

So well suited to its gracious old neighborhood and so perfectly attuned to the needs of its owners, a home in Weston, Massachusetts, cleverly disguises its origins as a brand-new spec house. TEXT BY MEGAN FULWEILER • PHOTOGRAPHY BY SAM GRAY • ARCHITECTURE: THOMAS CATALANO • INTERIOR DESIGN: BARBARA KOTZEN • LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE: MARC MAZZARELLI • BUILDER: MARK CAHILL

Made to Order







The family's golden retriever, Jake, stretches out in the foyer beneath Sam Barber's painting of swan boats. Facing page: In the living room, pale yellow and tan with a lively burst of red form the palette.



Old or new? A jogger pounding by on a sweet spring morning wouldn't even think to ask. The surrounding homes, all of a similar traditional style, boast impressive pedigrees dating back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Since this house complements its neighbors, it's often assumed to be of the same vintage—a mistaken conclusion that makes Thomas Catalano a happy man. "We wanted it to look like it's been here forever. We had no set agenda except to respect the context of the site," the Boston-based architect says.

Prettiiness aside, the location brought problems. The street has been designated historic—a coveted label that entails design constraints. In addition, the property slopes north. To gather sun, correct orientation was key. The new house had to maintain the area's unique flavor, relate gracefully to the topography and, of course, be immensely livable.

Catalano was originally commissioned, though, to design this impressive Weston house as a spec for area builder and developer Mark Cahill. By the time the owners showed up, the challenges had already been overcome. Similar materials and a clever an-

gling of the three-story structure on the lot wedded the home to its neighborhood and visually diminished its 10,000-square-foot size.

Catalano astutely hid the garage to the side and pushed the public rooms people gravitate to—kitchen, dining and living—toward the south to be flooded with light. At the same time, interior designer Barbara Kotzen of Wellesley, Massachusetts, skillfully saw to it that the interior was an inviting canvas that buyers could easily transform to suit their personalities. "I believe every home, every room, should be a reflection of its owners," she explains.

Today's owners admired the house from the start. "It was 75 percent of what we'd been searching for," says the husband. "We had only to go in and make some changes so it would work for our family."

An avid car enthusiast and wine connoisseur, he envisioned an expansive garage for storing prized vehicles and a wine cellar for his significant collection. Exercise, billiard and media rooms were priorities as well. No less important was a spacious mudroom for the steady stream of family and friends.

In the comfortable family room, pristine trimwork and classic plantation shutters set off designer Barbara Kotzen's mix of lively but cohesive patterns. "I listen to my clients," says the designer. "Their favorite colors set the tone."







Catalano and Kotzen remained on board to ensure that the upgrades unfolded in a manner that would befit the near-perfect house. The generous basement provided plenty of footage for a billiard room and a wine cellar which, with its cream-colored limestone floor, cedar beams, floor-to-ceiling racks and rock-faced walls, would be any oenophile's dream. With guidance from Fred Tregaskis at New England Wine Cellars in Falls Village, Connecticut, the cellar is as functional as it is arresting (so much so that it was chosen for the cover of *Living With Wine*, published by Clarkson and Potter last year).

Another happy discovery: there was more than enough space lurking beneath the living and dining room for a high-tech media room. Kotzen increased

the drama, adding walls covered in custom fabric to conceal top-notch acoustic speakers nested between shiny blue and gold-leafed pilasters. Soft leather chairs set in neat rows elevate game time (the husband is also a baseball fan), giving family and guests entertainment at its best.

