

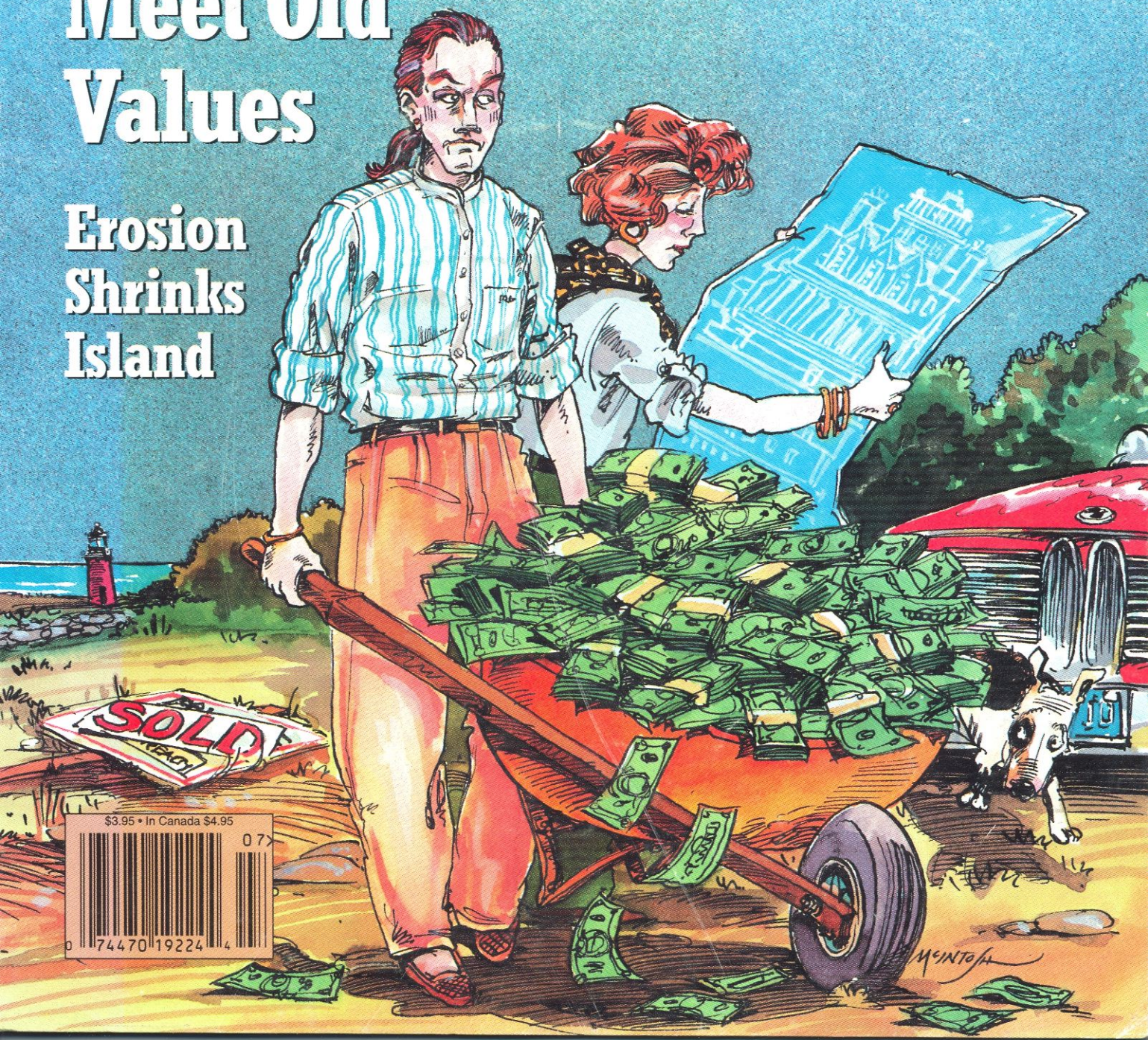
MARTHA'S

VINEYARD

JULY 1997 ♦ \$3.95

New Rich Meet Old Values

Erosion Shrinks Island



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The Past Renewed

By Laurence Michie

Photographs by Robert Schellhammer

IT'S ONE OF THOSE SPECIMEN PLACES THAT SUMMER VISITORS EYE WITH LONGING from the decks of the ferries bringing them toward our Island harbor. The summer homes of West Chop are the first sight of the Vineyard many visitors have, and the stately dwellings speak the visual language of summer ease, of carefree sunny days and languid evenings devoted to social gatherings of casual elegance.

When its new owners acquired this architectural beauty, however, she was faded indeed. About a hundred years old, the home had gone through a number of transitions and was in dire need of being reinvented. And the new owners — she's a Manhattan pediatrician, he's on Wall Street — were determined to maintain the West Chop style of a century ago while creating a new home with every modern convenience and comfort.

