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This Heritage Cottage on Cape Cod Nods to Classic New England Design—With a Twist

Rather than craft a scheme for aesthetics, designer Helen Bergin leaned into a feeling.

BY ALYSSA LONGOBUCCO | PUBLISHED: AUG 14, 2026

 SAVE ARTICLE



By late afternoon in East Sandwich, the golden summer light has a way of making everything feel a little softer. It slips off the nearby bay and across the lattice-clad pool pavilion, catching on the greens and blues of the patio, and settling into the recesses of a house engineered to accommodate the well-worn rhythms of a Cape Cod summer: sandy dog paws padding through the kitchen on the hunt for extras, playing cards dealt around a table, a drink passed through the awning window above the sink to someone waiting on the porch. The latter, **designer Helen Bergin** says, is “the true living room of the house”—and, fittingly, the place most likely to see stories unfold for summers to come.

For the homeowners, that feeling of belonging—and a sense of history in the making—stretches back generations. Summers on Cape Cod have been a long-time family tradition, and when they enlisted Bergin to transform an East Sandwich beach house into their own gathering place, nostalgia was discussed in the same breath as swatches and color palettes. In fact, there wasn’t much of a visual directive at all. “They didn’t tell us what they wanted the house to look like—they told us how they wanted it to feel,” Bergin says.

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That feeling—of easy familiarity and the patina of a home collected over time—became the North Star for an ambitious transformation that included a gut renovation, third-floor addition, pool pavilion, and revitalized landscape. Inside, Bergin resisted anything that might read as new. White oak wraps a former dining room turned moody library; Tabarka tile gives the pantry instant age; antiques mingle with playful patterns; and verdigris makes several appearances, thanks to what

Bergin says is its “patina, personality, and just the right amount of whimsy.”

Though it’s generous in both size and finish, the best measure of the home’s success is how readily it encourages you to settle in. Bergin’s favorite spot is the breakfast nook, where she imagines coffee in the morning giving way to wine, books, and games of gin rummy as the day unfolds. “It’s the kind of room that makes you slow down and stay a little longer,” she says. “To me, that’s exactly what Cape Cod living is all about.”

FAST FACTS

Designer: Helen Bergin

Architect: Kevin Dauphinais, Sandbox Design

Builder: Thomas Blake Builder

Landscape Design: Wagner Hodgson

Location: Cape Cod, Massachusetts

The Space: A five-bedroom, five-bathroom home across 7,000 square feet

KITCHEN

Low, wood-clad ceilings lend the feel of age and history.



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Cabinet paint: Borrowed Light, Farrow & Ball. Stools: Crump & Kwash. Pendants: Urban Electric. Runner: custom, L&M.



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Countertop material: Audacia Quartzite. **Backsplash:** Discovery Tile. **Sconces:** Urban Electric. **Cabinet hardware:** Rocky Mountain Hardware. **Roman shade:** custom, in Zak & Fox fabric.

Bergin completely gutted the original kitchen, expanding the footprint to create a kitchen that balances timeless Cape character with modern functionality. “The magic is truly in the mix of materials,” the designer adds. “These clients truly live in their kitchen, so it had to be equal parts beautiful and functional. We chose a stone that feels elevated but is easy to maintain, spent countless meetings perfecting the integrated dog feeding station, and I refused to compromise on the island

legs. They're subtle details, but they're what give the kitchen its personality.”

PANTRY

A deeper shade of blue ties this functional workspace into the kitchen.



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Paint color: De Nimes, Farrow & Ball. **Countertop material:** Bass Stone Fusion Green. **Cabinet hardware:** Rocky Mountain Hardware. **Flushmount:** Urban Electric.

The Tabarka tile floors in the pantry took Bergin a bit of convincing with her clients, but they were worth the effort. “They’re so important to the overall cohesion of the house,” she explains. “The client really craved patina and that beautifully lived-in feeling, and these tiles absolutely delivered. They brought just the right amount of age, texture, and soul to the pantry.”

DINING ROOM

An oval table offers plenty of room for weekend visitors.



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Paint: Vert de Terre, Farrow & Ball. Wallpaper: Elizabeth Dow. Table: Nickey Kehoe. Chairs: Luteca Eugenio, in Zak + Fox fabric. Chandelier: Lostine.

Bergin's favorite room in the house, the dining room, is anchored by a custom, L-shaped banquette, clad in Italian leather from Moore & Giles. Soft sage green blankets the whole room, accented by a piece of original art by Helen Frankenthaler.

LIBRARY

A high-gloss lacquered ceiling makes the most of the room's natural light.



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Ceiling paint: Vert de Terre, Farrow & Ball. Couch: George Smith, in Jasper Fabrics. Chairs: Antique Socialist. Ottoman: Clad Home. Side table: Corbin Cruise. Rug: STARK. Art: Helen Frankenthaler. Chandelier: Urban Electric.

Originally the formal dining room (“Who needs that in a summer house?” says Bergin), this space morphed into a cozy, moody library during the renovation. White oak built-ins add a spot to stash reads, while an Elitis wallcovering and a lacquered ceiling coat the room in verdant color.

