



The restored core structure retains much historical detail, offering a warm and welcoming feel of age. The original Small family home (inset) before restoration.



Construction: February 1985 – June 1986
3000 square feet;
4 bedrooms & 3.5 baths;
2-car garage

Architect: William Rawn Associates

The Small House

Photography by Steve Rosenthal

The Small family transported this home – originally one of the “wooden tents” in Oak Bluffs – to its present site in West Chop sometime in the 1880s. More than a century later, however, after the family moved from age and illness, the home was in such disrepair that inspectors condemned the structure as uninhabitable. The wind and weather literally intruded through the walls and roof.

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Home Portrait

continued





Seen in full profile, the home lends the impression of an old New England farmstead that was conjoined and restored into a single structure. The interior design and décor (above and right) all intend to create a patina of comfort and unpretentiousness.



Home Portrait

continued

When Flake's client purchased the property, only two choices remained: A full razing and completely new structure, or an extensive restoration of the core structure with new additions. Flake's client chose restoration and additions. "Truth be told, the easier route would have been to just take every stick down and build new from fresh ground and not get concerned with anything about the old house," says Flake. But the perfectionist in both of client and builder demanded the road less taken.

From the restoration point of view, the job defined attention to detail. Flake's crew fashioned interior woodwork and exterior trim to match the vernacular of the home's neighborhood in Cottage City. They refinished and adapted the original staircase as a kind relic of another era.

Even some of the plumbing fixtures Flake either restored or matched with antique replacements. The client even offered a collection he had found in

The end result is an elegant, unpretentious and understated home, warm and ageless.

France, which needed to be re-nickled. "I remember having all these faucets and fixtures out on the lawn, numbering them and making drawings and taking photographs," Flake says. "Though the plumber was not pleased with the challenge of fitting everything back together, in the end, it worked perfectly."

When a glass pane in the original front door cracked, Flake tracked down an artisan in the Midwest to craft a replacement using the same methods common in the 1800s.

Seen in total, the home has the look of a restored New England farmstead, whose script could have been a collection of buildings that grew during a century, and later were combined into a single compound. The end result is an elegant, but perfectly unpretentious and understated home, warm and ageless.

So many homes are designed and built to emphasize their prominence from street. Not this one. Blink and you could miss it. **VS**

A very cozy, bright and airy breakfast room (above left) compliments the formal diningroom. A balcony to the side yard (left) from the master suite gives a romantic feel of summer and ease.



Home Portrait

continued

Builder

Andrew Flake

IN HIS OWN WORDS

“Coming from a family with a long history as Martha’s Vineyard summer residents, I felt drawn to make my home here and to build a construction business that is on, and of, this Island. Since then I have gathered a gifted and dedicated team that takes huge pleasure in joining materials with visions to create our clients’ homes. All that we do is grounded in this place – the glacial terrain that affords a seemingly endless variety of topography and stunning views, a tradition of sturdy building and exquisite craftsmanship, and a community that is a special blend of Yankee native and cosmopolitan seasonal residents.

Our entire effort stands here – some 40 fine and unique homes crafted during the last 27 years. By choice, we are constrained and also enriched by our Island setting. By experience, we stretch those limitations and conquer the special

challenges of supply, logistics, scheduling, weather and talent largely unknown to those who build in what Islanders call “America.”

We undertake residential construction and renovation only, and thus we have mastered the rhythms that make for an efficient project and gained a deep understanding of what “house” and “home” mean to our clients. We are privileged to serve distinguished and discriminating owners and to work with architects, designers and other professionals of inspiring creativity and skill. We have the expertise to successfully undertake the most complex and sophisticated projects and the discipline and finesse to orchestrate each project’s thousands of details, decisions, challenges and surprises to a successful conclusion. We take great pride not only in the house we give over to each client but in the relationship we build with that family and with every person whose hand has touched the project.

While my own role has evolved from the days when I personally wielded a hammer, I am personally involved in every detail, decision and communication on each project. Our clients expect and deserve this intensely hands-on approach and I believe it is the only way to assure the quality of experience and finished product to which we all aspire.



Bold walls of glass (top) separate interior and exterior spaces. The home includes many intrinsic sculptural details, such as corner glazing (above), which though stunning to the eye, present difficult challenges to the craftsmen who execute the design.

VINEYARD style

Twin Perfections

**Two Island Homes
by Builder
Andrew A. Flake**

By John Budris

**Photography
by
Peter Vanderwarker**
Chilmark Hill House
and
Steve Rosenthal
Small House West Chop

The Chilmark Hill House

Construction: June 2000 –
March 2005

8,500 square feet;
4 bedrooms & 4.5 baths
Guest House:
800 square feet.

