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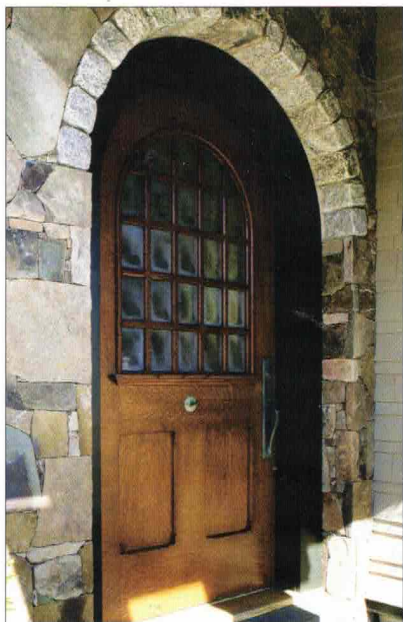
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An English-Style Cottage in Maine

BY PHYLLIS EDGERLY RING
PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREG WEST

When you first spot this home on a diminutive seaside lane, you almost expect to see thatch on its roof. Surrounded by English-style country gardens, it feels like the sort of cottage you'd find tucked behind stone walls or hedgerows in Devon or Cornwall in England

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When Lin and Bob Prefontaine began construction of their Cape Neddick, Maine, house, their plans had to accommodate local ordinances that required retaining 10 percent of a home previously located on this property, as well as that home's footprint.

"Today, the regulations would require larger setbacks from the water so if you want to use lots like this one that are already grandfathered for homes set closer to the water, you have to re-create the same footprint," says builder Glenn Farrell of YFI Custom Homes in Cape Neddick. "In the case of this house, we had to keep part of a floor and a foundation and build around it. But to look at the house today, you'd never know they were still there."

What the renovation accomplished

In 1999, the Prefontaines purchased property overlooking a cove-like inlet not far from the Shore Road between Cape Neddick and Ogunquit, Maine. In addition to its prime location above the rocky shore, it afforded a wonderful view of York's Nubble Light from a northwesterly perspective. Located on that property at the time was what Glenn describes as a "deck house," a large rectangular box with lots of windows, something that had clearly been built to maximize views.

Architect Paul Gosselin of Salmon Falls Architecture in Biddeford, Maine, met the challenge of designing Lin's dream home and ensuring that it would fit into a space that had been defined by another building years before. Once all but one existing foundation wall of the previous home's south side had been razed, Glenn got to work and, over the next thirteen months, Paul's concept for the Prefontaine

home took shape. The Shingle-style waterfront home's design, the kind that helped establish Paul's firm's reputation, fit precisely into the footprint of its predecessor yet, five years later, looks as though it was constructed nearly a century ago and has been at home here ever since.

"I think Paul made it all work so well because he was exceptionally accommodating about working the home's design from the inside out, unusual as that might be in his line of work," says Sarah Duquette of Duquette & Company in York, Maine, who was hired by Bob and Lin to design the home's interior. "That's why every space here can be so well-utilized. Many houses look gorgeous on the outside, but walk in and you find all these odd little spaces that you can't really use effectively. Here, every single space works."



Facing page: The dining area, with its handmade fireplace tiles and seaside views, is this home's central gathering place. **This page, top:** The house's English country cottage style is reflected in details like the stonework arch over the front entry. **This page, bottom:** An antique millstone is the centerpiece in the Prefontaines' stone driveway.



Top: The elegant living room affords breathtaking ocean views to the south and east.

Bottom: A cozy sitting area at the top of the stairs doubles as reading nook and TV room when grandchildren visit.

A small sitting area at the top of the stairs to the second floor exemplifies this. As Lin pulls back sliding cabinet doors along the side wall, she reveals a TV concealed in the “cubby” under the eaves. This living space can serve double-duty as a quiet reading nook or mini entertainment center when grandchildren visit.

“Basically, my design approach is that a building *has* to work from the inside out, based on the needs of whoever’s going to be inside it,” says Paul. “The other thing we try to do is to think of a project as the last time that a building will be put on a site and strive for the very best home that site can carry, one that will still be there in two hundred years.”

As you approach the house, fieldstone columns define the entrance to the driveway constructed from stone pavers, which feature an old millstone as its centerpiece. A fieldstone wall nearby that forms part of the home’s entrance has an arched window capped with a semicircle of granite stones that mirror the driveway’s millstone. The window’s shape also complements that of the hand-built, arched front door. The angle of the front entry draws you toward it as it radiates the welcoming quality of this home’s design.

