



With its wood shingles and bright white trim, Gillian and Dickie Dillon's new beach house in Duxbury, Massachusetts, looks as if it has always been in this historic seaside town.

Bayside Breeze

With an airy layout and spectacular sightlines from every room, a compact beach house on Boston's South Shore lives large.

Like many residents of Duxbury, Massachusetts, Gillian and Dickie Dillon like to stroll around the charming seaside town they've called home for more than thirty years. It was on one such walk in the summer of 2015 that they saw a "For Sale" sign on a property they had previously noticed when they were kayaking—a dilapidated beach cottage that clearly needed to be torn down and replaced. The Dillons hadn't even been considering a move, but the view of Duxbury Bay from the property was so breathtaking that they quickly starting making plans. "It had always been my dream to build a house from scratch on the water," says Gillian. "And how often do you get to do that?"



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ABOVE: As befits this new-meets-old house, a chest in the entry hall was made of antique components. **RIGHT:** Simple upholstered seating serves as backdrop to

an assortment of wooden pieces from the homeowners' store, including a reclaimed elm coffee table from England. Rustic ceiling beams add vintage charm to the new house.



“It’s amazing, everything is in the right place for us, and everything works perfectly for our way of living,” says Gillian Dillon.

Understanding how rare the opportunity was, the couple sold their home closer to the center of town—a colonial dating to 1796—and hired architect Jason Herzog to design a new house that would blend into the historic seaside neighborhood, but be tailor-made to the Dillons’ twenty-first-century tastes and lifestyle.

To create the classic beach-cottage exterior his

clients desired, Herzog used wood shingles and white trim, and added pillars and porches in keeping with local style. His dedication to honoring the past without creating a museum piece was rewarded not only by the Dillons’ enthusiastic appreciation, but by their neighbors’ accolades, as well. “When people saw the old cottage being torn down,” Gillian says, “they were terrified of what was going up. But we have had so

many compliments from the neighbors ever since the house was finished.”

There are plenty of old New England touches inside the home, as well, including shiplap on several walls and ceilings, and ten-inch-wide plank oak flooring from Vermont. But the interior also boasts several modern touches, like a cable railing for the central stairway and an open floor plan on the main

PROJECT TEAM

Architecture: Jason Herzog, Herzog Architecture

Interior design: Gillian Dillon, Dillon & Company

Builder: PJ Schneider, S&C Construction

Landscape design: A. J. Tomasi Nurseries



ABOVE: Gillian used a British fireback as a backsplash for her stove, and she loved the look so much that she now imports the hearth protectors for her store. **RIGHT:** Beyond the kitchen, views of

Duxbury Bay stretch out endlessly. **FACING PAGE:** An eighteenth-century Breton table surrounded by reproduction English Windsor chairs makes the perfect setup for casual dining.

level. “No one really uses a formal living room or dining room anymore,” says Gillian. “We just wanted a big, open great-room space that would suit the way we actually live.”

The open plan makes the house feel larger than its 2,500 square feet, the size limitation set by zoning laws and a right-of-way that splits the seaside plot of land into two separate parcels, neither of them very large. “This is an old town, with easements and rights-of-way that you find out about just when you go to build,” says architect Herzog. “On this lot, the previous house hadn’t been in compliance with the current zoning laws, but when you build something



“English furniture is very classic, and typically very simple,” says Gillian, who, like her husband, is originally from Great Britain.



In the stairwell, old-time touches, including shiplap and a barn door, are juxtaposed with the sleek modernity of the railing. **FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** The master bedroom's balcony is the

Dillons' favorite spot in the house. The master bath houses a bench designed by William Yeoward. The bench at the foot of the English bed is an antique from France, reupholstered in simple linen.



new, you have to make sure that you comply.”

Working with local engineer Paul Brogna, Herzog was able to eke out a few extra feet to build on, while still adhering to the ordinances. “But even so,” says the architect, “we were limited on size. And when you’re working with such a small footprint, an open plan is really the only way to go.”

In addition to the spacious cooking/dining/living area, there’s a small study and bathroom on the ground floor. Upstairs, the Dillons had Herzog design a large private bathroom and dressing room in the master suite, and another bath and dressing room for the single guest room, rather than squeeze in extra bedrooms.

“If someone wanted, one day, I suppose they could convert the downstairs study to a third bedroom,” Gillian says, “but we didn’t design this house for resale; we designed it to suit ourselves.”

And it does. “It’s amazing,” she says. “Everything is in the right place for us, and everything works perfectly for our way of living.”

The house also suits the couple’s decorating taste to a T—which is no surprise, as almost all of the furnishings come from their own antiques and home-decor store, Dillon & Company, in nearby Plymouth.

At home as in the shop, the aesthetic leans heavily toward traditional British style. “English furniture is very classic, and typically very simple,” says Gillian, who, like her husband, is originally from Great Brit-

“I look at the view of the bay and I think, ‘Wow, that looks just like the painting right behind me!’” says Gillian.



LEFT: A covered porch provides views not just of the water, but also of the garden the homeowners have created on a portion of the lot on which they were not allowed to build. **BELOW:** The back lawn rolls right down

to the water from which the Dillons originally spotted the property while kayaking. **FACING PAGE:** Because of its proximity to the water, the house had to be reinforced with hidden steel beams to withstand storms.



ain. The clean-lined tables and chests she favors mix beautifully throughout the house with new seating from Lee Industries (also carried at Dillon & Company), all upholstered in tones of beige and grey.

“I move things around a lot because of the business I’m in,” says Gillian, who often lives with an import for a while before putting it up for sale, or borrows something from the shop to refresh the look at home. “So I like to do all the bones very neutral. Then I can bring in different colors with pillows or throws or even a rug.”

She also adds color—and plenty of it—with paintings. Some of the canvases in the Dillons’ home were gifts from artist friends, and others are on loan from the store. And while there are no pictures of boats or seashells (“I don’t like anything theme-y,” Gillian says), the artworks’ coloring and abstract water imag-

ery all nod to the beach. “Sometimes,” says Gillian, “I look at the view of the bay and I think, ‘Wow, that looks just like the painting right behind me!’”

That delightful double-take is a frequent occurrence, because thanks to the home’s open spaces and large windows, Duxbury Bay is visible from every room in the house, year round. In the warmer months, Gillian and Dickie spend much of their free time enjoying the views from the porch, or while sitting on the terrace beyond the French doors of their master suite.

“I love everything about the way the house turned out,” says Gillian. “But being able to sit in my house or on that terrace and look at the water—the same view that drew us to this spot in the first place—that is probably the very best thing of all.” ■

RESOURCES : For more information about this home, see page 188.