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An old family
cottage gets a
new lease on life

Weekends by the Sea

| By Saxon Henry |

Photographs by Elizabeth Glasgow



A major renovation under the guidance of Paul Fiore and Amy Finlayson of Foley Fiore Architecture turned a little-used family cottage on Shelter Island into an inviting intergenerational retreat.



The wisdom of a family's elder generation is rarely a surprise. After all, life experience goes hand in hand with abundance of knowledge. When it's a member of a younger generation who brings a family the gift of insight, however, it is a notable event. Through just such vision, this cozy Shelter Island cottage went from rags to charming and became a welcoming family retreat.

"The cottage had been in the family for generations but it had become quite dilapidated," says Paul Fiore, who along

with his colleague Amy Finlayson at Foley Fiore Architecture designed the home's transformation. "It was actually one of the daughters who instigated the project and we loved working with the family because everyone had such a personal take on things."

The daughter, now grown with children of her own, had long heard of a house nestled along the strip of Shelter Island shoreline but had never visited. After the last of four great-aunts died and bequeathed the property to her father, her curiosity got the better of her. "We'd never gone there as a family when I



The original house had a cobblestone chimney, which was copied in the new design. Inside, the chimney bisects a wall of windows framing a stunning water view. Interior designer Jana Happel chose roomy upholstered pieces to maximize comfort in an oft-used space.

was growing up," she explains. "When I went, I fell in love with the surroundings. It's a very peaceful place with so much to do outside and I knew everyone would really enjoy it."

Drawing on that serenity was one Fiore's goals and the

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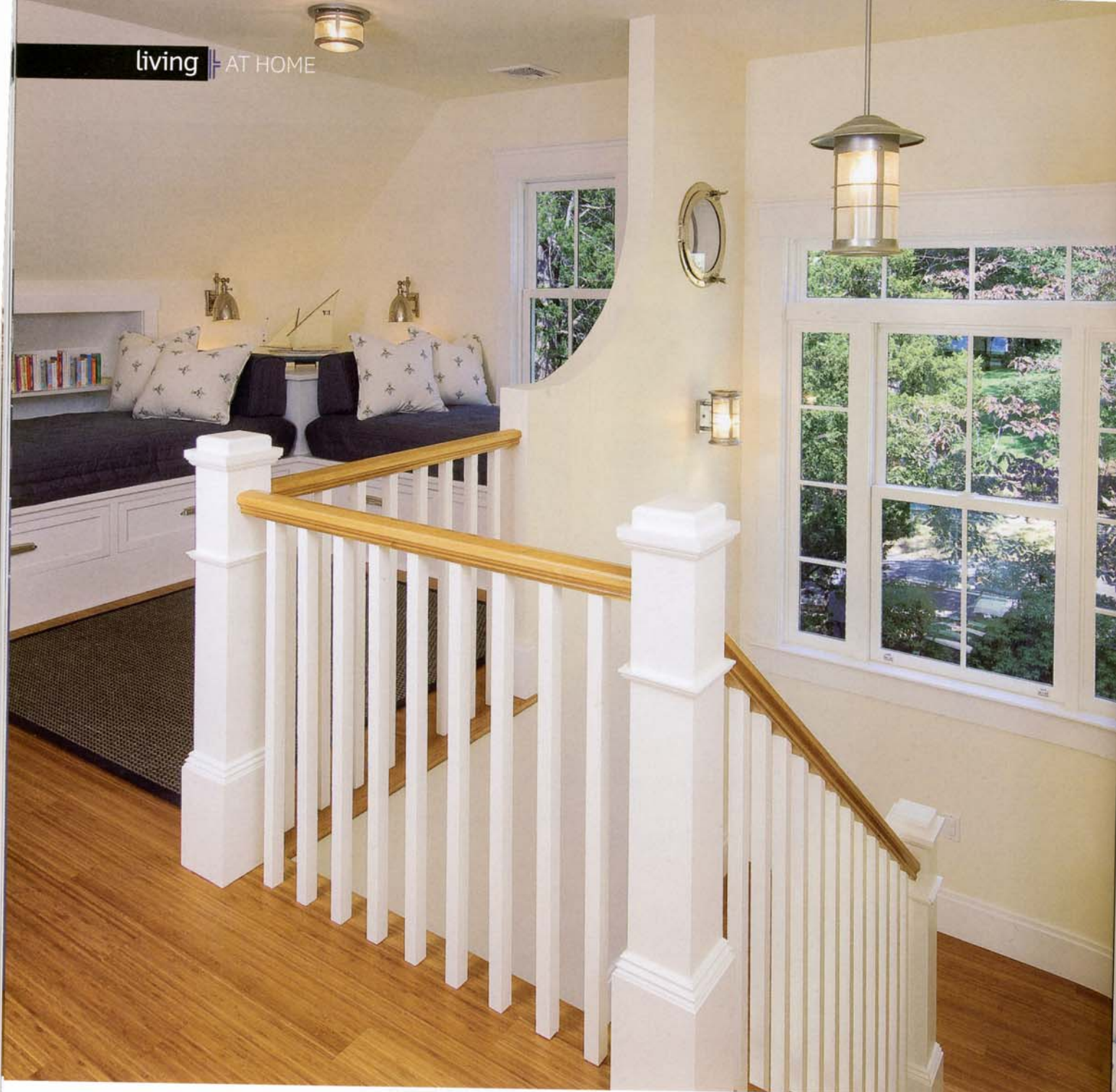
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property's water views became an important focus. "We wanted the house to feel as if the water was right there," he explains. "I've seen so many houses from which you see water but you don't feel you're connected to it and we didn't want this to happen. We actually added a window during construction when we realized that we'd covered an important view once the wall went up."

