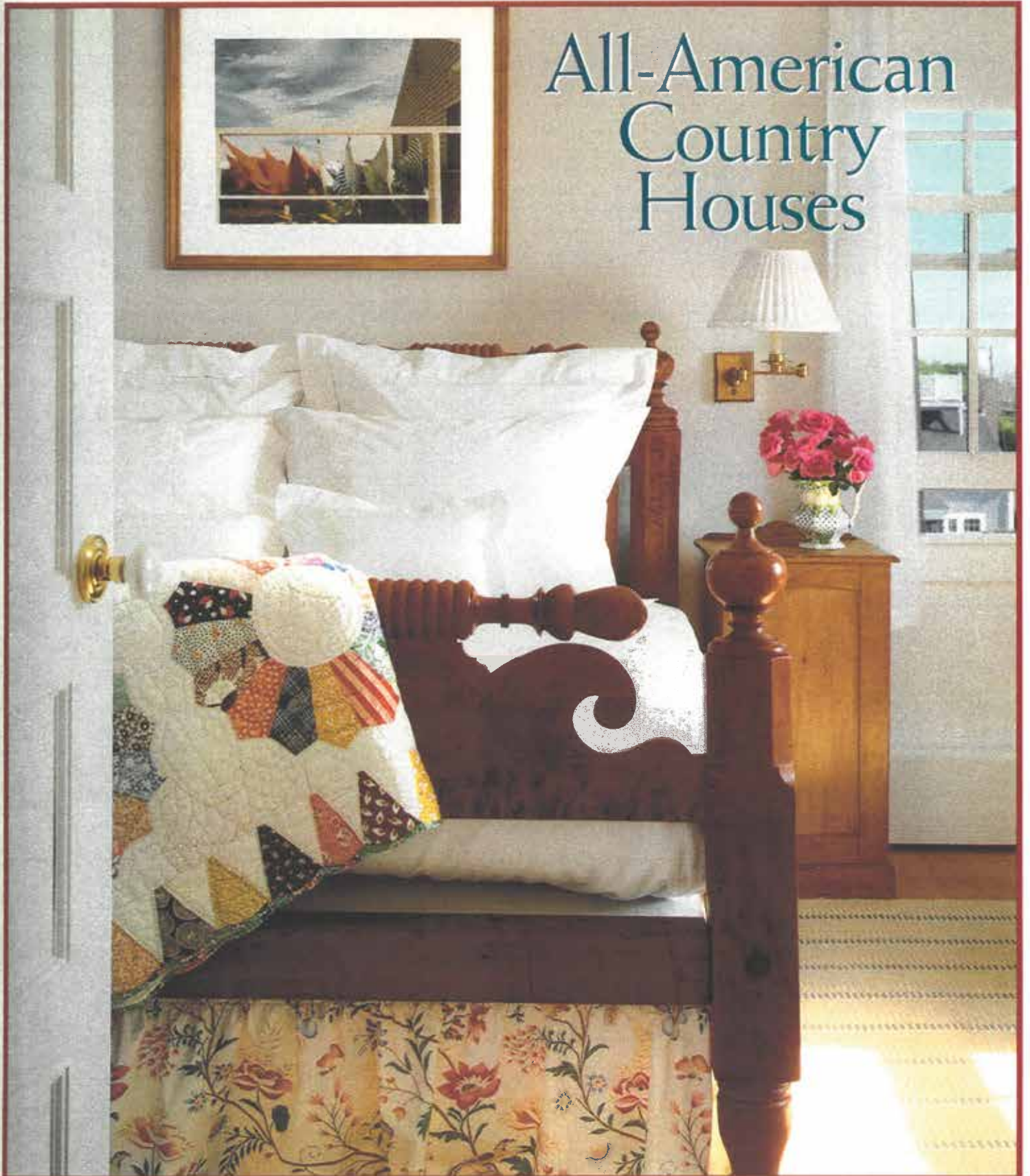


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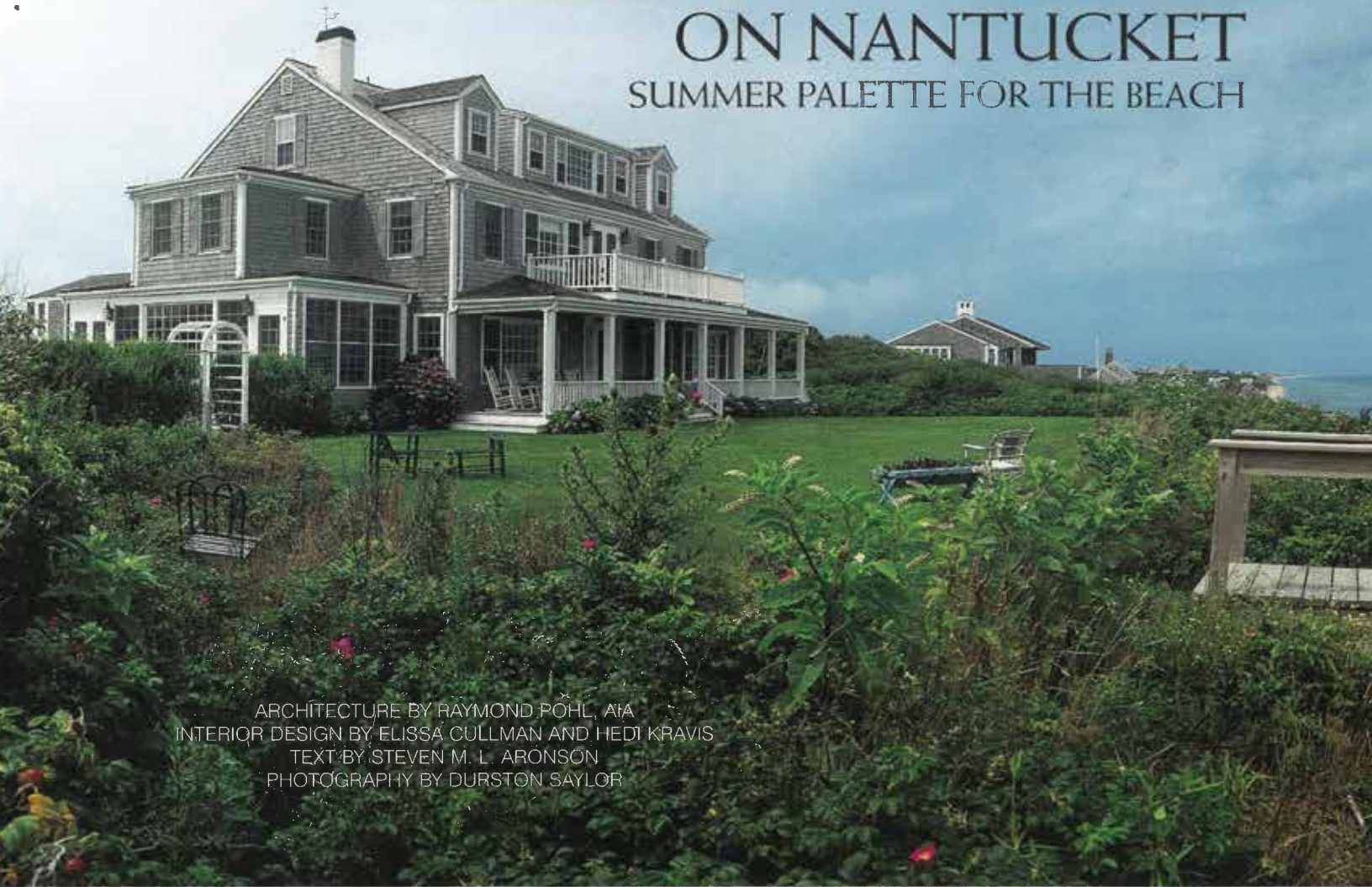
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All-American Country Houses



BREATH OF FRESH AIR ON NANTUCKET

SUMMER PALETTE FOR THE BEACH



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Theirs was a script that launched a thousand swags and pelmets. “About ten years ago,” says Elissa Cullman, “my friend Hedi Kravis and I wrote a screenplay about a skyrocketing eighties couple who wreck their marriage scrambling to get everything the perfect high-living husband and wife should have. It was called *All of the Trappings*. We showed it to this big film producer friend of ours, who said, ‘The typing is beautiful and I love the trappings, but . . .’ We both sighed, ‘Then what *should* we do? We’re creative, so what should we create?’ ”

It was a problem he was prepared to solve. “Why don’t you do what you describe the people in your script doing? Decorate. That’s your real forte.

ABOVE: “Our primary objective was to weed through the many layers of remodeling and ‘modernization’ that occur during the life of an old house, arrive at an idea of its original look and feel, and revive that quality,” says Elissa Cullman (inset, right, with her partner, Hedi Kravis). The designers renovated a traditional gabled house overlooking Nantucket Sound for a film producer–entertainment executive and his family. French doors and windows from Marvin.

I’ve seen what you’ve done with your own houses.” It wasn’t just a kindly suggestion—he actually gave them his Park Avenue apartment to decorate. Presto magico, Ellie and Hedi were corporately reborn as Cullman & Kravis, and in no time the producer’s apartment went from California style to eighteenth-century English. When he remarried two years later, they remodeled his place in Westchester County into a classic English