POWDER ROOM

A stone sink straight from Turkey brings in a touch of natural texture.



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Trim paint: De Nimes, Farrow & Ball. Sconces: Visual Comfort & Co., with custom shades in C&C Milano fabric. Sink skirt: custom, in C&C Milano fabric. Mirror: Palecek.

After “rolling the dice” on a monolithic sink from Turkey, sourced via Etsy, Bergin outfitted the rest of the room in fairly modern finishes, including a chambray-inspired wallpaper from Studio Four NYC, a curvy mirror, and polished nickel accessories.



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BUNK ROOM

Pattern-drenching disguises the room’s angular ceilings.



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Trim paint: Sutcliffe Green, Farrow & Ball. Rug: custom, L&M. Desk chairs: Four Hands. Lamps: Ethan Streicher.

“Every summer house deserves a bunk room that doesn't take itself too seriously,” Bergin says of this playful retreat, which she clad in wallpaper from Wayne Pate x Studio Four NYC. “This one is wrapped in pattern and designed for endless sleepovers and rainy-day board games.”

DEN

A do-it-all space to make it easier to socialize over the summer.



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Wall paint: Wimborne White, Farrow & Ball. Bedding, drapery: Helene Blanche.



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Cabinet paint color: Hague Blue, Farrow & Ball. Cabinet wallpaper: Arte. Backsplash: Artistic Tile.

Outfitted with everything from a comfortable seating area to a bed nook and bar, the home's den is the ideal spot to entertain summer guests, rain or shine.

SON'S BEDROOM

Grown-up colors help the space carry into adulthood.



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Paint: Sugar Bush Light (trim), Orangery (ceiling), both Farrow & Ball. Bed: CEU Studio.
Bedding: Pioneer Linens. Rug: custom, L&M.



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Wallpaper: Robert Kime.

Described by Bergin as “happy, handsome, and just the right amount of playful,” this bedroom—designed for the family’s son—boasts a yellow ceiling that bottles the feeling of a sun-soaked August by the beach.

GUEST BEDROOM

A vintage secretary ensures this room has all the comforts of home.



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Bedding: Pioneer Linens. Nightstand: Made Goods. Pendant light: Arteriors.



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Roman shades: custom, in C&C Milano fabric. Rug: Kathryn Hunt. Chair: Helen Bergin Interiors for Abner Henry.

Affectionately known as the garden suite, this comfortable escape has been known to cause guests to extend their stay by a day or two, jokes Bergin. Robert Kime wallpaper adds charm and playful personality, while a bobbin bed from Jullian Chinchester brings prominence.

KID'S BATHROOM

All-over blues call to mind stormy seas—in a relaxed way, of course.



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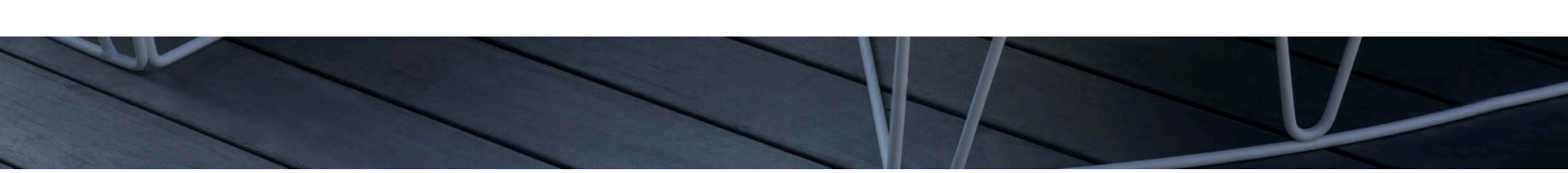
Wall and floor tile: Clé. Sink fixtures: Waterworks. Sconces: Visual Comfort & Co. Café curtain: custom, C&C Milano.

To create a kid's bath that “feels playful without sacrificing style,” Bergin leaned into a monochromatic palette of moody blues, relying on texture to differentiate the space. Handmade zellige tile covers the walls and floor in a nod to craftsmanship.

DECK & PATIO

The oceanfront views were priority number one.





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Couch: Isimar, in Perennials fabric.

“We leaned into greens and blues to echo the tree line and let the patio feel like a natural extension of the landscape,” Bergin says of the expansive outdoor space. “The goal was for the pool and surrounding spaces to feel like they had always belonged here. We wanted the architecture and materials to quietly blend into the landscape and let the beauty of Cape Cod do the talking.”



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Lounge chairs: Brown Jordan. Side tables: Made Goods. Umbrellas: Tuuci.

About the Designer

Helen Bergin Interiors is a full-service design studio that creates captivating spaces using layered details that are both enchanting and whimsical. Helmed by principal designer Helen Bergin, the HBI design philosophy centers on creating interiors that spark curiosity and invite exploration. From the finest detail to the boldest installation, each space is thoughtfully crafted to balance function, texture, and emotional impact—resulting in immersive, luxury environments.

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