“Curiously, this house isn’t really that big, yet its rooms and living areas all feel spacious,” Sarah says. “At the same time, it’s nestled into the property in a way that makes it feel comfortable and not intimidating.”

Details of the design

Many features in this house are like those you’d find in an English country home, says Glenn, “from the salvaged, restored chestnut flooring throughout the house to the rich, black-walnut paneling in the living room.” The home’s smaller-paned windows, stonework and a tucked-in feeling closer to the ground also enhance its country-cottage feeling and create the impression that it’s been here a long time, he says. “Most of the waterfront building we do these days is going for high, light and bright, with a lot of glass.”

In the tradition of historic English cottages, this home has interior walls with a stucco surface. They're painted in soft shades straight out of an English country kitchen, including the butter-cream color on the handcrafted distressed-looking kitchen cabinets and the walls in the kitchen and dining areas.

"I especially enjoyed the sort of research that helped this become a more period-style house that felt like a European-inspired cottage," says Paul. "It was a sort of happy coincidence that the year I was working on the house, I was also in England for part of the time doing research on woodwork and detailing, something that certainly benefited this project."

At the heart of the first floor, the dining area is contained alongside the kitchen in a pleasing, open-concept design that manages to retain the individuality of each space. Part of this can be attributed to a canny use of forty-five-degree angles that set off the adjoining kitchen, dining and living-room areas so that each is distinct yet also visible from the other spaces.

"We did that for a couple of reasons, including the fact that the footprint and lot size were somewhat narrow, and the way that the house had to be set up, we had to stack the rooms along a narrow line, almost like railroad cars," Paul says. "Using forty-five-degree angles meant that you can have views into adjoining rooms, whether you're sitting at the dining table or in the kitchen or living room, and this lends a feeling of spaciousness that also allows the rooms to flow together without feeling as though they're all on top of each other."

Additionally, the woodwork on the dining area's paneled walls, painted in the kitchen's butter-cream shade, helps to carve out this space and make it distinctive while also providing a plate shelf at the top to display Lin's extensive antique plate collection. Chamfered edges on this woodwork and paneling add authenticity and detail.

The home's interior provides a natural setting for the extensive and eclectic collection of antiques that Lin has gathered

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Top: Butter-cream-colored walls and Delft-hued tiles evoke English-country atmosphere in the Prefontaine's kitchen. **Middle:** The adjoining dining area, whose paneling is finished with chamfered edges, showcases some of Lin's china and plate collection.

Bottom: A hand-painted trompe l'oeil area rug and cookbook sit on the kitchen floor.

over the years. "When you want to make rooms truly appear old and seasoned, things aren't going to match, since they will come from various time periods," Sarah notes. "Our goal was to have these all come together the way they do in older English homes and not look contrived."

"I love mixing fabric patterns, something many interior designers don't like," Sarah says. "One fabric that became a sort of signature motif and inspired many of our design choices on this floor is a toile print." Imported from England, this fabric has been used in the window treatments that look out to sea from the dining-room area. The print's eighteenth-century scenes of everyday pastoral life, printed in blue on an off-white ground, evoke those seen on Delft tiles.

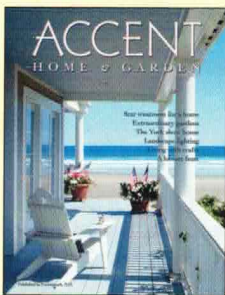
Sarah commissioned decorative painter Joan Preece of Kittery Point, Maine, to create tiles that duplicated the pastoral scenes of the toile fabric for the wall behind the big Aga stove and in the backsplash behind the sink and counters. Joan's artistry was also put to work on unique tiles that decorate the dining area's fireplace, scenes with toile-like views that represent the astrological signs of several generations of the Prefontaine family.

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“This mantel is located right at the center of things, where we typically gather when everyone’s here to visit,” Lin says, “and this seemed like a wonderful way to include all of our personalities in the décor while also carrying out that theme from the toile print.”

Other delightful hand-painted accents are an area “rug” on the kitchen floor, alongside a “cookbook” that has fallen open to a recipe. Each of these *trompe l’oeil* works usually fools first-time visitors, who hurry over to pick up the book, Lin smiles. They were created by decorative artist Colleen Hanlon of York, Maine, who also painted an impressive mural in an upstairs bathroom.

