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A HURRICANE-WORTHY STRUCTURE FILLED WITH
COMFORTABLY ELEGANT ROOMS MAKES
A MODEL SEASIDE RETREAT.

Text by Kim Christie Photography by Andrew Waller



For more than 10 years,

Garry and Mary-Lou Pye had been driving around Nova Scotia looking for just the right piece of property. Finally they found it: a little tidal island just outside historic Lunenburg. Steeped in romance and folklore, the island, like so many spots along this coast, had once been the landing point for rum-runners during Prohibition, hence the name: Rum Point. Now, its marshlands are a magnet for great blue herons, kingfishers, eagles, minks and otters, which, along with the view, sold the Pyes on the location. "We love wildlife and the outdoors," says Mary-Lou.

It's here that they built a 7,000-square-foot, four-bedroom summer gathering place for their blended family, which includes seven children ranging in age from 17 to 37, and friends. "We wanted something with acreage, a sandy beach and a view, but it also had to be close to town; somewhere within driving distance of a great restaurant," says Mary-Lou.

ABOVE: The main house is built around a centre core according to the proportions of Greek Revival styles that were brought from New England to Nova Scotia. It's designed to look as if it has been there for at least two centuries, with rooms added on as the family that owned it grew and became more affluent. The small house (foreground), which

was on the property when it was purchased, was converted into a guesthouse. Landscaping, Branch Tree Nursery and Landscaping; all windows, Andersen Windows.

RIGHT: Mary-Lou and Garry Pye with their dogs Brutus, Fergus and Ben. Table, Boyles Furniture; chair, UpCountry; fluted columns (beside door), Joy of Antiques.







They were also looking for a place where they could one day retire. Rum Point was perfect, and its view proved more glorious than expected: Canada's signature schooner, the *Bluenose*, sets her sails directly in front of the point when she heads out to sea.

They called on designer David Ripley, who worked with architectural designer John Hattie, to create a house that would take advantage of its unique site — surrounded on all sides by ocean and marshlands — without succumbing to it. "When you're on the water, there's nothing to stop the wind," says Mary-Lou. To help it withstand the savage winds of the Atlantic, the concrete house was designed with wings, rather than as a single rectangular structure or some other clean shape, and hundreds of trees were planted around

OPPOSITE: Corbelled beams in the entry hall were inspired by nautical design. An antique chandelier from an Ontario opera house makes a grand statement. Beacon Hill drapery fabric, Robert Allen Group; drapery made by Bedford Draperies; wall colour, Matchstick (2013), trim colour, Pointing (2003), Farrow & Ball; table lamp, Bowring; shells, Margolians Maritime; painting, *Coming Home* by J. Spence. **ABOVE:** The living room is designed for everyday comfort with a sisal

carpet and casual upholstered pieces made more elegant with pillows in velvet and velour. Fireplace, Tartaruga Design; upholstered furniture, rug, UpCountry; coffee table, Boyles Furniture; hutch, metal table, Hinkle Furniture; pillows, Recovered Treasures. **RIGHT:** A meandering dirt road leads to the main house past an original barn. The barn is now used for storage and as a tiny museum where old ox harnesses and farm implements are displayed.





the property. When hurricane Juan battered the province in September 2003, the house survived unscathed.

The interior is unlike traditional Maritime homes, which are often cut up into a series of small rooms joined by a back staircase. Instead, the Pyes wanted an open, informal plan of large rooms and gathering spaces. When it came time to decorate, Mary-Lou turned to hundreds of magazines for inspiration on creating a relaxed, warm feeling. "I knew years ago that we were going to end up with a property, so I began ripping out pages. Sometimes, the same look would appear in triplicate — rooms that looked traditional yet informal, country with a little pizzazz. That's how I found my direction."

Even with a clear vision, filling the rooms was daunting. "This house eats furniture!" says Mary-Lou. "We started out with just a table, two chairs and some new mattresses on the floor. It was all so empty that we'd buy something just to fill the space, only to discover that we'd gotten the proportions wrong, and were back where we started."

They mainly shopped for furnishings locally, but also visited High Point, N.C., where manufacturers from around the world converge to display their lines at a bi-annual show. "Everything you see in magazines is there," says Mary-Lou.

Meanwhile, Ripley chose the interior finishes and paint colours. "Everything inside the house is designed to



A path mown through the wildflower meadow leads to a private sandy beach and circles back around the circumference of the island, which measures nine acres at high tide.

ABOVE: In the kitchen, warm wood and stone complement the cool stainless steel backsplash and commercial-style range. The cabinetry is fashioned from bird's-eye maple. Mary-Lou designed two rows of inlaid granite tiles for the floor in front of the stove to match the granite countertops. Kitchen cabinetry, countertops, oven, Fern Kitchens; stainless steel tiles, faucet, Nova Scotia Building Supplies; granite countertops, Nova Tile & Marble.



Designer David Ripley created the kitchen's eating area with a coffered chamfered ceiling to lend it the feel of a ship's galley. A chandelier identical to the one in the main entryway was reworked to give it a different look. The view from the windows is an unobstructed sightline to the entrance of the harbour. Chairs, table, Boyles Furniture; drapery fabric, Robert Allen Group; sisal rug, UpCountry; telescope, Carsand Mosher Photographic.



complement the magic of this property," he says. "I used materials like jatoba wood that would have been used in ship building." Inside the billiards room, with its views of the water, you're hard-pressed to believe that you're not aboard a boat. Ripley's favourite space is the storm room, at the highest point of the roof. To get to it, you climb up a ship's ladder and through a trap door. "It's glass all around and you can see forever," he says.

When they retreat to Rum Point each summer from their home and workaday world in Truro, about a two-hour drive to the northeast, the Pyes take their dogs for frequent walks around the property. It's a veritable jungle from a two-foot high perspective. "But we like it that way," says Mary-Lou. "We don't want to interfere with the ecosystem. In fact, we used to have a farmer who hayed on the island, but the haying came at the same time as the nesting period for the pheasants and bobolinks, so now we just let the meadow grow wild." **ELITE**

ABOVE: The bar area in the billiards room features brass portholes, leather club chairs and floor-to-ceiling jatoba beadboard that make it easy to forget that you're on dry land. The mural is an enlargement of an 1869 oil painting, jatoba (on walls and floor), East Coast Specialty Hardwood; portholes, Lunenburg Foundry; bar stools, Hinkle Furniture; mural, London Billiards Club by Henry

O'Neil; club chairs, Lane Venture; toss pillows, Wind Rose Linens Laces & Collectibles.

LEFT: Vaulted ceilings 24' high create a dramatic vantage point in the billiards room. Roman shades are made in the style of sails. The leather and wood bench is an antique from an old billiards hall in New Glasgow, N.S. Roman shades, Michele Stevens Sailloft; rugs, Elite.



Brass accents give this bathroom the feel of a ship captain's quarters. Tub, faucets, A.J. Walker & Son Hardware; cabinetry, Charles Lantz Cabinetry. **BELOW:** In the guest room, plaid fabric imparts a relaxed look. Plaid fabric, Robert Allen Group; lamp, Joy of Antiques; wall colour, French Gray (18), Farrow & Ball.



The home faces the Atlantic, with water views from every window. **BELOW:** An antique Belgian chair stands out elegantly against shuttered cabinetry in a guest bathroom. Slate tiles, Nova Scotia Building Supplies; cabinetry, Charles Lantz Cabinetry; vase, Margolins Maritime; wall colour, Light Stone (9), Farrow & Ball.