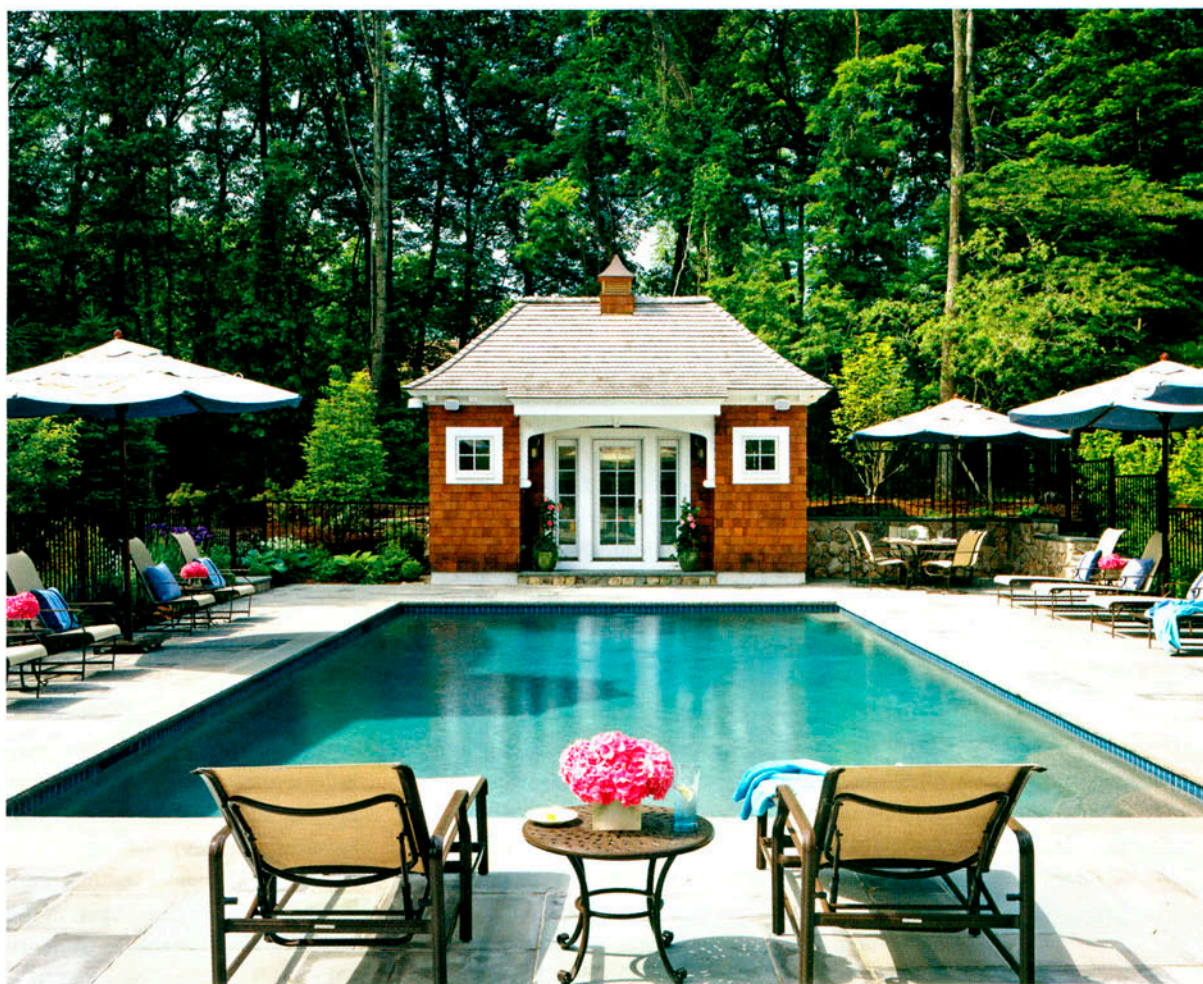
The third floor proved an ideal locale for an exercise room. Yet the garage dilemma still remained. "It was only for three cars, and regulations prevented me from making it any larger," says the husband.

Catalano's solution was ingenious. In order to maintain the garage's footprint, up came the floor and in came the excavators to make way for three more cars below with automatic lifts.

As much as they wanted the house to be beautiful,



Top: Landscape architect Marc Mazzearelli preserved many of the site's trees. Fieldstone walls exude New England flavor. Bottom: The cabana mimics the home's architectural style. Facing page: French doors extend along the home's southern exposure.





the owners, parents of two teenage daughters, also yearned for comfort. Hands-off fabrics and delicate furniture were verboten. While an abundance of quality millwork—added at the owners' request—dictated a certain degree of formality, everyone agreed that handsome needn't be rigid.

Catalano's floor plan allows for a straight view from the vestibule through the dining room and out across the terrace to the garden where a stellar bronze sculpture halts the eye. Every room feels open and sunlit. Accordingly, Kotzen and her clients opted for a spirit-lifting, timeless decor that speaks to their personal preferences, in particular, flowers for the wife.

Pale yellow, red, tan and brown replaced yesterday's safe neutral palette. A thread of white-painted woodwork links the rooms and emphasizes the archi-

tecture. "The rooms don't necessarily match one another, but they do flow together," says Kotzen. Floral patterns resonate from the warm living room—the wife's favorite space for reading—to the family room, but never overpower. In the latter, for instance, bloom-festooned pillows rest atop a leather sofa.

Antiques mingle with new pieces in rich finishes throughout the house. Every room is truly meant to be used. In addition to a piano, the living room includes a game table where the husband lays his puzzles. The sofa is upholstered in cut velvet—a fabric that clearly invites lingering.

With the change of seasons, French doors along the south side are flung open to the stone terrace. There's no denying that as wonderfully cocoon-like as the gracious home becomes in winter, warm



Top: Deep wooden cases hold legions of bottles in the temperature-controlled wine cellar. *Bottom:* Limestone counters and a copper sink elevate the tasting room. *Facing page:* Red suede covers the billiard room's walls.

weather doubles the rewards.

The pool was laid when the owners moved in, but minus the bluestone paving, it lacked presence. The new stone connects the dazzling pool and the generous terrace. And that dear pool house! Newly installed with all the amenities the cabana also blocks neighbors, adding privacy. How well stonework, plantings and buildings correspond is also due to the talents of Cambridge landscape architect Marc Mazzealli. "We maximized what we had," he says.

From its beginnings as a spec house, the home has evolved into a supremely gratifying sanctuary. Inside and out, the owners have achieved their goals on a grand scale, leaving their history-rich street proud. •

Resources For more information about this home, see page 208.