Just off the dining area, the living room is a strikingly lovely and inviting space that offers views of the sea in two directions. The room’s imposing fireplace mantel with its handmade green tiles is set in a wall covered with rich, black-walnut paneling. Overhead, ceiling panels between the dark crossbeams show another buttermilk shade that helps to lighten and soften the room, whose atmosphere, like the house itself, its builder describes as “unpretentious — understated elegance.”

Recessed down a short hallway from the dining area is the master bedroom, where a color scheme of spring moss walls and tall, mulberry-colored wainscoting-style paneling make for an interior whose soothing colors suggest a cool oasis. The master bath, in true European style, includes a separate “water closet” for the toilet. Since this bedroom is on the northern side of the house, frosted glass in the door to the dining area helps admit more light from that south-facing side of the house.

Down two short flights of carpeted steps, the basement level holds a suite of rooms that include offices for Bob and Lin and an exercise room with wall mirrors and a steam-shower. A sofa bed in Bob’s office offers more accommodations for visiting family and other guests, and a butler’s “pass-through” between this room and the exercise room next door facilitates the swiveling of a small television



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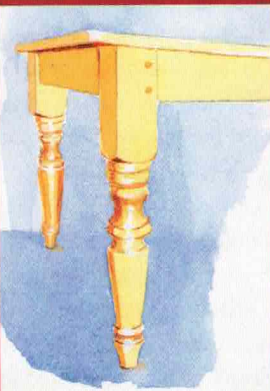
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Top: The larger of two guest bedrooms is a welcoming retreat, with a window seat and sitting area that each look out toward the sea.

Bottom: The upstairs bath is an oasis complete with hand-painted mural of Nubble Lighthouse as viewed from Cape Neddick Beach in Maine.

to accommodate viewers in either space. Bob's desk area has been built on a raised platform, Glenn notes, in order to help provide views of the sea even though the room is at basement level.

Outside the house, just off the living and dining areas, is a stone patio, the largest of three and the site of lots of outdoor living and entertaining. Two smaller ones are located farther down the grounds toward the sea, and all are accented with beautiful English-style plantings.

Upstairs, the house feels exceptionally welcoming for guests. One blue-and-white bedroom with angled, exposed beams under the eaves and two beds is a cozy space with fine ocean views. An adjacent three-quarter bath is a tongue-in-cheek nod to British humor, decorated in a deliberately over-the-top celebration of the "coat of arms" belonging to Samantha, the couple's wheaten terrier.

Another upstairs bathroom is a singular sort of retreat. Its footed tub, flooded with daylight from

two skylights overhead, has, as backdrop, Colleen's hand-painted mural of the view of Nubble Lighthouse from nearby Cape Neddick Beach. A chaise longue invites relaxation and the room includes pieces of Lin's grandmother's furniture. The toilet has an overhead tank and pull-chain reminiscent of 1940s Britain.


Next door, a separate shower room with a sea captain's bench and Victorian carved oak mirror maximize the facilities that are available when multiple guests are in residence. A door in the hallway between this and the larger bath next door optimizes privacy and serves to create a "suite" for the larger of the two guest bedrooms.

This larger, second guest bedroom is a sight to behold, with spectacular views that look down on the surf below. One wall contains a splendid window seat, while another's window framing and treatment defines a sitting area that feels like the captain's quarters at the rear of a galleon, with a picture-window-sized view of the sea.

"It's so nice up here, and the view so wonderful, that we sometimes come and sit up here for cocktails or coffee," Lin says, "or even sleep up here ourselves."

Sarah's grandmother's rug, a special gift to Lin at the end of the project, seems to fit perfectly in the space at the foot of the bed.

"So much about putting this house together simply became a labor of love," says Sarah. She and Lin, who both love antiquing and design, became friends in the process.

"Sarah even began to leave messages in an English accent when she'd call," Lin laughs. 

Freelance writer Phyllis Edgerly Ring of Exeter, New Hampshire, is a regular contributor to ACCENT ON HOME & GARDEN and a columnist for United Press International. She may be reached at info@phyllisring.com.

Greg West's clients include architects, interior designers, contractors, builders and developers involved in commercial and residential properties. See his work at www.gregwestphotography.com.

Resources

Sarah Duquette of Duquette & Co. in York, Maine; 207 363-1827, www.duquetteandcompany.com

Colleen Hanlon in York, Maine; 207 363-2150

Paul Gosselin of Salmon Falls Architecture in Biddeford, Maine; 207 283-4247 <http://www.salmonfallsarch.com/>

Glenn Farrell of YFI Custom Homes in Cape Neddick, Maine; 207 363-8053, www.yficustomhomes.com