



Anchors Aweigh

Once home to a whaling captain, a stately Greek Revival in North Haven is made shipshape for generations to come.

WRITTEN BY MAILE PINGEL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADRIAN GAUT



Architecture: Val Florio, Val Florio Architect **Interior Design:** Maureen McDermott, Winter McDermott Design
Home Builder: Alex Forden, Forden & Co. Builders **Landscape Architecture:** Stacy Paetzel, Marshall Paetzel Landscape Architecture

R

estoring a historic home on Sag Harbor Bay would be feather enough in any cap. But for designer Maureen McDermott, the most rewarding moment came not when finding the perfect sconce or even

during install, but upon a recent visit. “There was a playpen in the kitchen, food out on the counters and a dog barking,” she says. “It’s so nice that there’s *life* in this house again.”

Excepting a brief stint as a hotel, the 1845 Greek Revival—built by a whaling captain for his wife and seven children—had always sheltered families. But recent years had seen its rooms empty and its gardens, which once produced prized vegetables, fallow. “It was frozen in time,” recalls architect Val Florio. And it remained so until the arrival of its new owners, a young family who wanted, to the delight of their design team, to preserve as much as possible.

“They loved the quirks and the history,” notes general contractor Alex Forden. “We remodeled with a modern twist,” adds Florio. “We brought it back to the standards of the 1800s—this is such a good example of restoration work that’s true to the period with authentic details—but added things like glass-and-steel doors for an interplay of old and new.” Together, the team carved a proper foyer out of the former dining room, expanded the floor plan with a gracious addition (which houses new formal dining quarters) and reconfigured the sequence of rooms on the second floor for better flow. They also excavated the basement and, for additional guest accommodations, renovated an existing carriage house. Along the way, the home slowly revealed itself. “We found a boy’s vest from the turn of the last century, old pewter items, horseshoes, bottles and postcards from the 1920s,” adds Forden. “If you like history, this house tells a wonderful narrative. You can get lost in the romanticism of it.”

McDermott felt similarly about the building’s timeworn charm, fondly embracing its original pine floors, brickwork, classical trim, fireplaces,

doors and hardware. While utilitarian spaces like the kitchen and bathrooms did need modernizing, the designer kept to a historic look with Shaker-style millwork and natural stone countertops. She also eschewed recessed lighting throughout the residence, opting instead for pendant fixtures and table lamps to create “moments of light that make the house feel special,” she notes.

“They wanted a lived-in feel, but not heavy antiques,” continues McDermott. “We took a wabi-sabi approach with imperfections and aged patinas—but with crisp aspects too, so it doesn’t feel gloomy.” Case in point: Rooms were given fresh, neutral palettes to balance the pedimented front porch and 20-foot columns’ monumental nature with a contemporary spirit. “There’s a strength in quiet colors,” McDermott says. “This felt like an old American house, but with more sophisticated bones,” she adds, sharing that she referenced the subdued schemes of several favorite European designers—Axel Vervoordt, Oliver Gustav, Rose Uniacke—for inspiration.

But while colors lean cool, the designer’s attention to texture infuses a cossetting warmth. Raw materials, like unfinished woods and linen textiles, provide an organic throughline, joined by handmade lighting fixtures and pottery vessels. A fine example is the primary bedroom, where a woven paper pendant by Naomi Paul illuminates the peaceful retreat which overlooks the harbor. Its newly reconfigured bathroom incorporates the existing pine floors and fireplace, with the addition of “marble, brass and plaster elements to create a classic space,” McDermott explains.

Beyond the main house lies an Olympic-size lap pool, a pool house designed by Florio and a lush landscape (“the icing on the cake,” notes the architect) by Stacy Paetzel. Designed with mindfulness of the adjacent wetlands, the grounds were fittingly embellished with classic plantings of clipped hedges and hydrangeas. Now, not only does a vegetable garden flourish anew, but a plaque reading “restored and rebuilt in 2021 with love and respect for the whalers of Sag Harbor” documents the home’s history—and a collective gratitude for what the old captain envisioned. ■



“We wanted to create focal points to welcome guests,” says designer Maureen McDermott of the home’s redefined foyer. “The vent is original and the clients didn’t want to block it with a piece of furniture.” Above, offering a contemporary counterpoint, alabaster sconces by Allied Maker flank a 1940s Italian mirror from Galerie Half.



Above: The dayroom, as the owners call it, is a place “to relax and read,” says McDermott. Surrounding the custom coffee table are armchairs from Studio Oliver Gustav, a Dmitry & Co sofa upholstered in a Holland & Sherry performance cotton and woven chairs from Danish Design Store. The pendant light is from deVol and the rug is by Armadillo.

