

Connecticut Home Show - 12th Annual Spring Home at the Connecticut Expo Center Feb. 29, March 1, and March 2 and March 3. Visit www.osbornejencks.com. Page 17



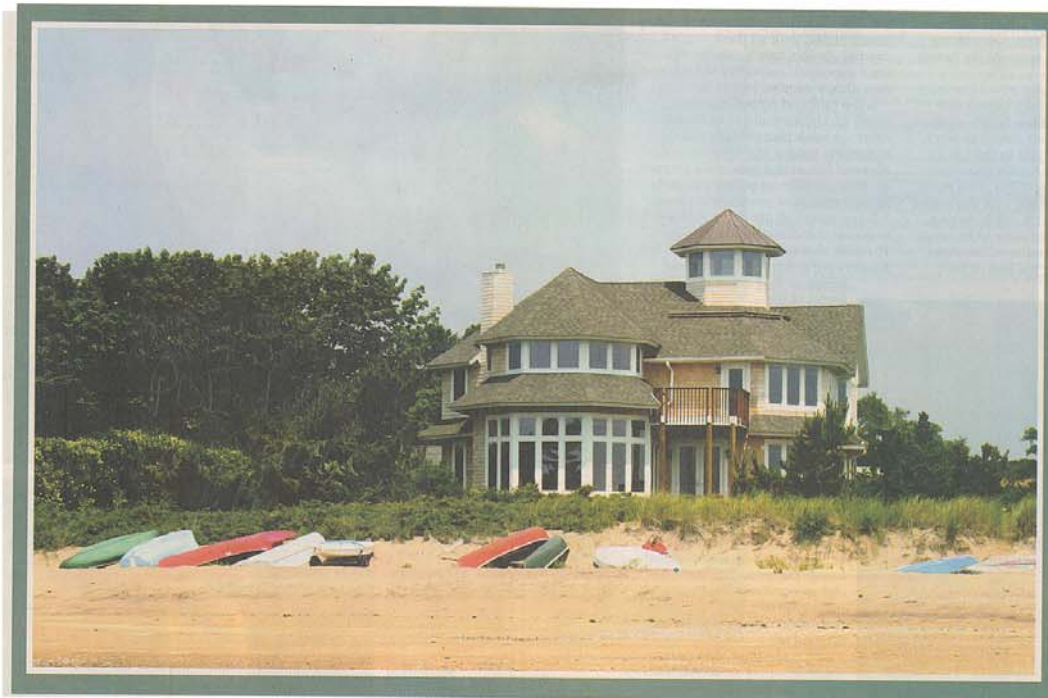
Shore Home

SECTION C

■ Home Listings

See what that house down the street sold for or that parcel you've been eyeing for the dream home you will build some day, look it up in our real estate transactions.

Inside



A house in Madison was designed explicitly to capture the 270-degree sweep of views that are second to none on the East Coast.

From the outside in

Waterfront home maximizes spectacular views

By Duo Dickinson
Special to ShoreView

Sometimes it's hard to understand why the homes you see around you look the way they do. Architects often design homes as sculptures, so they are not very "domestic" to most peoples' eye, whereas homeowners often think of homes as floor plans so what you see from the outside is often unconsidered, and often artless.

A house in Madison finished last year was designed by my office not as a sculpture but from the outside in - it was designed explicitly to embrace the 270 degree sweep of views it captured that are second to none on the east coast. Directly to the south is the unalloyed wide open view of Long Island Sound; directly to the west is the coastline of Connecticut with fantastic views of Hammonasset State Park; and to the north are views of a breathtaking 20-plus-acre salt marsh replete with spartina grasses and nesting herons. These wrap-around views are seen through wrap-around walls of octagonal window-

scaping, often providing a full visual sweep of every angle visible from each space's interior.

Beyond the generating design principles of this home, the context for its construction overcame potentially negative preconceptions as well. Often the homes that result from a "tear-down" (where smaller viable older home is prematurely demolished to make way for a bigger gaudier bloated trophy version) are often sore thumbs in our quiet coastal part of the world. In this particular case after a pre-occupancy stop-gap renovation of a 1920s house and almost a decade of ongoing repair, the homeowners, Bruce and Renee McIntyre realized that the home they had originally purchased was simply becoming less and less viable as the money they were putting into it both for maintenance and heating costs was rapidly becoming a bottomless pit. A new house was simply a necessity.

So building new with value became a constant ethic for all the elements Bruce and



Photo by Dennis Bell

Virtually every window has a roof or rooflet directly over it to protect against overheating, solar decay and water intrusion.

Renee considered (spending money where desired and keeping things as inexpensive as possible in other areas). Fortunately Waverly Builders of Branford facilitated a classic three-way partnership between their offices, the McIntyres, and our design, spear-headed by Jim Wilson from my office who happened to know the couple from growing up with their children.