Not only does the expanse of aqua contribute to the home's calming atmosphere, it was the inspiration for its subtle nautical details. Built-in beds and reading nooks bring to mind

bunks in a finely crafted ship's quarters, light fixtures are pared-down versions of nautical lanterns, and ocular windows at the top of the stairwell are whimsical nods to the seafaring life.

Within the contemporary shingle-style exterior with its peaked dormers, Fiore carved nooks from the attic space on the second floor, creating great spots for afternoon reading and a play/sleepover room for the grandkids, which has clever recessed niches to hold books and games. "We were able to heighten the coziness of these spaces by recessing places to read and relax," he explains.

There is no lack of seating in the home. Wherever possible, window seats and banquettes, reminiscent of nautical bunkbeds, were integrated into the design — often providing additional storage. In the bathroom below, the window seat sits atop four drawers.

Other nods to the home's proximity to the water include porthole windows in the stairwell and light fixtures that reference ships' lanterns. The clean color scheme built on a variety of blues with crisp white accents is another reminder of the seafaring life.



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Citing how challenges often become benefits, Fiore saw the narrow lot as a plus, as it forced the architects to create a linear floor plan that made it easier to open more rooms to the water views. A diminutive screened porch with a cupola roof brings added personality to the home's profile. "The screened porch became an addendum to one side of the house," remarks Fiore. "We tried to keep the structure as low as possible in order to be sensitive to neighboring houses and not block their views."

Several exterior design details were chosen to honor the earlier cottage. "The original house had a cobblestone chimney, which had an exterior niche holding a lantern," explains Fiore. "As a bit of nostalgia toward the old house, we copied that on the new design." Inside, the cobblestone on the fireplace bisects a wall of windows that opens the living room/dining room to surrounding views. The long space is punctuated by the screened porch, which makes it a natural gathering spot. A designer who came to the project once it was underway, Jana

Happel, helped to choose the roomy upholstered pieces and a variety of other furnishings in these spaces.

As is the case on the second floor, the woodwork in these first-floor rooms is painted a crisp white, while walls are pale shades that reflect the surrounding seashore. "Paul and Amy designed a house that is perfect for us," the daughter remarks. "I think this is the case because they asked such good questions when they were interviewing us: Do you like to cook at home? How do you relax? What do you enjoy doing?"

Fiore declares that the art of architectural planning is not unlike detective work or psychology. "We take many steps during the design process to get to know clients and how they live their lives so that a place we plan for them fits on many levels," he explains.


An accountant, the daughter enjoyed the creativity that these steps brought into her life. "The process was so much fun," she explains. "Every time we saw more detailed drawings, the

SEASHOR



The home's interior has a clean, simple feeling. The color palette reflects the varied blues of sea and sky, with ample doses of cool white. Accessories are kept to a minimum, making upkeep easy.

excitement grew because we began to see the house clearly."

"It's a beautiful spot and the house really brings the outside in," adds her father. "We wanted something comfortable for our children and grandchildren, and that's exactly what was achieved." 

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