country house. And when he was made the chief executive of an international entertainment conglomerate, they took the slick office suite he’d inherited and filled it with George III and William IV. So the film producer had not only given them the occupation they unknowingly needed, he was keeping them fully occupied, too.

Cullman & Kravis’s client list began to swell. It didn’t hurt at all that Ellie and Hedi were both accomplished



RIGHT: "The entrance hall introduces the nautical theme, starting with the crib quilt and its sailboat motif," says Cullman, who acted as primary designer with assistance from Penny Ashford. An English garden chair stands beside a mid-19th-century apothecary chest.

charmings as well as disciplined, unflinching professionals fully conversant with every trapping in the world. Ellie Cullman's approach was altogether curatorial: A trustee of Barnard College, her alma mater, and a collector of American folk art, she had coauthored books on the subject and cocurated an exhibition of Andy Warhol's folk art at the Museum of American Folk Art. Design commissions poured in from a surfeit of





"As the salient feature of the house is the commanding view of the sea, we decided that color and texture should be kept to a minimum; hence the palette is predominantly white," Cullman notes. Michael J. Whitehand's 1993 *White Heather II* hangs above the fireplace. Cotton-and-linen print on sofa, club chair and chair pillow from Brunshwig & Fils; pillow cord and fabric on bench and medium sofa pillows from Clarence House; small sofa pillow fabric from Hinson; fabric on caned chair from Henry Calvin. Elizabeth Eakins handwoven rug.