The needs of the family were relatively simple: a four-bedroom, three-bath house with a separately accessed home office for Renee and a "bonus room" over the three-car garage. Because the home was built in a Velocity Zone, by federal regulation the house's first floor had to sit high above the existing dunes. With some careful micro-manipulation of the ground plane and the way the home joins the land, it's anything but a "house on stilts."

In the main living area, a ceiling level

change facilitated 12-foot high walls for windows to allow an unrestricted view. A large deck extends the living space out into the landscape making the inside/outside integration more than just visual, and the master suite is extended by a walk-out deck integrated with the social deck below via its own octagonal shape and columns. Views from the lower deck have a minimum amount of visual disruption by eliminating most places railings might normally be placed by using wraparound steps (octagonal, of course!) that allow for stadium seating for social gatherings.

With so much glass facing so many views in a windswept zone of often horizontally driven salt water, the potential wear and tear on the house is extreme. For that reason, virtually every window has a roof or rooflet directly over it to protect against overheating, solar decay, and water intrusion.

With a careful eye toward costs in its design, bidding and building, this home represents an optimal value for coastal building in the Northeast. Beyond the stock vinyl-clad windows, unfinished white cedar shingles were used for siding, and simple flat stock trim, inside and out, and wind-resistant asphalt shingles complete a weather-worthy and cost effective exterior spec.

On the interior, there are

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SHORE HOME

Waterfront: Home maximizes spectacular view of salt marsh

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virtually dozens of personal touches art directed by these eclectically creative homeowners. Some trim is rendered as hand painted flourishes of coastal waves, the front door is a sand blasted representation of the most beloved plant and bird species seen every day from inside this perch, water washed stone serves as flooring, and dozens upon dozens of heart-shaped stones collected over several decades by the homeowners serve to create the hearth of the fireplace.

Coastal sites usually have close quarters with nearby homes on one side and unlimited openness to the water on the other side of their shoreline perch. Many new homes built in the last 10 years "max out" in hostile ignorance of their surrounding elders. This home was built to be in scale with the homes immediately around it, while having the parts that are not close to its neighbors rise to the occasion of the views presented – getting the best of both

worlds.

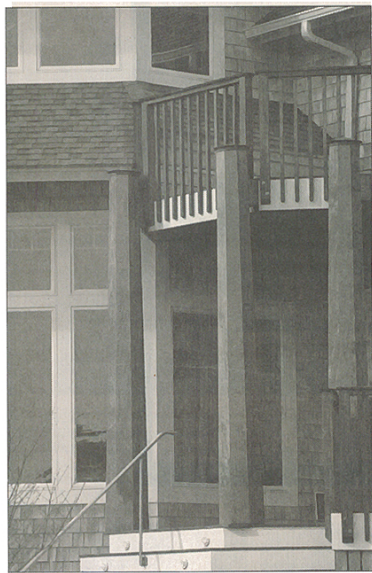
It's harder to design from every perspective – the homeowner's dreams, its plan that responds to those dreams, the views that plan can capture, the shape that results from that plan and how its viewed by those around it, - the resultant budget, the building's weather-worthiness in its specific environment, and, yes the art of architecture. It takes longer to deal with all these juggled criteria – in this case a year for design, town approvals, contractor bidding and then almost another year of building.

Is the time and mental exercise worth it? The alternatives to all this effort – a stock plan plopped onto an exquisitely unique site, or a internally obsessed layout that gets walls propped up about its plan, or perhaps an architectural conceit of preconceived heroic 3-D expression all are easier solutions to conceive and implement quickly.

The odds that easy answers are the best answers are as improbable in home design as they are in any other aspect of life.

Bruce and Renee had lived on this incomparable piece of land for a decade before building, and given that knowledge base and their exuberantly expressive character a standard house was simply not in the cards. It was obvious that a predictable solution could never satisfy all the potentials that revealed themselves over that decade. But this extraordinary project has truths common to every home. No matter who you are or where you live, never assume that you can be happy with an unconsidered home. Every site has some special aspect. Every family has a unique set of values and dreams their home should express and respond to.

Life is too short, and your home is too big an investment not to take the risks Bruce and Renee McIntyre took to make their largest physical possession reflect their values, desires and hopes. Your home deserves to be yours and not an anonymous box you happen to inhabit. Don't just be your home's occupant, be its celebrant!



Rear entrance features stark columns that are in contrast to the rest of the home. The builders used many recycled elements in its construction.



Photos by Dennis Bell

Above: A sculpture sits atop a fence in Bruce and Renee McIntyre's backyard. The view of the salt marshes and Hammonasset State Park is heavenly.

Right: The site provides an attractive habitat for monk parakeets.