The owners turned to contractor Andrew A. Flake and architects Mark Hutker & Associates — Phil Regan was the project

architect — because they were enthusiastic about protecting the classic style of the house. They assembled a team of Vineyard-based craftsmen and skilled tradesmen who turned vision into reality. The key to the success of the rebuilding of the house is a fact that will make the Island's old curmudgeons drop their jaws. "Crafts people on the Vineyard," Hutker says, "are as good as or better than a hundred years ago."

The transformation took a couple of years, but the result was worth the wait. The large and gracious homesite with its lawn sloping to the water and with a view of East Chop Light beyond looks much the same as other large and gracious West Chop homesites. That was the plan.

Up the long driveway toward the Sound, there is now a carriage house on the right — a wholly new creation. The structure houses a three-car garage and, on the second floor, a two-bedroom dwelling for staff in the summer. The interior wood in the staff apartment is natural, long-grained fir — a wood that is closely akin in looks and quality to southern yellow pine, a warm and gorgeous wood no longer available in quite the quality used a hundred years ago. The fir is also used in the main house to match the yellow pine that has been saved there.

From the windows of the second floor apartment, one looks down on a new swimming pool, raised on a plinth so swimmers are three feet above ground level for a better view of the saltwater a hundred yards away.

The reinvented main house is the showcase, of course, and although the West Chop style has been maintained, the transformation has been utter.

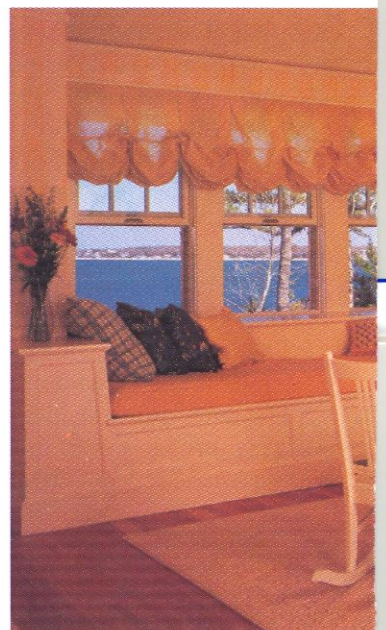
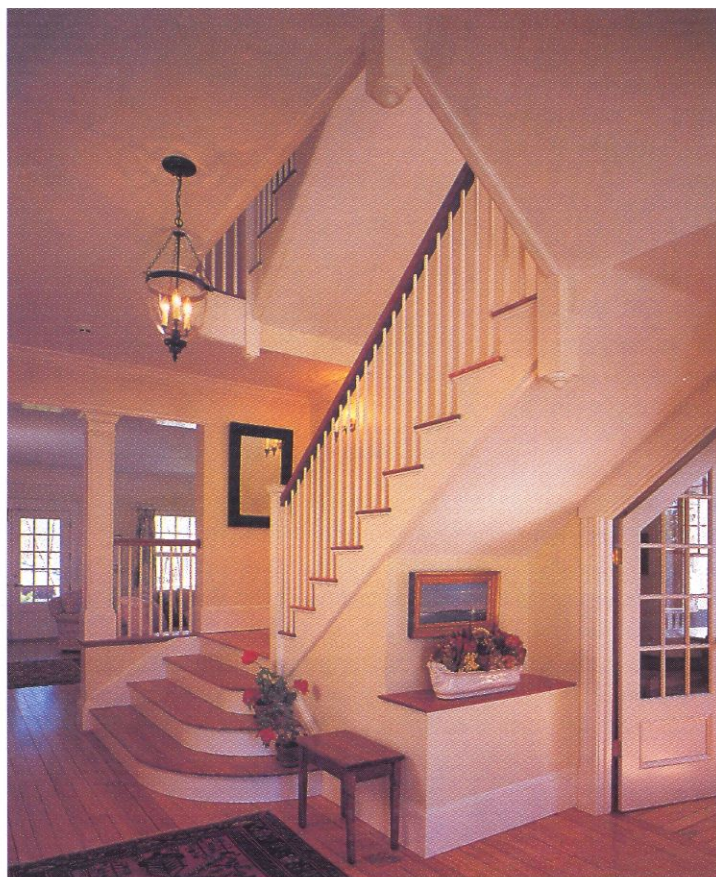
The most radical challenge in updating the house while maintaining traditional style was that people a century ago simply did not value interior light and ample views in the contemporary sense. Windows were added and enlarged in careful proportion to open up the house to the brilliant Vineyard



Nantucket Sound dominates all views. Above is a glimpse from a corner of the living room, and on the page opposite, a ferry steams by.



