

Pleasant Bay



By Brenna Collins
Photography by Mike Crane

BLUES

This open-concept Orleans home provides a private summer retreat, complete with the perfect calming, coastal palette.

In F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby," the color blue is thought to represent hope and whimsy. With every reference of the color, the story unfolds amidst idyllic and aspirational scenes. Whether it be the glasses of Dr. Eckleburg or Gatsby's blue garden beneath the stars, blue conjures hope. In the Madsens' family home, the color blue calmly flows throughout each space, acknowledging the waterfront exterior as it informs every corner of the interior. Like in the novel, the blue in this Orleans home emits peace and serenity. "I just think this house is a happy house," homeowner Paula Madsen says.

In 2018, homeowners Paula and Drew Madsen began searching for a New England summer home to escape the Florida heat. The couple looked at multiple properties to find the one with the bones and location that would fulfill their wish list. Finally, they found their home along a quiet shoreline in Orleans. A water view was at the top of their list, and while the Atlantic Ocean is majestic in its own right, Pleasant Bay won their hearts. "We thought, 'Pleasant Bay is really interesting because it's a huge body of water, you can see the National Seashore, but it's a bit calmer with so much dimension,'" Paula shares.

"It became apparent that this property was once in a lifetime. They don't come around like this often. We looked at a million houses, and I remember catching my husband's eye when we walked into the house and just nodding at him," Paula recalls. Aside from the water views, the home offered the ability to entertain and had an array of comfortable spaces for people to congregate.

For the new homeowners, a significant renovation and addition was needed. Leslie Schneeberger, AIA, Associate Principal of SV Design, became the Madsens' trusted architect for the project renovation. When the plans were complete, SV Design introduced the father-and-son team of Ted and Matt Spencer of Spencer & Company to the homeowners in 2019. The Chatham-based builder's expertise in custom millwork and details made them the perfect partner for the job.

The plans focused on enhancing the property into the high-end haven it has become. "I feel like we got big impact out of small changes. It was smart in the planning. Partially because the Madsens were so involved in the design process, so there was a lot of working together and playing out scenarios. They were the right changes, because they had a significant effect," Schneeberger says.

From the start, a key objective was to better utilize the expansive view by enhancing the windows. "All of the windows and doors on the east elevation were replaced with wider and taller units to take advantage of the views and brighten up the space," Matt Spencer says. The main



floor now boasts beautiful sliding glass doors and large windows to invite in the view. Further, it was imperative to maximize the open floor plan, which the team thoughtfully adjusted. “It can be hard to find an existing open floor plan when looking at real estate. That was what was so great about this house. There were kitchen cabinets and islands arranged in a way that blocked the flow, but there weren’t walls. We enlarged the opening between the living and dining room, but structurally, we made very few changes,” Schneeberger recounts.

Today, approaching the newly finished home feels like reaching the very edge of the “Olde Cape” to unveil an untouched haven. Nestled behind a stone walkway, a cozy farmer’s porch welcomes guests and sets the tone for the charming interior. “The house changed in that when you approached the home, we added a lot of character at the entry approach. One of our first things is we wanted there to be a porch, an overhang or some kind of extra layer before you get into a house. We added the porch and rearranged the garage doors to the side so that front courtyard, instead of being an expanse of driveway leading into the garage, could be lawn and

greenery. Then, we added the porch and that allowed us to add the mudroom and powder room spaces. We focused our attention, as far as additions to the house, right there,” Schneeberger says.

Stepping through the front door, there are multiple layers to admire in the view, from the back patio, to the lush greenery, Pleasant Bay, and the coast of the National Seashore just beyond. Paired with the airy, coastal design of the interior, the home is a serene environment that washes visitors over with a sense of ease.

On the interior, the Madsens wanted the style to embody a charming, cozy Cape retreat. “For me, I wanted a place that was comfortable and charming that felt like it belonged on the Cape, which to me meant lighter colors, big windows, and wood floors. We leaned a lot on SV for that,” Drew says. SV Design was both the architect and interior designer for the project. A thorough interior design process began from a strong palette to designing space by space to ensure everything worked together.

On the main floor, each area seamlessly flows into another. While nestled on the living room couch, the entire floor is in view across to the screened porch, a perfect spot to curl up with a cup of coffee overlooking the water. In the dining room, the long wood table is flanked by two walls of full windows that brighten and open the space. In the warmer months, the sliding doors can be completely opened for an indoor/outdoor dining experience with the outdoor couch and fire table just beyond.

In the kitchen, in keeping with the home’s prevailing aura, coastal style blends with a clean, modern feel. Atop the oversized island and the base cabinets, a light blue marble is the star of the show. The wet bar, with its glass cabinetry and wine cooler, adds a layer of luxury and is a perfect area for crafting a coffee or cocktail. By the powder room, the open pantry is complete with the puppy’s own personal space, a built-in crate fitted with his own bed.





Thanks to the collaboration between SV Design and Spencer & Co, custom finishes went a long way. “Millwork is such a big part of what we do, so it was great to work with a team that really wanted to develop some unique moldings,” Matt Spencer shares. “We came up with a custom crown molding that helped make the modest ceiling height feel a little taller and added a touch of elegance without overpowering the more modern and coastal feel.” Schneeberger adds, “We designed some interesting and unique details, and that’s where the Spencers shine. Their cabinetry, and the fact that they are doing all of their finish inside and out themselves, you can see it’s what they love.”

To the right, a large lounge area, called the flop room, is a laid-back space to unwind that adjoins with the screened porch. The textured area rug, paired with a large ottoman, sectional, and wooden accent furniture make this a rich, layered design. The white vaulted ceilings amplify this space, while the blue furnishings tie in the coastal palette used throughout the house.

Upstairs, the master was reconfigured to create a vestibule before entering the room, leading to the closet or the master bath on either side. The wall of built-ins was added surrounding the bed, where a mix of calming blues and neutrals make this the ultimate seaside escape. The spa-like master bath is a work of art, with a free-standing tub and a spacious double sink. The tilework is a touch within the project that stands out



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to Matt Spencer. “There was some pretty special tilework in some of those bathrooms; great selections, subtle details, and the color palette really worked, nothing was forced,” he comments.

Also on the second floor sits a waterfront office and a guest room with an en suite bath, where a built-in bed overlooking the view is one of the coziest nooks of the home. Tucked above the garage, a third bedroom suite claims a unique, elevated vantage point of Pleasant Bay. Here, the built-in bookshelves and seating area add yet another space to relax.

On the exterior, the patio and deck areas completely transformed the underutilized backyard, connecting the pool and outdoor living space from the interior. “For a property with such stunning views, there was no emphasis on outdoor living in the original home,” Matt Spencer explains. “The pool was there, but it didn’t relate to the house and the home lacked any outdoor entertaining areas. We added a couple of decks, one with a fire feature, and a patio with bistro lighting that spanned from the house to the pool area. SV Design really tied everything together inside and out. It’s a great example of how impactful the little changes can be. They don’t have to be dramatic to be successful.”

This June, the Madsens and their one-year-old Labrador retriever settled in for their first summer in their Orleans oasis. “There are so many things I love about the house. It’s one of those things where you walk downstairs and you’re like, how lucky am I? This is just so beautiful. Once you get here, it’s like time has no relevance. It’s all peaceful and lovely,” Paula shares. For the Madsens, their home is now the charming, New England coastal escape they envisioned. Like in “The Great Gatsby,” the blue throughout this home and in its captivating Pleasant Bay view is illustrative of its joyful, peaceful essence.

Brenna Collins is the story editor for Cape Cod Life Publications.

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