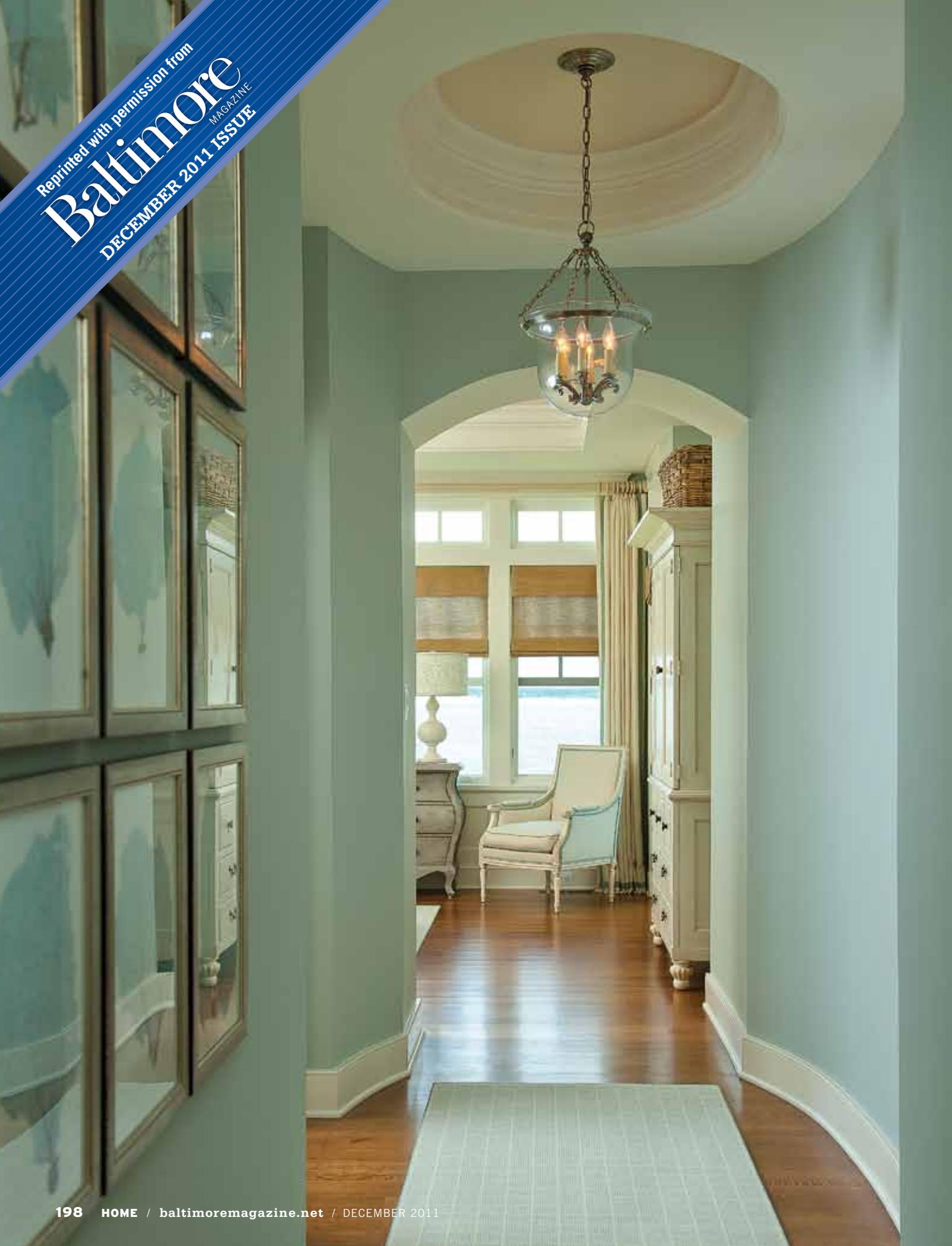


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Baltimore
MAGAZINE
DECEMBER 2011 ISSUE





NANTUCKET

on the Choptank

New England seaside architecture meets comfort and elegance in this home away from home.

By Kelly Alm. Photography by Vince Lupo.





Curt Singer strolls along the edge of his backyard, seal-brown Lab in tow, as a breeze carries the faint scent of marine life. Nearby, a neighbor pulls crab pots onto the dock, the sound of seagulls in the distance and lapping water setting the afternoon's leisurely pace. ❁ "We had always wanted to live by the water," Curt says of himself, founder of a hospitality management company, and his wife, Paula, who works for Laureate Education. The couple resides in Howard County, but spends weekends and holidays at their waterfront home in Cambridge.

The shingle-style home on the Choptank River, *top*, is reminiscent of one you might see in a New England seaside town. In the kitchen, *left*, an eat-in island provides an ideal place to grab a quick breakfast or snack between dips in the pool. Throughout the interior, *above*, soft whites, sandy beiges, and sea-glass tones create a soothing coastal palette.

The shingle-style home, reminiscent of one you might see in a historic Cape Cod seaside town, sits on eight acres cradled between a pond and the Choptank River, a major tributary of the Chesapeake Bay. "The property was key," Paula says, noting that she and Curt spent years looking for the ideal waterfront view.

