



LIGHT HOUSE

On a Martha's Vineyard bluff, Victoria Hagan and Oscar Shamamian give a busy New York family the salt-air sanctuary they'd been dreaming of for years

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With gracious gabled façades and water views from nearly every room, a Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, house by architects Ferguson & Shamamian catches the late-day sun. Victoria Hagan handled the interior decoration. For details see Sources.

Though paneled in toffee-color American white oak, the living room is full of light. A circa-1860 French chandelier is suspended from the tray ceiling; the club chairs are covered in Jasper's Chatham linen, and the Sultanabad carpet is from Doris Leslie Blau. A Josef Albers print is displayed over the mantel.

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INCE MOST OF THE WORLD'S great beaches have long since been usurped by the party-hardy, the dramatic, sparsely populated, and largely unspoiled coastline of Martha's Vineyard always comes as a surprise. Where is the hubbub? Where are the chic seekers, the luxury condos, the traffic jams? The Vineyard's defense against all that, of course, and its prime natural asset, is the seven-mile stretch of salt water between it and the mainland. Accessible only by boat or air, the Vineyard takes time and forbearance to get to, which discourages those who pack their stress along with their swimsuits when they head to the beach.

Victoria Hagan knows all about slowed-down island time. She has decorated several houses on the Vineyard and on nearby Nantucket, including her parents' summer place. Still, she was excited on her first visit to one particular building site. "We drove through what seemed like endless woods until we finally came to a clearing," she remembers. There, on a stretch of grassland atop a bluff overlooking Vineyard Sound, was the frame of a future dwelling that appeared, she says, "as if it had been sketched onto the landscape.

"I love seeing a house at that point; my imagination goes wild," she adds. "I could







TOP: The dining room chairs were designed by Hagan, who upholstered them in Elizabeth Eakins's Alt Stripe linen twill.

BOTTOM: Custom-made cabinetry by Ferguson & Shamamian meets vintage Italian pendant lights in the kitchen; a trio of Oxford Station fixtures from Ann-Morris Antiques hangs above the island.

OPPOSITE: A soft play of patterns in the family room: The Lacquer Stripe hemp covering the sofa and Rockingham hemp on the bobbin chair are both from Jasper; the custom-made





see the views, the colors, the scale, which was surprisingly intimate. I knew right away that I wanted this place to have an old, salty feel, but also a fresh one for a young, fun family.”

The owners and their four children had been vacationing at this very spot for years, in another house they’d bought only because they so loved its setting. Now they were bent on giving their land the house it deserved—which to them meant one that looked as if it had always been there.

They entrusted the project to the New York architecture firm of Ferguson & Shamamian. Principal Oscar Shamamian is known for making new homes that, as his frequent collaborator Hagan says, “look old and yet are very modern in the way they function.” His design for the Vineyard site honored the local vernacular, combining the dignified Greek Revival detailing often found in “down-island” houses with the more relaxed, rural Shingle Style of this property’s “up-island” neighbors. And to ensure a water view from nearly every room, the architect gave the house a rambling L-shaped plan.

At the heart of that plan was an oak-paneled living room of one and a half stories, with French doors on opposite sides and a fireplace at each end. “There are rooms you know are going to be great just from looking at the drawings,” Hagan says. “I was excited to do this room from Day One.” She was also determined not to overdo it, or, for that matter, overdo any other room in the house. “In some places you can hear the decorating,” she says. “I just wanted to hear the ocean.”

Since wood paneling figured heavily in Shamamian’s scheme, he and Hagan spent hours pondering their options for species and studying grain and color. The choices they made were a starting point for the decoration. “When you’re working with warm, textured materials like wood,” she notes, “it’s important that the textiles, including the rugs, also have warmth and texture.” For a color palette, the designer simply turned to the view. “The water in Vineyard Sound can be a very Caribbean greeny blue—so unexpected in New England,” she says. Each of the painted rooms is a different Farrow & Ball color, all dusty



greens and blues, and deeper in hue than one would normally expect to see in a beach house.

Though Hagan's decorating style is identifiable—pared down, tailored, cool—she always leaves plenty of breathing room for personalities other than her own. The public rooms here are filled with upholstered seating and sturdy country antiques. In the bedrooms, her choices are more delicate but equally unpretentious: spool beds, Gustavian chests, faux-bamboo nightstands. The only custom-designed pieces are the dining table and chairs. "The client wanted them to be supercomfortable," she says, to encourage lingering after dinner.

The result is a house that promises to age with Yankee grace, inside and out. Salt air is already at work on its pristine shingled surfaces, etching them with a softening patina. And as four teenagers grow to adulthood and make the journey here with friends, partners, and children of their own someday, the family retreat will only get better, as nicks and scratches accumulate to both humble and ennoble it. □

OPPOSITE: The floor, stairs, and beadboard paneling in the hall are made of carefully selected American white oak. The single-arm sconces are from Circa Lighting.

ABOVE: In one of the children's rooms, new takes on the charm of old: A side table from the British Khaki collection by Robert Lighton flanks a Hazel spool bed by Leonards New England.