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Restoring a
Chatham Antique

Time Marches



A PRESERVED CHATHAM GUEST COTTAGE
KEEPS MAKING HISTORY.

by jennifer sperry | photography by randall perry



On



BEACH EXCURSIONS, EASTER EGG HUNTS, CHILDREN'S first steps, time spent with grandparents—moments have left impressions, and impressions have evolved into stories. The cottage's location and history are charming, but recollections of togetherness are foremost in its owners' minds: "The kids loved growing up here in the summer," they agree. "We have so much personal history invested in this house."

Purchased in 1994 by its current residents, the Chatham retreat boasts memories of its own. Known as the 1767–68 Thatcher Ryder House, it is one of the town's earliest properties and was once used as a drop-off/pick-up point for mail in North Chatham. Oriented to face a dirt road that is no longer, it appears sideways to anyone unaware of its extensive history.

The family has never missed a summer in their landmark retreat—"We take our shoes off in June and don't put them back on until September," says the owner. A few years ago, they made a decision to update the property's offerings, and Nantucket-based Botticelli & Pohl Architects designed a new

The 1767-68 Thatcher Ryder House is one of Chatham's earliest properties and once a mail outpost in North Chatham. Botticelli & Pohl Architects along with Von Thaden Builders restored the antique house close to its original footprint. Carole Freehauf of Carole Freehauf Interiors in Plymouth chose to play off the New England vernacular in a fresh, relaxed way.



main house to satisfy their growing needs. The improvement called into question the cottage's future.

Whether or not to preserve it was a non-issue: The owners always knew they would honor and protect such a vital piece of Chatham's past. Architects Lisa Botticelli and Raymond Pohl recommended reclaiming its character by eliminating the rambling additions not in keeping with the structure's architectural roots. At the same time, attaining an accommodating guest cottage involved updating amenities without affecting character.

"About 2,500 square feet of addition area were removed," explains William von Thaden of von Thaden Builders Inc. in Orleans. While the cottage decreased in size, it gained a variety of perks, including a deck off the dining room and updated plumbing, electrical, and HVAC throughout. "It rested on granite blocks with locust support beams. We picked it up, poured a full foundation, and installed a maintenance room in the new basement to house the updated systems," adds the builder.

Botticelli & Pohl added modern amenities such as this efficient galley kitchen just off the dining room. Just beyond the dining room's French doors, a brick patio offers a sunny breakfast spot.



After the demolition, the affected section was converted to an outer wall and new windows were installed. The entire exterior was re-clad with cedar shingles for a cohesive look. Original to the house, the shutters were refurbished by von Thaden Builders and mounted accurately so that, when not held by shutter dogs, they swing closed over their companion windows.

Built nearly 250 years ago, the Thatcher-Ryder House

is a mixture of both original features and changes made over the years by successive owners. Its historic personality shines in the formal entryway, where the solid-wood front door still possesses a brass rim lock. The authentic staircase even contains a mortgage button embedded in the railing.

Maximizing the remaining square footage involved clever use of space. On the first floor, an inner nook trans-



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formed into a galley kitchen, complete with a two-burner stove, dishwasher, and refrigerator. A bedroom expanded on the second floor, and a full bath and closets were added. Overall, the cottage's original floors, wainscoting, and trim work were preserved, yet reconditioned, and in some cases replicated where replacements were needed.

To fulfill its guesthouse role, the cottage needed to "sleep whole families comfortably," points out interior designer Carole Freehauf of Carole Freehauf Interiors in Plymouth, Massachusetts. "The idea was that it would be used by either extended family members or the kids on break from college." She directed the main home's interior, shifting her concentration to the cottage when the opportunity to place it on a historic home tour arose.

"With the upcoming tour, I had a relatively short period of time to modify what was already there," she explains. "My intention was to keep the interior consistent with the New England vernacular but in a fresher way.

"Compared to the main house, the cottage has a completely different personality," she continues. "It's more casual and fun." Freehauf achieved the desired informality via casual cottons and linens, cotton velvet, quilts, wicker, and ticking stripes. Rugs were kept to a minimum, except

for small area rugs that can be shaken outside. The absence of formal floor coverings enhances the interior's laid-back feel and highlights the hardwood floors.

Freehauf honored the Thatcher Ryder House's historic roots whenever possible. While upholstering with more casual, kid-friendly fabrics, she selected furniture pieces whose structure communicates tradition. "I was inspired by early American artifacts," she adds, alluding to round mirror sconces in the living room, which are new but reminiscent of the 18th century. "They add sparkle and are an interesting sculptural element."

Interior lighting fixtures act as yet another layer of historic referencing. Freehauf chose a reproduction beehive lantern—"a subtle nautical reference," she says—for the formal entryway and a chandelier with metal shades for the dining room, both intentional nods to early America.

Playful colors dance the line between whimsical and time-honored as well. "Some rooms already had established colors. I played with what existed, lending additional sophistication. The end goal was to have a distinct color scheme for every room," explains the designer.

In the living room, Freehauf softened an existing yellow to a more neutral khaki. "It picks up on instead of competing with the yellow in the entryway," she says, adding that the overall scheme relies on whites and blues, with a touch of red for edginess. The room derives its spaciousness from the removal of a wall by past owners, an alteration that resulted in a long, rectangular layout with two mirror-image fireplaces. Freehauf took advantage of this unique double focal point by arranging two seating areas, one with an armoire-hidden television and another designed for games



The original entryway to the antique house has its original rim lock and the staircase newel post contains a mortgage button.

Freehauf finished the bath in a bright blue paint dressed with sea-inspired stencils. Opposite: The master bedroom mimics the living room below and is painted a cheery "Tiffany Blue."





and conversation. “I wanted the two sections to function separately as well as together,” she explains.

On the second story, the master bedroom’s layout mimics the expansive living room below. Oriented towards one fireplace is a king bed, and gathered around the second fireplace is a relaxed sitting area. A desk bridges the two spaces. Freehauf grounded the room’s intense, ethereal “Tiffany blue” color with black and white furnishings and accessories.

The cottage’s kid-friendly traits are concentrated in the popular bunkroom, where a troupe of young visitors can comfortably sleep. Its accompanying bathroom is awash

in faux-painted creatures swimming through a sea of blue walls. Faux-painted details continue in the cottage’s third bedroom, whose floor is punctuated by a compass rose.

Updated yet reserved, comfortable yet traditional, the finished cottage pleases guests of any age. Now that its renovations are complete and rooms filled with family, more engagements and baby steps are inevitably on the way. **h**

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE MARKETPLACE PAGE 113.