Clockwise from the glow of the home above at twilight: The family area and fireplace that adjoins the kitchen, and the view beyond down a hall that leads to the library doors at the front of the house; the sitting space with a window seat in the primary guest bedroom, offering comfortable access to a panoramic view across the Sound to East Chop; and the classic stairwell, where restoration and replacement have painstakingly matched southern pine and newly cut long-grained fir.



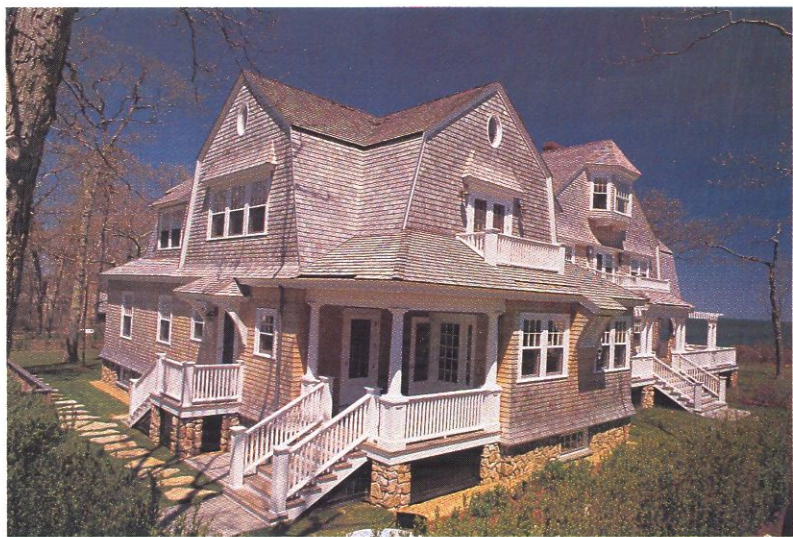


discovered old cypress beer barrels in Narragansett, Rhode Island, and adapted their wood. The mantels were milled on-site and the beer smell was noticeable for a time. It was even missed by both workers and owners when it went away.

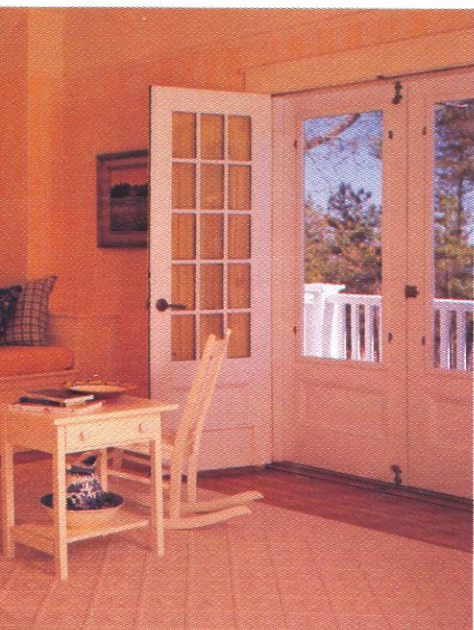
The library opens into the sweeping space of the living room with all the light and views appropriate to West Chop. Behind the living room is a spacious dining room and sitting area, and at the rear of the house is the new kitchen. "We're very lucky," the physician owner says. "It's a beautiful house. We chose Andrew and Mark because we wanted to maintain the style, and they showed enthusiasm and flair. This was so collaborative, and everyone was respectful of the house. I've done a number of renovations, and this was so satisfying because everyone was involved."

And, she says, now she and her husband hope to spend more and more time on the Vineyard. Eventually she hopes to practice part time on the Island.

"This was a most gratifying job," Regan says. "There are so many great old houses on Martha's Vineyard, and it was wonderful that this one didn't get torn down. It'll be there another hundred years." ♦



The kitchen above was added to the old house, and it opens to a comfortable social area pictured on the previous page. The house's old foundation and basement have been retained, but the new basement area beneath the kitchen now has a wine cellar, and may be rigged out as a fitness room in the future.



sky. The front porch couldn't be saved, partly because the railings were too high to be practicable. The forty-inch high shingled railings meant that anyone sitting there couldn't see the view.

Today, not only are there multiple exterior sites for varied views of the Sound — including a breakfast patio off the kitchen — the nine bedrooms all have been reconfigured with balconies or decks with water views. The one exception is a bedroom just a step away from a deck.

The master bedroom, with an eye-level porthole in its bathroom shower, faces flush onto the Sound, and the principal guest bedroom is a mini-suite, with a built-in window seat sofa where paragraphs of summer reading can be alternated with thoughtful glances at the passing boats.

The principal entrance to the 8,300 square foot main house finds a small library on the right, appropriately woody and dark. The cypress mantel on the fireplace there has been replicated for the house's other fireplaces — Michael Levandowski and Jim Young of Martha's Vineyard Millworks

