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# House Beautiful

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You don't get more "all-American summer" than this: shingles and porches and fresh-air rooms and flowers from the garden

INTERIOR DESIGN BY PAULA PERLINI  
ARCHITECTURE BY MARK FERGUSON,  
FERGUSON & SHAMAMIAN ARCHITECTS  
INTERVIEW BY LISA CREGAN  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DON FREEMAN

# COTTAGE CLASSIC

**LISA CREGAN:** So how many classicists does it take to build a beach house?

**PAULA PERLINI:** We really were a dream team—the architect, Mark Ferguson, me, and the clients. We all love classical design. But right from the beginning, the clients said they wanted a casual house. Mark really listened. There's no formal dining room. They have a big table in the kitchen for indoor dining, and a big round table out on the porch. When they have a party, they put tables out on the lawn.

**There's a wonderful sense of continuity throughout the house.**

**PP:** Mark designed an enfilade with openings out to the porch across the beachfront side of the house—it's brilliant. Then I took one color and used it in different combinations across the downstairs rooms, so it's not jarring when you look from the living room through to the kitchen and the porch beyond. The client loves blue, so we did blue. And the rugs in the living room and library have stripes going in the same direction, which takes your eye seamlessly through the rooms.

**With that jaw-dropping Edgartown Harbor out there, another architect might have placed a wall of glass on the view side.**

**MARK FERGUSON:** I think views are more interesting if you don't experience them all the time. It's better if a window or a porch column frames views. The modern sensibility is to be immersed in the view—that became possible with plate glass and steel construction—but I think a house is not enjoyable if you lose the walls altogether. With the porch and the columns, you don't feel exposed to the elements.

**The Shingle Style has been called 'the architecture of the American summer.' A romantic sentiment, but appropriate here?**

**MF:** Oh yes. This is a very American house. I think the shingles, the rambling floor plan, and the house's gambrel roof give it its informal quality, and the classical elements, like the columns, make it more dressy.

**That mudroom is a pure delight, like a summer garden.**

**PP:** The owner always fills the house with flowers. That's why we did the mudroom as a flower room. She collects pitchers—



The mudroom multitasks for flower arranging, with open shelves that store baskets and the owner's pitcher collection. Beadboard and an oversize porcelain farm sink create the feeling of turn-of-the-century Martha's Vineyard. Resilient navy-blue granite countertops keep watermarks at bay and oak floors have a light pine stain so sand doesn't show. Lighthouse area rug by Claire Murray.





a mixture of antique and new—and majolica, but she also likes things from Pottery Barn and simple milk pails. They do a lot of entertaining, and sometimes it's just fun for her to put a bunch of juice glasses filled with flowers down the center of a table.

**Shells everywhere, but somehow they don't seem a cliché.**

PP: It has to do with scale. Some fabrics have big shells and some have tiny little shells. The fabric on the antique sofa in the living room has small shells, and on the striped fabric in the library, they're bigger. The sconces in the library have small shell back-plates, and the living room coffee table is all about big scallop shells. Yes, you're hitting people over the head with shells here, but softly.

**And more bamboo than a panda exhibit.**

PP: I love the color of bamboo. It warms up a room and it's very forgiving of a lot of use. Bamboo works well at the beach because it actually likes the moisture in the air. Since it's a reed, it's much better around water. The bamboo game table in the library was found at Walters Wicker, and the table on the screened porch is one the owners brought from home.

**Any signature touches?**

PP: I always encourage clients to buy slipper chairs like the red one in the library. They're movable, and great near a fireplace. Men always say they don't like them, but when I walk into a room it's always the biggest man on the slipper chair. You can sit forward or sideways, and you can slide it closer to the person you're talking to, to make a point. You know what I mean? You know how men are.

**There's something so fresh and appealing about the furniture on the screened porch.**

PP: It's made of sea grass, not wicker. It's very durable. Everyone flops out there after sports—tennis, waterskiing, biking, golf. I made sure everything out there was non-precious so they could put their feet up. That twig coffee table is something I found in the country. It's fun because it's disparate, and it's a big wide place to set out a tray with coffee in the morning.

**Why ceiling fans when the house is air-conditioned?**

PP: They bring an element of softness to the ceiling. They also provide ventilation, because the husband is allowed to smoke cigars in the house. When you ask why, the wife says, 'Oh come on, it's his house!'

PRODUCED BY SENGA MORTIMER

An antique sofa in the living room, covered in Shellscape by Brunschwig & Fils, is positioned to face the harbor view. A pair of white painted armchairs from Louis J. Solomon offset bold amber hurricane lamps from John Rosselli. The stripes in the Elizabeth Eakins rug line up with the library rug, drawing the eye down the enfilade that runs the length of the house. Ceiling fan by Brighton Pavilion.





In the library, a pair of swivel-base club chairs are covered with Summer Hill's Sardinia in Pacific Blue and flank a sturdy antique steamer trunk that Perlini says is for putting your feet up. The library's high wainscot, painted a cool white, is a crisp counterpoint to Benjamin Moore's Moroccan Red.

**OPPOSITE:** A Walters Wicker bamboo game table and chairs with tortoiseshell finish are tucked into a bay window overlooking the harbor.

















THIS PAGE: A guest room reflects a Paula Perlini truism: "Everybody loves blue and white."

Periwinkle walls are Benjamin Moore Riviera Azure and the shell-splashed fabric on the armchair and bed is Concarneau from Pierre Frey. OPPOSITE: A window seat and armchair in a daughter's bedroom are upholstered in Nicolette Pinpoint Check in lavender by Brunschwig & Fils. The door opens to a second-floor porch.

FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES.







OPPOSITE: Walters Wicker Seagrass sofa and armchairs covered in a Brunswick & Fils cornflower blue and white plaid make the screened porch an inviting family gathering place. Ceiling color is Morning Glory by Benjamin Moore. THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Flowers from the farmer's market arranged in pitchers and vases in the mudroom. The expansive porch and a Balmoral teak dining table by Barlow Tyrie take the place of a formal dining room. The owners' birdcage collection serves as objects of art in the living room. Perlini painted a guest room's bamboo bed frames in Benjamin Moore Dove White and used an old sewing machine table between the beds. The owners' blue pashmina serves as a throw. The front entry's intricate stairway opens wider as it spills downward, providing perches for a wooden mermaid and the family beagle, Posey. Hydrangeas surround the porch.