Drawing inspiration from the New England homes of their childhoods, as well as a beloved vacation spot—the Wauwinet, a shingle-style inn built in 1860 on Nantucket Bay—the Singers envisioned a tranquil refuge where they could unwind from hectic



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schedules, and where family could come to relax. The house offers the allure of times past but with all the appointments for today's lifestyle, and is built with the craftsmanship it takes to make a home last for generations.

Though impressive inside and out, what makes the home unique is how the Singers' vision for the house—as a space to reconnect and relax with family and friends while surrounded by nature—drove the architecture and interior design.

Architects Christopher Frank and Robert Hammond of Annapolis-based Hammond Wilson Architects helped bring that vision to life. "They pretty much gave us free rein to create a design plan, and then see if we could sell it to them," says Frank. "And we did."

Unlike many such projects, the Singers knew exactly what they wanted and the architects were in total sync: The first floor of the plan was almost identical to one Paula had drawn, which the architects hadn't seen,

and the second floor was very similar. After a year refining details of the plan, Gary Smith Builders of Queenstown broke ground in the fall of 2008, tearing down the original 1950s one-story, ranch-style home that was typical to the surrounding neighborhood. The 6,500-square-foot house was completed in January of 2010.

The buildable footprint was only about three acres, according to Frank, because much of the land is too close to the water to build on. "Paula was enamored with the view up the river, north of the bridge, versus the expanse of the river," he says. So they slightly shifted the siting of the house from the original floor plan to capture the ideal vista.

A view of the water distinguishes almost every main room in the house, but there's none quite so striking as when one comes through the front door. Standing in the foyer, one can see directly through the great room, where floor-to-ceiling windows span the back of the house, perfectly framing the river below.

The house emphasizes horizontal continuity in exterior details and in the interior flow of spaces. Painted cedar shingles wrap the home's rambling form, which is anchored by a stone masonry foundation, while crisp white paint accentuates the gambrel roofline. Transoms on the waterfront side brighten up the view, allowing more light in and creating a more transparent wall. Inside, bold classical arches and columns replace doorways, opening the interior space and allowing light to penetrate, while creating a sense of flow through the house.

Despite the home's impressive size, the Singers wanted it to feel cozy, and they achieved that. Coffered ceilings and detailed moldings, such as the three-tray ceiling in the great room and kitchen, keep the rooms defined and intimate.

Interior designer Kristin Peake collaborated with the Singers to expand on these architectural details, tying the aesthetics together. Soft whites, sandy beiges, and sea-glass tones create a soothing coastal palette, adding to the home's light, airy atmosphere. The stone fireplace, oak floors, bronze wall lanterns, and natural wood décor convey a sense of warmth and coziness. Ocean-inspired artwork and textiles—a handmade oyster-shell mirror in the foyer, indigo sea horse and octopus prints in the stairwell, and

a hand-embroidered sand dollar pillow in the great room, among others—add touches of seaside whimsy throughout the house.

Every space has been designed with practicality in mind. From the side entrance, the Singers' nieces can clamber into the mud room, throw their towels into the adjoining laundry room, and shower in the pool bathroom. The back hall leads to the kitchen, where an eat-in island provides an ideal place to grab a quick breakfast or snack between dips in the pool. Appliances, such as the built-in coffee maker, wine refrigerator, and microwave, are situated for easy access while minimizing traffic in the cooking area. Instead of a dining-room table, the Singers opted for a hand-made Tuscan-style dining table and custom banquette by Gary Smith Builders. This eating nook is nestled at the end of the kitchen, where the windows overlook the river.

A custom cabinet with columns divides the kitchen and great room, functioning as kitchen storage space on one side and as a bookshelf with two reading chairs on the other (or as a serving space when they have company). "We like to sit here and watch sunsets or storms come in, or in the morning, sit and drink coffee on the terrace," Curt says, referring to the back terrace, which has access to both the great room and master bedroom.

"That's the neat thing about this house," he says. "Sometimes we have 15 to 20 people here, but there's enough room for everyone to find a favorite spot."

Visitors staying in one of three second-floor guest rooms can relax in "the loft," a spacious barreled-ceiling family room that

leads to a deck overlooking the river, or in the sitting room, which faces the pond, home to fish, bullfrogs, and muskrat. Curt points out a guest room window seat, one of many tucked throughout the house, where his youngest niece likes to curl up.

It's in the outdoor spaces where one can really see the influences of the Wauwinet inn. There's an old-fashioned back porch with a screen door that has that special "bang" that reminds them of their childhood. "More often than not, we find ourselves sitting in the breezeway," Curt says of the passage between the house and garage, which overlooks the pool and river. "It's shady and there's the best breeze through here 90 percent of the time."

Sometimes, the couple simply brings folding chairs down to the dock with a bottle of wine and watches the sun set.

"We enjoy watching that view change with different seasons, different weather, and different wildlife," Paula says. Curt notes the three crab boats out on the water each morning, the heron family that frequents the docks, and the ducks that buried their eggs beneath the pergola by the pool. "If you're by the water, you build a house and then spend all your time outside," he says.

Shortly after the Singers moved in, their neighbor welcomed them with half a dozen crabs, which they cooked on the spot and ate with wine.

"At the time, this Connecticut Yankee was not into crabs," says Curt. But people grow: Now he checks crab pots himself, his nieces often joining him. "I don't know which they like more, grabbing the crabs out of the pots or eating them." ❀

