



Photos by Bob Handelman

The home, built on the site of a former carriage house, required many small-space solutions, including much custom site-built cabinetry. Its design earned the builder a national award from Remodeling magazine.

# A TOAST TO STILL MARSH COTTAGE



A starfish mantel detail reflects the home's marsh location.

**Prohibition lore gives way to one stunning home in Clinton**

By Kira Van Deusen

**T**ALES HAVE BEEN TOLD of bootleggers who ran rum from Duck Island and the beach across from the site of this Clinton home during the days of Prohibition from 1920 until the repeal in 1933.

One historical account relates that a



flock of geese were kept on the island to warn of surprise visits. Agents always arrived too late to catch the bootleggers anyway, and the case of Scotch left alone on the beach would disappear with their departure.

Other recorded stories recount that the carriage house previously on the site of this beautiful new home, provided a discrete hideaway and source of liquor. An old still was purported to have been kept there in the attic and there exist some rare, old photographs as proof. Although Still Marsh Cottage is a witty reference to the days of Prohibition, it is equally true as it describes the tranquility of the surrounding property.

Brian and Linda Dewhirst owned the waterfront property, which included the carriage house across the street. In 2008, the property was subdivided, and the Dewhirsts went ahead with their plan of re-purposing the carriage house property to build a smaller home with beach rights, which was completed in 2009.



A clever use of space maximizes the size of the long and narrow master bath. Note all the cabinetry for storage.

The Dewhirsts hired Rick Brauchler Jr. & Co., LLC, of Clinton to bring their new construction project to life. Rick spent many hours with Brian and Linda to transform their dream into reality.

"Almost every morning, we would meet with the Dewhirsts and the

project would evolve," said Brauchler. "Linda and Brian had great ideas, and we were just the crew to bring them to life," he added.

Having served as a carriage house for over a century (and now in a state of disrepair), the building was demol-



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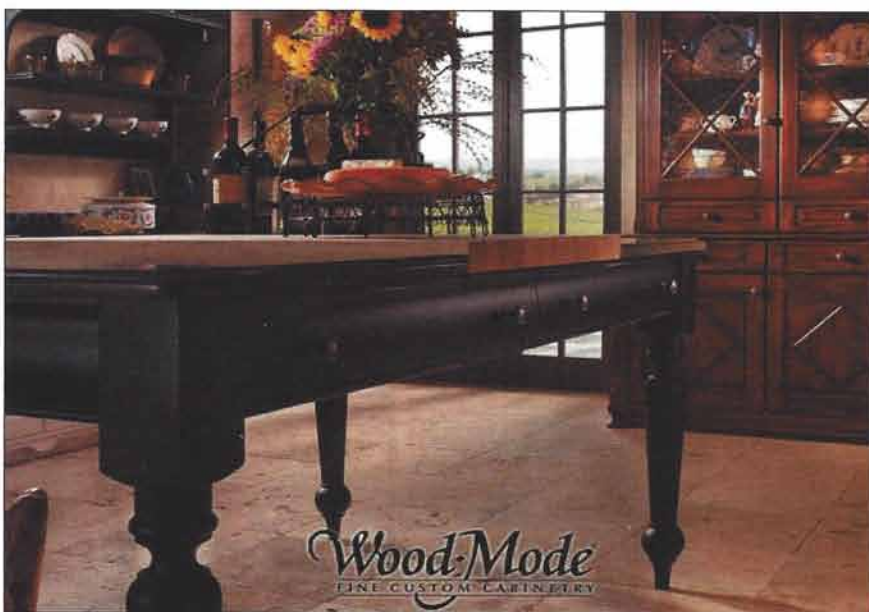
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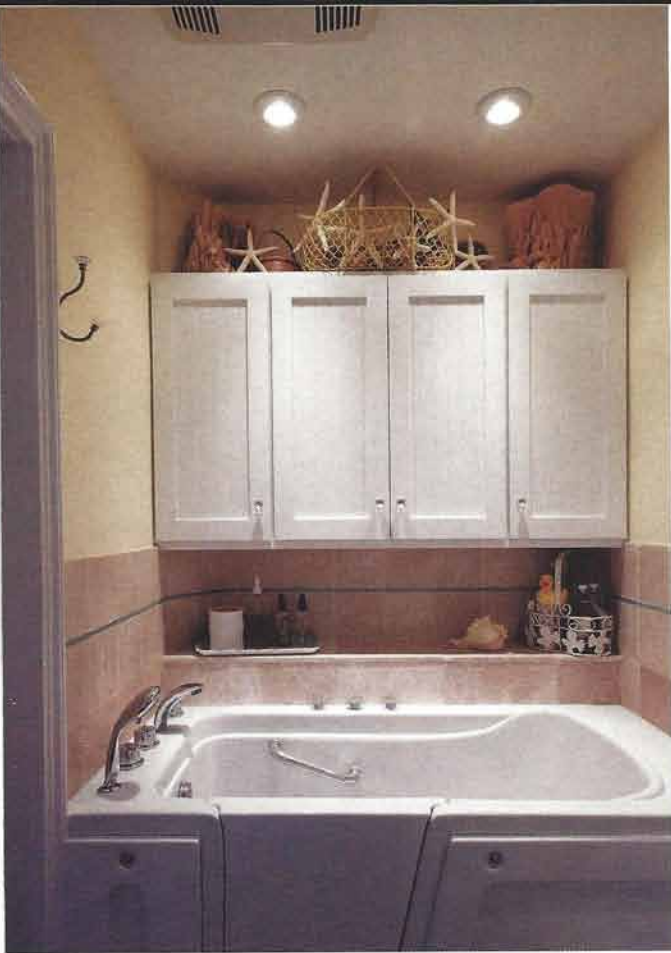
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A walk-in whirlpool tub in the master bath, a welcome respite after a hard day.

ished to pave the way for the new custom home with amazing marsh and sea views.

