

# Once Upon a Time

## IN THE HAMPTONS, A SHINGLED HOUSE TAKES ITS CUE FROM AN IMAGINED HISTORY

Architecture by Frank Greenwald, AIA/Interior Design by Timothy Macdonald  
Text by Michael Frank/Photography by Peter Aaron/Esto



**N**arrative and architecture: It's not very often that the two go hand in hand. But consider the story of a couple, long-time renters in the Hamptons, who spend years looking for the ideal house and are unsuccessful in their quest. They switch gears and decide to search for a piece of land instead, with the notion that the ideal house is, after all, one they commission themselves. They tend to favor the more modest charms of Wainscott over the showier, busier energies of East Hampton and Southampton. Lots are scarce and often tricky to build on. Finally, in the hamlet itself, right there between the schoolhouse and the chapel, they come upon the last unbuilt parcel on Main Street.

The lot is not very wide, but it has ample depth and handsome views over

fields in one direction and the water in another. The couple, a New York executive and his wife, have three children and many friends and relatives they hope to accommodate. They do not want a cottage in its literal sense but a cottage in the Newport (or Hamptons) sense: capacious, rambling, with many varied public rooms and comfortable bedrooms, a large, efficient kitchen, a pool, a poolhouse—the works. They are insistent, however, that the structure respect its setting and speak to the local Shingle Style vernacular. They want it, in short, to have more in common with houses put up at the turn of the 20th century than at the turn of the 21st.

So how do they solve this conundrum of siting, setting and size? They sit down with their architect, Frank Greenwald, and their interior designer, Timothy Macdonald,

With its Shingle Style front portion and attached barnlike structures in the rear, a Wainscott, New York, residence, designed by architect Frank Greenwald, is an unusual combination of formal and informal. ABOVE: The turret, near the porte cochere, was inspired by a local chapel.

OPPOSITE: Interior designer Timothy Macdonald says the entrance hall is “the classic you’d expect.” An oil by Eric Freeman is on the balcony. Amy Perlin Antiques cabinet. Carlos de la Puente chandelier. Mirror, Lee Calicchio. Newel Art Galleries lamp. Patterson, Flynn & Martin rugs.





"The key," Macdonald says of the living room, "is to maintain a comfortable formality." Mill House console cabinet, John Boone brass-framed low table and French lacquered low table. Marvin Alexander sconces. Drapery and shade linen, Cowtan & Tout. Lee Calicchio fauteuils, with Great Plains linen. Newel mirror.



and they write a story. It goes something like this: Once upon a time, several generations back, a family of farmers settled in Wainscott and built an elegant, understated Shingle Style house on Main Street. As the family prospered and proliferated over the years, they expanded their house to the rear of their property, annexing and converting an old barn and outbuildings. The resulting house is one that moves across both space and time.

"I don't know if I've ever worked from a story like this before," says Greenwald. "But fairly quickly it gave us a solution to this problem of presenting a modest face to the street while being able to stretch out toward the rear of the property. It also freed us to design two almost distinct, though clearly related, houses."

The front portion of the house is markedly more formal than the one that was imagined to have followed later. Here Greenwald began with a two-story entrance hall, which doubles as a music room and a gallery for the clients' ever-expanding collection of contemporary art. Downstairs, the hall distributes visitors to a living room and its attached circular library, a billiard room and a formal dining room; upstairs, it leads to the master suite and office. Greenwald derived most of the details through his study of traditional Shingle Style houses: The floors, for instance, are made of custom-milled two-inch Douglas fir. The trim, baseboards, door casings and doors, also custom, all have a classic refine-



ABOVE: A neutral palette in the living room provides a perfect backdrop for the couple's art. Michael Gregory's 2002 oil *Tonasket* hangs above a mahogany commode with a marble top.





OPPOSITE: Cypress beams in the family room add a barnlike effect. John Boone low table. Games chairs, Holly Hunt. Brunswick & Fils drapery fabric. Eyeglass molds, Amy Perlin; firewood barrel, Suzanne Golden Antiques. Patterson, Flynn & Martin rug. Samsung television.

ABOVE: "We designed some of the kitchen fittings to look like old furniture," using zinc for the counters and sinks, explains Greenwald. In the kitchen passageway, the windows look out onto the boxwood garden. The Tibetan runner is from Michaelian & Kohlberg.

The fieldstone wall, unfinished-fir floor and cypress ceiling in the screen porch accentuate its indoor-outdoor feel. Walters Wicker rattan sofa and armchair. Donghia sofa, armchair and dining chair fabrics. John Boone low table with bronze base and travertine top.











A narrative helped resolve “the problem of presenting a modest face to the street while being able to stretch out toward the rear of the property.”

ment of proportion and scale. The ceilings in the entrance gallery and living room are coffered; the dining and billiard room walls are fitted with recessed paneling. Except for the billiard room, which is lined in lightly stained white oak, Macdonald painted all the woodwork a crisp white.

The house may be period in inspiration, but it is contemporary in function and in its sensitivity to light and views. In the front of the house, this is evident mostly in the window sizes, which are larger, generally, than they would have been

in an old shingled pile. In the rear of the house, there is a more modern floor plan: Downstairs, the kitchen, breakfast room and family room interconnect effortlessly, while upstairs a passel of children’s bedrooms stand at a sensible distance from the master suite.

In keeping with the working narrative, the rear of the house also brings on a change in materials and ambience. Most notable, of course, is the scale of the “barn” (the family room), whose ceiling rises to 30 dramatic, light-filled feet at its peak.

The floors in this room, as throughout the rear of the house, are made of reclaimed-oak barn flooring, stained a chocolate hue. The striking curved trussed ceiling is built out of sinker cypress, so named because the wood was salvaged from old-growth logs that fell off barges in the South and were preserved by the decades they spent underwater.

The barnlike part of the house was a compromise Greenwald devised to please both the husband and the wife: “He want-

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**OPPOSITE:** For the master bedroom, “we went back to a more formal approach,” notes Macdonald. Travers sofa pillow fabric and glazed linen wallcovering. Nobilis drapery cotton. Brunschwig & Fils lounge chair and ottoman fabric. Stark carpet. Newel bronze sconces.

**OPPOSITE ABOVE:** The office, off the master bedroom, “is a room of views and vistas,” says Greenwald. Lorin Marsh barley-twist chair. Carlos de la Puente lamp. **ABOVE:** The pool was built into an old stone foundation. The landscape design is by Joseph Tyree. Kingsley-Bate chaise longues.