CEOs (Goldman Sachs, Salomon Brothers, Philip Morris, Seagrams UK and the Blackstone Group, among others), not to mention Count Giovanni Volpi and Rupert Murdoch.

In 1992 the producer reentered the decorating picture—he bought another house. This time the challenge lay in the location, which was as inconvenient as it was incomparable: a romantic, historic and pacific Atlantic outpost by the name of Nantucket. (Inhabitants of this four-by-fourteen-mile island thirty miles off the coast of Cape Cod have even been known to refer to the mainland as America.) “When my wife and I got married,” he explains, “we wanted, like most new couples, to make a fresh start; we thought it would be nice to discover something together. We’re not heavy on entertainment,” adds the entertainment executive. “We wanted to

live a very quiet life.” Ellie Cullman adds, “Nantucket means downtime for the producer. He doesn’t keep any Hollywood stuff there—his Oscar’s in his study in Westchester. Here’s how he spends his days: He and his wife play the board games you see throughout the house, they rock on their rockers, they look out to sea.

These are two people who know how to stay home.”

The house they stay home in has sixteen rooms, is weathered gray with white trim and was built in the 1930s. It is serious if not quite stately, and beautifully scaled and gabled in the Nantucket vernacular. It sits on several acres of lawn on the far brow of a

BELOW: “The sunroom is where the family plays games and reads—the emphasis is on quiet pursuits,” she says. An antique French table is used as a desk; the Bar Harbor wicker settee, chair and rocker are circa 1920. Print on settee and chairs from Clarence House; white linen on desk chair and table from Ralph Lauren; Brunschwig & Fils checked underskirt; Houllès cord. Patterson, Flynn, Martin & Manges carpet.

“One of the key design concepts in the house is the harmonious juxtaposition of dissimilar objects,” Cullman says. OPPOSITE ABOVE: *Portrait of a Ship’s Captain*, circa 1830, by John Wesley Jarvis presides over the dining room. An antique French fruitwood buffet accompanies the 19th-century Breton cherry table. OPPOSITE BELOW: A 1936 maritime painting by John Steven Davis and a circa 1880 painted nautical tray hang in the family room. Silk burlap used for table skirt and pillow from Christopher Norman; Houllès cord; toile for pillows from Manuel Canovas; Elizabeth Eakins rug.







bluff. Some sixty-five feet below, the producer's boat, christened after one of the hit movies he's made, is moored to an outlying dock.

This is an island famous for its fickle weather, but if you are fortunate and the sun has struck Nantucket Sound while you're standing on the deck of the house, you can see the

ocean with its dazzle of pleasure craft and, at regular intervals, the steadfast ferry, freighted with natives and off-islanders. Then to your left are rolling, storybook moors that remind people of Scotland's and that silver in the sun.

The house had been insensitively renovated in the sixties and seven-

ties. A young Rhode Island School of Design-trained Nantucket architect, Raymond Pohl, then of Design Associates and now of the more artistically tagged Botticelli & Pohl, was hired to strip away the layers of piecemeal "modernization" and restore the structure's original look and feel. "We

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ABOVE: The master bath “serves as an extension to the master bedroom,” Cullman notes. “The view from the dressing table is one of the finest in the house.” BELOW: An English table is paired with an antique American wicker chair in the son’s bedroom. Clarence House fabric on chair; the circa 1930 quilt is from Laura Fisher.



“The decoration is meant to be uniquely Nantucket, which on the beach is informal and understated,” Cullman says. “Color is used in its most distilled shades—sand, seafoam, blush and the like.” ABOVE: The sitting area of the master bedroom is highlighted by a faux-bamboo rocker attributed to R. J. Horne and a circa 1930 morning-glory quilt on the sofa. Pillow and sofa toile from Manuel Canovas; Ralph Lauren linen for table overskirt; Elizabeth Eakins rug.



"A concerted effort was made to acquire real pieces of Nantucket handcraft," says Cullman. "The balance of furnishings is light-hearted." OPPOSITE AND COVER: *Laundry, Provincetown, 1977*, by Joel Meyerowitz hangs in the daughter's bedroom. The "Dresden Plate" quilt is circa 1930. Floral cotton bed skirt from Brunswick & Fils.



INSET: Contemporary Tennessee rockers offer a restful spot on the veranda for "enjoying sunsets and watching the boats come in and out of the harbor," says Cullman. THIS PAGE: Except on the beach side, the house and grounds are surrounded by privet hedges, which also delineate the lawns and gardens. Weatherend pool furniture.