The small footprint of the property necessitated a very creative design and similarly, the home required many small-space solutions, including custom site-built cabinetry.

"Linda would leave us sticky notes letting us know what each built-in needed to accommodate," Rick says. "We spared no research because the Dewhirsts were moving from a 3,000-square-foot home to a home slightly larger than half its size," he said incredulously.

All of the storage built-in units were constructed on site. Every square inch was extensively thought out to fit the owners' needs. An elevator rises from the garage through the first and second floors, and there is a staircase from the second to the third floor where a utility room/office/studio is located. There are two bedrooms on the second floor each with a private bath, a third-floor full bath, and a first-floor powder room tucked beneath the stairs.

Five-inch wide, whitewashed select white oak planks create floors that provide a handsome backdrop to pale yellows, seaside blues and white. A crisp nautical feel permeates the space.

The garage level of the home is 20 by 24 feet, while the first living level was cantilevered out 2 feet on three sides, providing a 24- by 26-foot living space. The total living space in the home is 1,580 square feet.

"We had to keep the size in mind when it came to all the major components," Brauchler said. "We used a high-velocity HVAC system because the duct work was much smaller and allowed us to use smaller soffits."

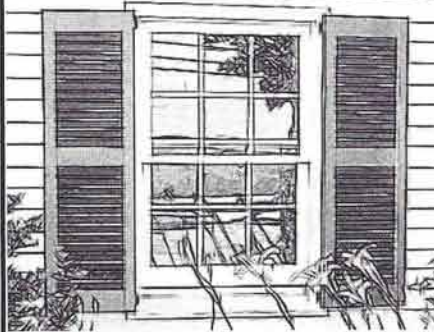


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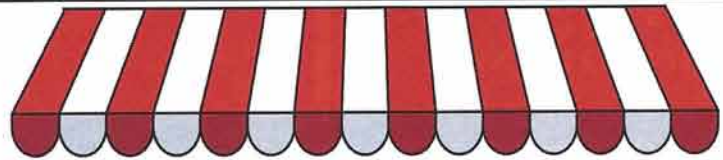
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The bedrooms offer their own private second-floor decks with clear glass railing panels that allow for marsh views as breathtaking from inside as outside.

Brauchler designed this home to maximize space and energy efficiency, and built a house that is ready for the next century. Some of the special features he included are air and water purification systems, a “smart electrical system” that automatically regulates lighting, heat and air conditioning and can even be customized to turn on the coffee pot. Another attractive feature is a gas fireplace complete with custom shelving that not only provides cozy ambience, but can heat the house in case of a power outage. The house is built tough and smart: It is able to withstand 150 mile per hour winds and the window design maximizes warm sunlight into all rooms, keeping the house naturally warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

It is this kind of attention to detail that earned Brauchler’s company a national award from *Remodeling* magazine where they won a spot in the 2012 top 300 remodelers of the country. The magazine provides an annual list and reviews the top rated, full-service builders and remodelers

and polls their clientele and reviews an extensive portfolio as a prerequisite to qualification. The Dewhirsts’ cottage is one example of Brauchler’s detail-driven expertise.

Although small in stature, this home manages to accommodate all the amenities of homes much larger in size. One such feature is an extravagant master bath suite with steam shower, walk-in whirlpool tub and fine tile work. In addition, both bedrooms include their own private bath and access to beautiful second-floor decks. An interesting feature of these decks is the clear glass railing panels that allow for views as breathtaking from inside the home as they are from a seat on the deck.

The powder room beneath the stairs is a treat to the eyes. Linda asked Rick to create a wood platform countertop to which she glued her collection of small shells and sea treasures. She then covered it with an epoxy resin to create a beautifully unique piece with a personal touch. A glass vessel sink complements the countertop and does not obstruct the

view of the artwork beneath.

The top floor of the cottage is a utility room and would make the perfect home office or craft room and boasts the best sea views in the home.

The house also has a large bright family room with a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows leading to another glass-railed deck overlooking the marsh. Custom kitchen and pantry with greenhouse window, dining area and laundry room are other perks that make this space sensational. Secret storage areas throughout the house are hidden behind wainscoting and “pop open” when given a little push.

Outdoor details like the extensive deck systems, lattice work, white fencing, an electric car gate, sprinkler system, stunning landscaping and fine masonry work round out this truly unique home.

Visit [www.rickbrauchler.com](http://www.rickbrauchler.com) to see more photos of this remarkable design build project.

*Kira Van Deusen is a kitchen designer who likes to write about building and design projects. She works at Covenant Kitchens & Baths in Westbrook.*