

# HISTORY IN THE MAKING

SUBTLE DETAILS AND CLASSIC STYLING ARE THE SPRINGBOARD  
FOR MODERN FAMILY LIFE IN THIS HOUSE ON CAPE COD.

TEXT BY MEAGHAN O'NEILL  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY READ MCKENDREE



The street view of a house designed and built by Polhemus Savery DaSilva Architects Builders features a welcoming front porch and large-scale windows and columns that give it a cottage-like feel. The one-and-a-half-story facade belies the house's three stories, which include a walk-out lower level on the waterfront.



To draw the eye upward in the long, open-plan living area, interior designer Lisa Tharp added beams and rafters to ceilings, hung drapes as high as possible, and replaced the existing fireplace surround with floor-to-ceiling paneling. **RIGHT:** In the same space, Tharp specified a daybed, ottoman, and sectional from her own custom line, the Lisa Tharp Collection; the cozy-yet-streamlined pieces don't monopolize visual space. Swivel chairs offer flexible seating; Scofield sconces hang above the fireplace.



Architect John DaSilva was facing a dilemma. His integrated architecture-construction firm, Polhemus Savery DaSilva Architects Builders, had purchased a prime piece of real estate in Chatham, Massachusetts. The property's existing 1950s-era house had a Cape Cod aesthetic, but the interior wasn't cohesive, and it didn't take advantage of

the site's beautiful location on a salt pond with views of the bay beyond. Having built eight custom houses in the neighborhood, DaSilva and his team knew the building was a tear down. Still, they wanted to retain the character of the neighborhood.

"How do you make a house that meets the needs of contemporary living, but respects the natural and historical character that draws people here in the first place?" asks DaSilva, design



principal at PSD. “It’s a philosophical and artistic challenge. People want a certain degree of familiarity, but they don’t want something that feels ordinary, either.”

Solving for that, says Aaron Polhemus, owner and chief executive officer of the firm, was “about being thoughtful about the architecture and the landscape.” Posing such questions resulted in a building that,

from the front, references classic cottage proportions. Over-scaled columns on a broad porch coupled with over-scaled windows and roof overhangs play with proportion to give the illusion that the house has less mass and volume than it actually does. While the front facade “confounds expectations a bit,” says DaSilva, the water side’s ganged windows, raised terrace and infinity

In the kitchen, astragal molding was carried from the upper cabinets onto the ceiling, drawing the focal point up. The same style molding was used to frame ceiling beams. The Urban Electric Co. lanterns and a pendant light hang above the island and table.

**FACING PAGE:** Sharp chose a custom-built dining table in the shape of a surfboard. It sits near the entrance to the terrace, which is delineated by hydrangea-blue wooden doors, a backbone of the decor’s palette.







A vaulted ceiling and walls in the second-floor master suite are covered in Schumacher linen upholstery, delivering a delightful canopy effect. Tharp's signature sail-pulley shades dress the windows. The daybed is vintage; Holland & Sherry pillows button up the look.





Texture rules in a playful guest bedroom, where hand-blocked fabric by Design No. Five covers walls and a pillow. A vintage campaign chest was painted inky grey, while the model sailboat comes from Thoreaulu Antiques in Concord. **FACING PAGE, TOP:** A built-in daybed in a child's bedroom was outfitted in pale pink; curtains reveal a play space below. **BOTTOM:** A bunk room with toe-to-toe twin beds on each side is used for lounging or guests. Striped wallpaper, Schoolhouse sconces, and vintage art lend a nautical vibe.

pool, and walk-out lower level offer fairly contemporary styling. Inside, open-plan living maximizes the gorgeous views.

Because the 5,850-square-foot house was custom built for sale, the homeowners—a husband and wife who use it as a seasonal

retreat for their family—purchased the property after construction was complete. Wanting to further personalize the inside, they brought on interior designer Lisa Tharp with Lisa Tharp Design.

To define and unify spaces within the

“We wanted to introduce a sense of age not through distressing and patina, but in classicism in the detailing,” says interior designer Lisa Tharp.

horizontally oriented main floor, Tharp added rafters and beams to ceilings in the living, dining, and kitchen areas; crown molding, drapery, and paneling also draw the eye upward and add texture. The designer swapped out contemporary lighting fixtures for options with a touch of vintage charm and warmth.

At the terrace entry, new wooden doors—painted a stunning shade of hydrangea blue, a favorite color in the family—became the





**ARCHITECTURE, BUILDER,**

**LANDSCAPE DESIGN:**

Polhemus Savery DaSilva  
Architects Builders

**INTERIOR DESIGN:**

Lisa Tharp, Lisa Tharp Design

foundation for a harmonious palette.

For the seating area, Tharp replaced the fireplace surround with floor-to-ceiling paneling reminiscent of Colonial-era Cape Cod. “We wanted to introduce a sense of age not through distressing and patina, but in classicism in the detailing,” she says. The result, partly inspired by the homeowner’s admiration for design icon Jackie O, is gracious and elegant, yet still crisp and fresh.

In the kitchen, that direction meant adding a Pietra Cardosa stone slab behind the stove, lightening the white oak floors, and installing a custom surfboard-shaped table. “The style is about being comfortable, easy entertaining, and classic, casual elegance,” says Tharp.

Bedrooms also advance what Tharp calls the house’s “ethereal envelope.” A dreamy first-floor guest suite is dressed in what she describes as “a tight range of white, creams, and neutrals.” Upstairs, an airy master bedroom that features upholstery on the walls and ceiling and three-directional views feels like a tent canopy floating over the water.

The ultimate effect is a residence where interior and architectural elements come together to do just what they’re supposed to—in this case, provide the perfect backdrop for relaxation, fun, and family time, now and for years to come. As Polhemus puts it, the house “embraces the past while looking forward to the future.” It’s a design that has fulfilled its promise, and in so doing, become more than the sum of its parts.

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** For details about this home, see Resources.

“How do you make a house that meets the needs of contemporary living, but respects the natural and historical character that draws people here in the first place?” asks John DaSilva, design principal at PSD Architects Builders.



A raised terrace and infinity pool extend into the backyard, which abuts a saltwater pond with views of the bay beyond. Connecting landscaping and hardscaping with the architecture was an important element of the design for Polhemus Savery DaSilva, the firm responsible for the architecture, landscape architecture, and construction of the house.