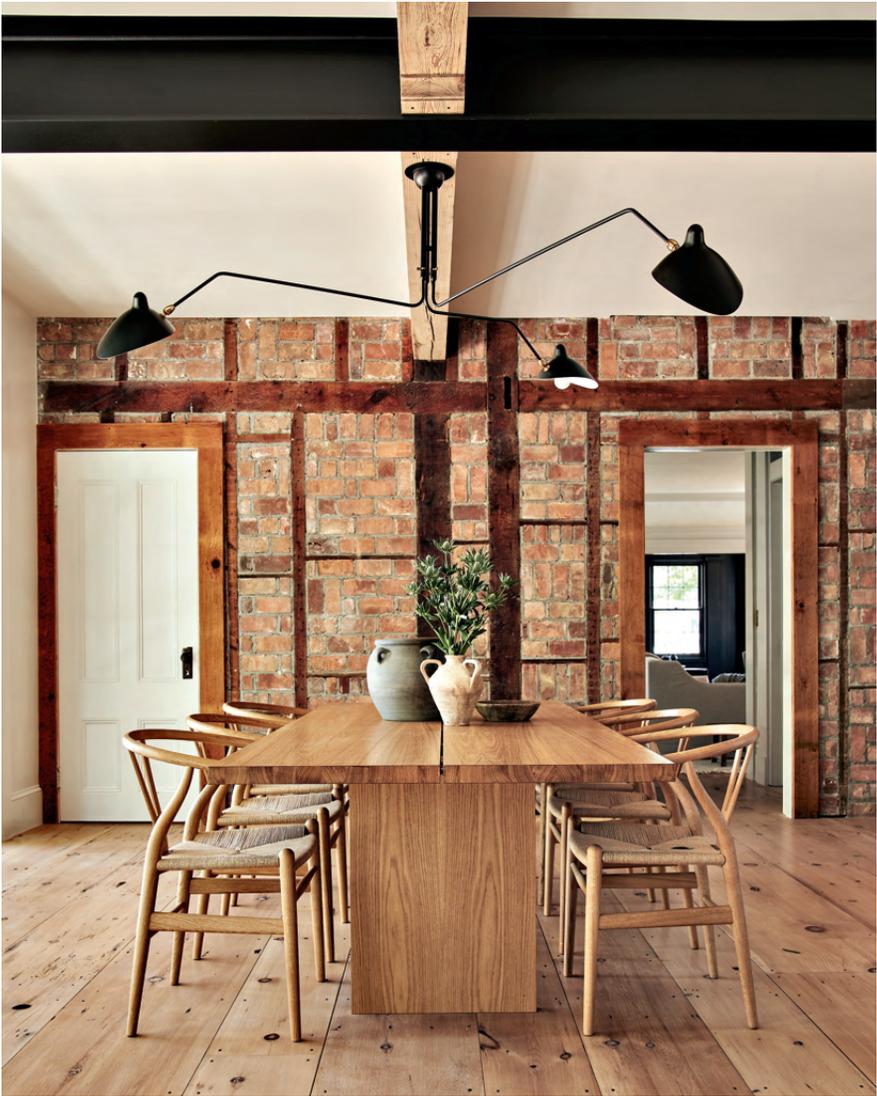
Opposite: A built-in shelving unit creates a pretty hub to display vintage ceramics. The wooden console that backs the sofa was found on 1stdibs. Benjamin Moore’s Sea Salt defines the restored trimwork against the home’s plaster walls.





Above: The kitchen's custom millwork by Cluffo Cabinetry was painted Farrow & Ball's Purbeck Stone and equipped with Armac Martin hardware. A glazed entrance from Manhattan Steel Door Company separates the pantry. For the interior space, McDermott chose Benjamin Moore's City Shadow and sconces from The Urban Electric Company.

Opposite: The kitchen offers an informal dining area, where the designer paired a Serge Mouille chandelier via Design Within Reach with the clients' own table and chairs. The brick wall, pine floors and ceiling beams are all original to the home. "These were important features to keep," McDermott explains.





Above: "The dining room is an addition but feels like it's been part of the house from the beginning," says McDermott. Chandeliers from Allied Maker illuminate a custom walnut table topped with candlesticks from Roman and Williams Guild and cane chairs from Monc XIII. Framing harbor views are drapes of Fox Linton twill.

Opposite: The intimate living room off the foyer is another cozy space in which to gather, with Paolo Buffa wing chairs surrounding a coffee table from Black Creek Mercantile & Trading Co. A Jamb scone hangs above the mantle.

“We took a wabi-sabi approach with imperfections and aged patinas—but with crisp aspects too, so it doesn’t feel gloomy.”

—MAUREEN MCDERMOTT



Above: “The goal was to keep this room quiet,” says McDermott of the primary bedroom, which is anchored by a custom headboard of Jim Thompson fabric. The caned bench and desk chair, which joins a Dmitry & Co desk, are vintage. The bedside lamp is Cassandra Thatcher Studio through Spartan Shop and the rug is from Tibetan.

Opposite: A former sitting room is now the primary bathroom, anchored by a Waterworks tub and fittings. The plaster sconce in the niche is by Porta Romana. For the Roman shades, McDermott chose a white Rogers & Goffigon linen.

