Historic Baths for a Shingle



Style House



Simple shapes and understated decoration. *Weathered cedar shingles and a bit of white trim are hallmarks of the Nantucket shingle-style house. The reserved colonnade of this beauty, called Wideawake, frames windows with diamond-patterned mullions.*

Beadboard tile, period fixtures and picture-framed medicine cabinets are just the start

BY DAVID BENTLEY AND ELIZABETH CHURCHILL

By the end of the 19th century, robust economic times created a building boom for summer cottages on Nantucket Island. Many of these houses were constructed according to plans provided in pattern books in what was then called the modern style. A reaction against the gaudy ornamentation and formal plans of Victorian houses, these early modern houses featured open, flowing floor plans and derived their exterior character from the forms and surfaces of the structure itself. Often covered in wood shingles, a material well suited to following the undulating and continuous surfaces, these houses now are referred to as shingle style.

Even in late 19th- and early 20th-century houses, bathrooms and kitchens remained largely utilitarian spaces, generally confined to the rear of the dwelling. A single bath was considered adequate for most houses, even those containing a large number of bedrooms. Today, much of our work restoring historic homes on Nantucket includes creating new bathrooms appropriate to these shingle-style buildings.

The home shown here, which is called Wideawake, originally was a modest dwelling constructed in the late 19th century and then substantially expanded about 1914 into much the same form as it appears today (photo above). Although the open floor plan and number of bedrooms were adequate for the new owners' needs, the two small bathrooms from 1914 were not. Our job was to create four modern bathrooms that could be used all year round,



MASTER BATH
Subliminal sea shapes. *In the master bath (photo facing page), the white, sloping ceilings and oiled-wood floors bring to mind the feel of a yacht. Where the glass wall of the shower meets the wall behind the sink, the beaded wood paneling changes to beaded tile inside the shower (inset photo).*



MASTER BATH: ***Picture-framed mirrors.*** *Mirrors with beveled edges and museum-grade frames conceal the medicine cabinets. The heavy assemblies are supported by European-style cabinet hinges.*

without detracting from the character of the original house.

Drawing inspiration from the original house

Like many shingle-style houses, Wideawake combined exposed framing and sheathing with beadboard and V-groove paneling as interior finish. In the master bath (photo p. 62), the 1x4 center-beaded paneling runs horizontally on the walls and sloped ceilings. At the glass wall of the shower, the wood paneling turns to tile with the same profile (photo p. 63), continuing the look through the frameless glass enclosure around the shower. We chose an off-white paint that matches the tiles for the walls and ceiling, contributing to the illusion that the beadboard wood paneling extends through the shower and around the space.

The quartersawn 1x4 heart-pine flooring has a color similar to teak. Combined with the off-white walls, the effect has a nautical undercurrent, right at home on an island.

Mirrors in turn-of-the-century bathrooms typically were treated like paintings, framed and hung on the wall over free-standing lavatories. We had mirrors framed in an antique silver-leaf picture molding at a frame shop (photos above right). The mirrors conceal custom-made medicine cabinets sized to fit within the courses of beaded paneling.

These framed mirrors can be convincing at not looking like cabinet doors. One of our clients called to request that we put some medicine cabinets in his bathroom, not realizing they were already there.

In the downstairs powder room, we took another approach with the mirror. One of the house's key details is the diamond-patterned mullions in the windows and doors. We reglazed one of the original sashes with mirror glass and hung it over the pedestal lavatory. Trimmed to match the windows in the house, the mirror appears as a window in this internal space (photo top right, facing page).

In the master bath, vanity storage is in a separate custom cabinet built into the eaves. Furniture-style details contribute to the period look. The finishes were carried throughout the renovated areas to create a seamless blend between old and new. A flat brick-pattern tile was used in one of the children's baths, echoing the painted brick chimney that passes through the space.

Small spaces provide a challenge

Our biggest challenge was designing the smallest of the new baths. Older bathrooms

Sources

Fixtures

Waterworks
www.waterworks.com; (800) 899-6757
- Norfolk tub faucet
- Etoile shower faucet
- Belle epoque console lavatories
- Highgate faucets
- Etoile towel bars
- Archive beadboard and star-embossed tile

Sunrise
www.sunrisespecialty.com; (800) 646-9117
- Claw-foot tub in master bath

Electrical

LBL Lighting
www.lbllighting.com; (800) 323-3226
- Nautical cage recessed shower lights

Steven Handelman
www.stevenhandelmanstudios.com; (805) 962-5119
- Wall sconces

Classic Accents
www.classicaccents.net; (800) 245-7742
- Reproduction push-button switches



CHILD'S BATH: Barrel-vault shower. *In a space only 42 in. wide, this tiled shower makes room for getting in and out by way of a frameless glass door that is hinged in the middle. The double-hung window has its own shower curtain to protect it from the indoor weather.*



POWDER ROOM
Mirror meets window. *In a little powder room with no exterior walls, this reglazed window sash has been transformed into a mirror.*

were usually generous spaces, with freestanding fixtures and furnishings for the storage of linens and sundries. By extending an existing shed dormer 4 ft., we were able to recover a usable space of 42 in. wide by 8 ft. long for a new bathroom for one of the children's bedrooms. Into this tiny space we shoehorned a Kohler Standish tub (photo left). At 36 in. by 42 in., this little tub has long been a favorite of ours for tight-space situations. We were dismayed, however, to learn recently that Kohler has discontinued it. The arch-topped ceramic-tile enclosure has a custom bifold frameless shower door that allows access to this confined space.

Details make the difference

Creating a modern bathroom for a historic house requires new fixtures and hardware that are convincing in look and feel, yet possess up-to-date function ("Sources," facing page). We used such products throughout this house. Along with plumbing and lighting fixtures, we replaced the light switches. To match the originals in this house, we chose reproduction push-button switches from Classic Accents (photo right). You can even get them with a dimmer function. □



Don't forget the switches. *Reproduction push-button switches are another finishing touch that shows attention to detail. Note how the cover plate just fits between the panel beading. It's no accident.*

David Bentley and Elizabeth Churchill are partners in Bentley & Churchill, Architects, in Siasconset on Nantucket. The restoration was completed by Michael Phillips Construction. Photos by Charles Miller.