



A Polished Pearl

Casabella Interiors transforms a dated Cape cottage into a semi-precious gem of a sanctuary

Wikipedia defines *beachcombing* as an activity that consists of an individual "combing" (or searching) the beach and the intertidal zone, looking for things of value, interest or utility. The day that a lucky Ohio couple vacationing on the Cape discovered a mid-century beach cottage perched above Cape Cod Bay in the seaside Sandwich neighborhood of Scorton Shores, they became world-class beachcombers. "Within a short amount of time we realized we absolutely loved Sandwich," she recalls. "As much as everyone is in a hurry to get farther down the Cape to other towns, we were perfectly content to enjoy this sweet village at the top of the Cape." One day, as they considered putting down some semi-permanent roots, they saw a small cottage for sale with a heart-stopping view, and bought it that evening.

"My husband has a favorite song that has always been a part of our marriage," the homeowner says. "It is 'Lucky Enough' by Scott Kirby, and he sings about being lucky enough to live on blue water. That day, we looked at each other and said, 'Maybe now we are finally lucky enough.'"

The home had the benefit of only one previous owner, who built it in the late 1950s for their family as a summer vacation spot. As a result, it was a lovingly cared for home that had good, solid bones. "The previous owners had taken such good care of the home; it was a real treasure for us to find it," she says. But the home did need furniture and a bit of updating to make it their own.

This is a husband-and-wife team who are not casual combers of these special shores, but well-prepared explorers and self-proclaimed aficionados of the *Cape Cod LIFE* "Best of" list. "Although both my husband and I spent summers coming to the Cape, we weren't really familiar with the various businesses. So, we are always armed with the 'Best of' list for everything from dining to shopping recommendations. I actually owe finding Michele and Shannon at Casabella to *Cape Cod LIFE*. We used the list to find the best 'Shop for the Home' when we started to look for furniture and accessories."

Michele Chagnon-Holbrook, owner of Casabella Interiors, has an exquisite showroom



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By Julie Craven Wagner // Photography by Richard Hilgendorff

on Route 6A in East Sandwich, where over 2,500 square feet of home accessories, (and an additional 4,000 square foot warehouse off-site) allow her entire staff to provide full-service interior design. “We stopped in to look for a new couch, but it wasn’t long before Michele—with her enthusiasm and her expertise—made us pause to consider doing more than just adding furniture,” the homeowner says. Chagnon-Holbrook’s talents lie in her ability to not only transform a space into a sophisticated coastal retreat, but also to deftly and competently manage the entire process, resulting in a happy, stress-free experience for her clients. “I would live at Casabella if I could,” the homeowner says with a giggle. “It just offered everything we had wanted: the colors, the style, the quality. Michele, as well as the people that work for her, made the decision to move forward very easy.”

After initial consultations to transform the kitchen area of the 1,008 square foot cottage, the homeowner says the project took on a life of its own. To characterize Casabella’s function as “designer,” or even “general contractor” overseeing the entire project would



discount the invaluable contribution they bring to their clients. They provide a unique concierge-like commitment to the projects they handle. “Casabella seems to know everyone, at least everyone that you need to know in order to execute a high-quality renovation,” the homeowner says. Chagnon-Holbrook confirms the importance of establishing a relationship of trust and competence with her clients, explaining, “Homeowners don’t want to spend their precious time on the Cape waiting for contractors or chasing down sources. That’s what my team does so well. We give our clients the chance to enjoy their surroundings and the spaces we’ve created for them.”

The goals of the project were pretty simple, in part due to the limited amount of space, but perhaps more significantly because the size limitations forced a deliberate consideration of what was important to achieve maximum enjoyment of the home. “I kept saying to Michele and Shannon, ‘I don’t have three bathrooms, I don’t have a lot of space for extra furniture, so I want everything to be special.’ They embraced that, and as a result, we chose very unique things,” the homeowner recalls. Some of those special details are found in items like the farmhouse sink in the kitchen that has a unique hand-woven basket weave on the front. The homeowner says it was one of her favorite things in her mother’s home, so they tracked down the artist in Texas and asked him to craft another one for the Cape cottage. Another showstopper in the kitchen is found in the pair of



Soothing shades of blue, taupe and sand - drawn straight from the beach outside - are sparked by bits of stainless, silver and glass, to make the perfect beachside cottage. All items available through Casabella Interiors, East Sandwich.



pendants that crown the oversized island. Reminiscent of a Fresnel lens associated with classic lighthouses, the pendants' glass shades fracture and prism the light for maximum drama, all while suspended in chunky stainless steel anchor chain.

Throughout, the purposeful attention to detail that has become associated with a Casabella project is evident. Hammered silver bin pulls in the kitchen sparkle as they complement the diamonds of sunlight dancing on the bay. A small guest room becomes extra-special with a double bed suspended from the ceiling by thick rope. The red brick fireplace is re-faced with stacked stone in hues and textures that look as though they could have washed up on the beach outside. Casabella transforms predictable seaside environs into posh, polished gemstones.

Casabella's suggestion to replace a window and exterior door in the living area with as large a slider as could be accommodated, as well as a slider in the master bedroom, each accessing a substantial deck that runs the waterside length of the house, was met with enthusiasm. "The whole focus of this property is what is going on right outside, the beautiful blue sky and the deep blue of Cape Cod Bay. Casabella accommodated that perfectly with a neutral palette that allows the outside to be the backdrop. The new sliders just make you feel like there is nothing between you and the water," the homeowner explains.

To maximize space and functionality in the bedrooms and the sole



The guests rooms do not feel like an after thought in this special home. Above, a suspended bed makes this room extra-special for any weekend visitors. Below, the waterfront view is complemented perfectly by the seaside touches found in the fabric and accessories in this guest room.



Above, the master bed is tucked into a cozy niche that previously accommodated the plain closet that has been replaced by custom built-ins. Above right, the little details have subtle impact throughout this home. Below, the spa-like bathroom makes up in chic style, anything it may lack in space.



interior bath, Casabella finessed the home's layout down to the inch. When every inch of space counts, each decision must serve a purpose. Space was taken from a closet in a guest room to create a perfect niche for a dresser, which is now flanked by two new closets with smaller double doors requiring less swing and therefore less space. The same guest room gave up precious inches to create a luxurious makeup station, centered between functional built-ins in the master. The spa-like bathroom now has a gleaming glass shower that maintains its sleek profile by utilizing a length of floor drains set into the stylish floor tile instead of a threshold, as would be the standard choice. To maximize function in the small space, Casabella directed her subcontractors to split the shower door to either side of the corner, again limiting the need for additional space to accommodate the swing. An oversized outdoor shower, just steps from the beach, provides options when guests visit for the weekend.

An outdoor overhang at the entry of the original design was converted into a three-season porch, with extra seating and an outdoor SkyVue television. Visitors are informed that they have arrived as they are greeted by a blue, wooden Seaport Shutter storm door with the home's latitude and longitude carved in gold letters. The space provides another 55 square feet of seasonal living space, and with its multifunctionality, the porch serves as a friendly entrance, a mudroom, and even an additional dining area if necessary.

The homeowner says the day she and her husband found Casabella Interiors with the help of *Cape Cod LIFE's* "Best of" list was a particularly great day on Cape Cod. "My husband says it was the most expensive couch he has ever bought! But seriously, it was an invaluable find."

Julie Craven Wagner is the editor of Cape Cod HOME.