreozzi chose Prairie-style windows throughout — with mullions near the window perimeter, leaving an broad expanse of glass but still providing architectural detail.

Further emphasizing the views, Andreozzi designed a main level with no interior walls between living area and kitchen, an arrangement made possible, structurally, by the use of steel. “With this being a 120-mile-per-hour wind zone, we used a lot of steel to create the framework of this house,” says contractor Randy Gardner of Gardner Woodwrights in North Kingstown, Rhode Island. The openness of the kitchen and living areas is emphasized by the kitchen layout, with a run

WINDOWS WITH A SALT POND VIEW wrap around the open-plan dining area and kitchen (LEFT); the aesthetic is enhanced by maple floors. The stairway (ABOVE, TOP PHOTO), which has a cherry railing and newel posts, is designed to echo the curves of the house’s exterior wall. A granite countertop (ABOVE, LOWER PHOTO) curves with the arc of the windows, providing plenty of view-facing work surface. The center island also has a curved outline.



DESIGN DECISIONS
The Golden Section

Since ancient times, the mathematical ratio known as phi (1.618) has been applied to works of art and architecture because of its pleasing proportion. Phi, also known as the golden section or golden ratio, is the formula behind such compelling geometry as the triangle at the core of the Pyramids of Giza, the rectangular spacing between the columns of the Parthenon, the perimeter around the face of Michelangelo's Mona Lisa, and the radius of the arc that the human body scribes when arms and legs are extended.

In designing this coastal Rhode Island house, David Andreozzi (at right in the photo above, with contractor Randy Gardner) considered the geometry of the pie-shaped lot and used the golden section in his early drawings to establish a radius that translated into a sweeping view of the ocean. "The original drawings are all math, all based on the golden section," says Andreozzi. "The combination of the angled site and the wide-open view started the geometry swirling."

of countertop following the arc of the windows, and a curved central island offering more view-facing work surfaces as well as snack-bar seating. A curved leather sofa in the living area echoes the main level's geometry as well. The homeowners consulted with Providence interior designer Nancy Taylor on overall themes, incorporating new and existing furnishings throughout the house.

Architectural elements indoors speak to a traditional New England vernacular with custom-designed baseboard moldings, window casings, and a curving stairway whose newel-post design was inspired by the integrity and muscle of old wooden masts. Maple floors provide a reminder of the beach-house mentality. "We wanted a balance between a beautiful New England house and a place casual enough that you don't feel

guilty coming in with sand between your toes," says Andreozzi.

But the soul of the house lies in its many outdoor spaces, for this is, after all, a house sited just 100 feet from the water. An ipe deck off the master suite, lined with a mahogany rail, offers a panoramic view of the ocean, including Block Island, some 12 miles out to sea. A deck off the kitchen offers ample room for outdoor dining, while a covered porch off the living room feels almost shiplike with its varnished wood ceiling. On the ground floor, the decks are all just a few skips away from the dock. For the active family that vacations

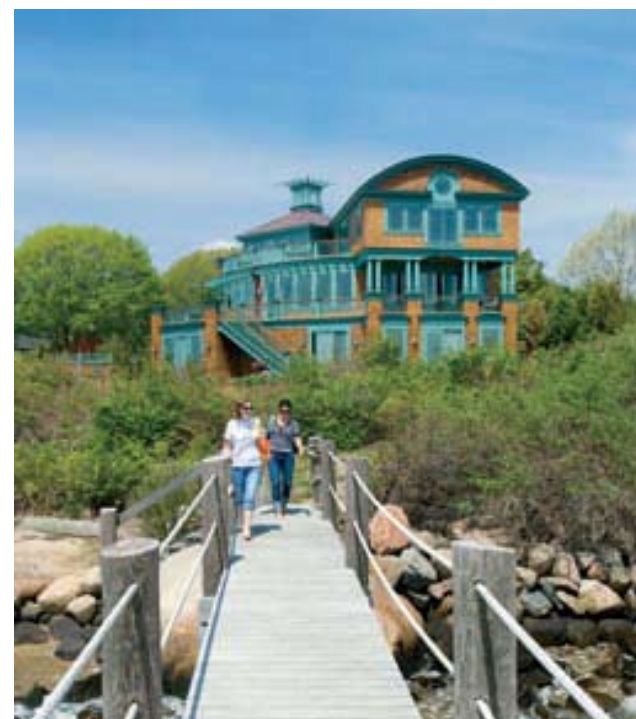
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here throughout the summer — and uses the house year-round on weekends — it doesn't get any better than life along the salt pond. ■

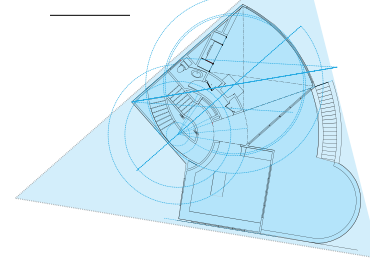
THE SIDE OF THE HOUSE FACING the pond (ABOVE) is dedicated to outdoor living, with decks on every level and a covered porch off the living room. Seen from the dock leading to the pond (RIGHT), the top-floor study is capped with a hipped copper roof and stylized cupola; a copper barrel roof tops the master bedroom.

Architect
Andreozzi Architects,
Barrington, Rhode Island

Builder
Gardner Woodwrights, North
Kingstown, Rhode Island



Early Drawing
Showing
Use of the
Golden Section



Completed
Second
Floor/Main
Living Area

