



A Martha's Vineyard Landmark Reimagined

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For eighty-plus years, residents of one neighborhood on Martha's Vineyard had been well-acquainted with the imposing home (and reported party palace) affectionately known as Big Bluff. But time and, more notably, nature, had not been kind to the Shingle-style home, and it sat on the market for a long while, intimidating buyers by the amount of work it needed. Those house hunters included a couple from New York. She had been vacationing on the Vineyard since she was a child, and with her husband and three kids, had been renting the same house for twenty-one years. When it came time to buy their own place, there was no denying Big Bluff's idyllic location. "I wasn't into it at first," she admits. "I knew it was going to be a huge undertaking. But because of the team we worked with, it actually wound up being a very pleasurable experience."

The couple purchased the house in 2015 and then spent a year working with Hutker Architects on the design of a new structure that would pay homage to the original—think of it as Big Bluff 2.0. The old building was demolished, and the new eight-bedroom home, which retained the original's footprint, took nineteen months to build. Mark Hutker, principal architect on the project, calls the new Big Bluff a "stylistic handshake" to the surrounding neighborhood, complete with a gambrel roofline. "Martha's Vineyard residents love where they live," he says. "We wanted to immerse this home into that local tradition."

Hutker accomplished that, in part, by using elements from the old home. The homeowners purchased all of the original furnishings, for instance. Not everything worked, but many of the bureaus were repurposed. So were a copper sink and faucets that moved from a butler's pantry and powder room, respectively, into the family room to serve as a convenient wet bar. The beach cobbles from the original fireplace were used to construct the reimagined double-sided fireplace. And new details like the stacked-step interior stairway, Herrick & White kitchen cabinetry, exposed-beam ceiling, upstairs painted-concrete floors, and white "Tory chimney" are all nods to the area's heritage.

That isn't to say the house doesn't have plenty of modern amenities. The walkway behind Big Bluff is outfitted with wheel blocks carved into the stone for parking bikes. Dual entry points, built around a grand dining space, allow a sightline through the entire house, from the lush garden on one side to the ocean on the other. There's also a new screened porch, a favorite spot of the homeowner. And all throughout the interior, peekaboo pops of red make an appearance as if they are playing hide-and-seek with the more traditional blue and white hues that mimic the sky and the ocean. "If you want to create a timeless space, you reflect what doesn't change in that space, and that's nature," Hutker says.

This summer, Big Bluff's family contemplates a season less filled with the usual extended friends and family waging ping-pong battles in the basement (last year, they had eighteen houseguests in one weekend). But Big Bluff was designed to be a family heirloom that would last multiple generations and be used year-round, so there are many more gatherings to come. "This home has good family space," says the homeowner. "When our kids are older with their own families, everyone will be able to visit without being on top of each other. This house was built to be used, and we absolutely use it."

Architecture: Mark Hutker and Matthew Cramer, [Hutker Architects](#)

Interior design: Mika Durrell and Ania Siekierski, [Hutker Architects](#)

Builder: [John G. Early Contractor](#) and Builder

Landscape design: [Dan Gordon Landscape Architects](#)

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