Architect:
Olson Sundberg Kundig
Allen Associates

Fitting a decidedly modern home on a weather-buffed Chilmark hilltop posed unique challenges. Modest glazing, steeply pitched roofs and wooden shingles – New England's traditional solution – conceded to flat and shallow roofs with sweeping walls of glass that invite the outside in. The home serves double-duty as private art gallery and retreat.

Home Portrait

continued

What Andrew Flake does before work tells as much about his labors as do the beams, the glass or the fine joinery. Most mornings, and often in darkness, he runs, swims, bikes. Invisible, he trains for triathlons, the definition of the long haul.

So too are his dwellings in wood or steel. The homes he builds are also here for the long haul, meant for generations, not simply as shelter or show, but as works of art, as close to the contemporary cathedral as budget and time now permit.

And he too tries to stay invisible, deferring the credit of the creation to his team, many of whom came of age along with him. Andrew Flake began building on the Vineyard as a natural progression of a gangly summer kid who 30 years ago simply liked the work of hammer and saw. That part hasn't changed.

"Well, I don't do the banging very much anymore, but I wouldn't ask anyone to do something I hadn't done before," he says, surrounded by wall-sized photographs of his work at his Vineyard Haven office.

Now as one of the Vineyard's premier builders – with more than 40 exquisite dwellings in his wake – Flake's role as has again morphed. In his rapport with clients, whom we stipulate are folks of means and success, he is both contractor and confessor, a role he savors. "Sometimes this home on the Vineyard is the reach for a second chance to spend time with the family, the kids, build memories, make up for lost time," he says. Sometimes – and in no way are the bones of the house involved – the plan succeeds or fails. But always the structures endure.

Two are Flake's yin and yang, homes with vastly different beginnings, with a unified end. Each morphed from very disparate raw materials under Andrew Flake's watch. Both posed challenges on opposite ends of the spectrum.

One started life sometime in the 1800s in the Campground in Oak Bluffs, then left by horse and wagon to West Chop sometime in the next century, served as a year-round home to a Vineyard family for a hundred years, was condemned by code, and later transformed on paper by the same architect who designed one of the world wonders of the trade – Ozawa Hall at Tanglewood.





The other is a steel and glass marriage of home and art gallery, conceived by a Seattle architectural firm schooled in the demands of the Pacific Northwest rainforest, and created on a Chilmark hilltop overlooking a salt pond and the Atlantic.

The Chilmark Hill House

The Chilmark Hill House began with the client's wish list of a home that would devour the outdoors and take in the panoramic views of Chilmark Pond and the Atlantic Ocean. As a collector of fine photography, he wanted the home to be a kind of art gallery as well.

The site would take the most severe New England beating of weather, and all the tried and true solutions of steep roofs and minimal glass would be denied to Flake. This would be a contemporary home with a Northwest touch.

"From a builder's point of view, these are the most challenging kinds of projects because everything has to be perfect, both inside and out," says Flake. "There's very little tolerance or wiggle room." In other words, there's no trim to hide any gaps. Every part of this job demanded precision.

From the design point of view, the project was an exercise in restraint and some compromise, one that blends traditional "Island" motifs with a contemporary esthetic that feels neither historical nor out of place. Custom wood siding and shingles, lead-coated copper and steel sunscreens form the simple palette of materials with a mind to the extremes of weather.

Some elements – the master bedroom, guestrooms and garage – are separated from the family gathering areas to provide privacy and create a variety of exterior spaces. These exterior spaces of terraces, patios and screened porches allow the owners to experience the natural setting in all kinds of climatic conditions.

"The architect who designed the home is based in Seattle, and he understood so well about using these materials to work effectively and efficiently," says Flake. "And it all translated perfectly to this climate."

In any structure with so much concrete, steel and glass, especially with open flooring plans, acoustics are key elements to consider. Flake conducted extensive sound testing to adjust the interior materials and ceiling design to tune things just right. "This home truly was a piece of art in itself, and we treated that way."



Landscape designer Steven Stimson took a massive glacial boulder (top left and bottom left) that once threatened the foundation excavation and gave it a new role as a focal point. Unique horizontal siding further tucks the home into the landscape, keeping its profile modest and handsome. The bold walls of glass (middle left) unify interior and exterior spaces, but posed great demands against weather. Sunscreens, careful detailing, modern materials and fine workmanship combined to keep the elements at bay. Distinct living, dining, and working areas (top) blend seamlessly together unified by clean lines and terse materials. The infinity pool (above) invites the eye to drift across Chilmark Pond to the Atlantic and beyond.