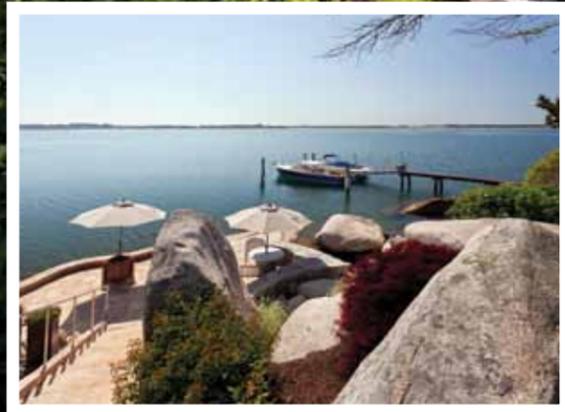A COASTAL NEW ENGLAND HOME IN SOUTHERN RHODE ISLAND IS TRANSFORMED INTO AN ITALIAN SEASIDE VILLA

Resort Living *in* Rhode Island

By Sarah Lamberti • Photography by Dan Cutrona

Design & Construction by BRADFORD DESIGN

Fifteen years ago, Bradford Design was hired to renovate a recently purchased vacation home in southern Rhode Island. At the time, the home had a seaside ship theme. In 2008, the homeowners contacted the design team again – this time to completely renovate and update the house with new amenities such as a home office, exercise room and wine grotto, outdoor entertainment space and even indoor parking.
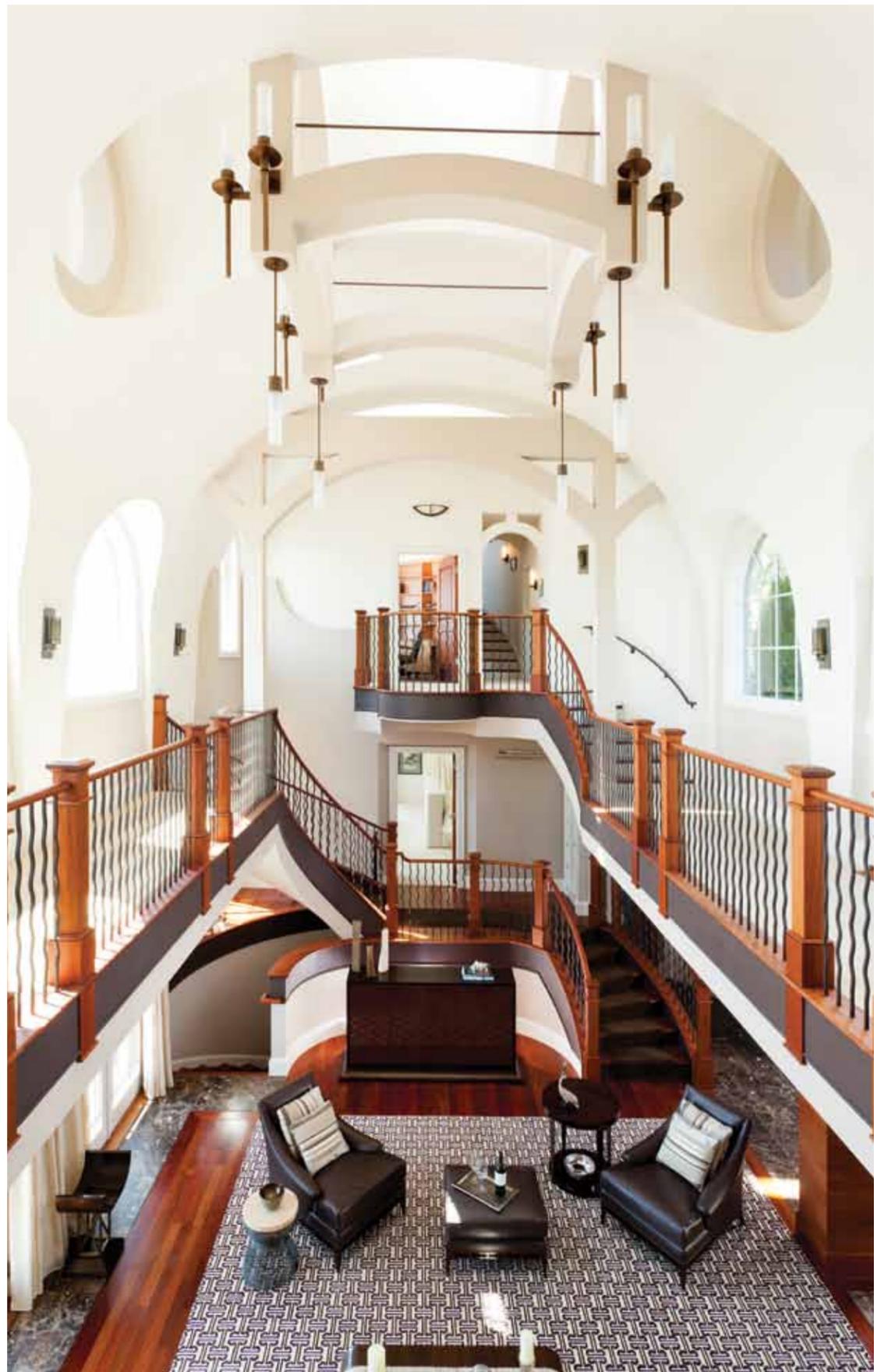
Natural stonework used in both the home's design and the landscaping gives the entire property a cohesive, streamlined feel.

A thoughtful approach leads to a brilliant result

The entire project was under the direction of Bradford Design, which acted as both contractor and designer, creating the overall concept and designing the plans, selecting the materials, doing the actual construction work and bringing in subcontractors as needed. Because of the half-acre lot's relatively narrow shape and area conservation codes, the firm needed to keep construction to within the home's existing footprint, providing more than a few design constraints. Not that anyone would ever guess this after seeing the stunning and unique nearly new build. To be sure, the house is long and narrow, but there's nothing narrow about the vision it took to create the dwelling.

"We couldn't extend out. We could only build up a limited height to fit everything in," says Kristine Teto, owner of Bradford Design. In September 2008, work began by tearing down much of the old house while leaving a few walls up. "We came up with the idea to design it like an Italian villa," says Bradford Aubin, the project's designer. However, because of its lean dimensions and coastal site, they needed to keep the house from undergoing the subtle shifts that can happen during the high winds and adverse weather conditions that can hit New England. This was accomplished by reinforcing the entire frame of the house with steel. They also dug a full basement during the initial construction, providing even more stability. Framing continued for several months and then finishing work was completed in the fall of 2009 with the entire house ready for prime time by June 2010.

At left: The dining room is done with a rich paneling laid on a horizontal and has a lit-from-within ceiling and raised fireplace. Below: A major excavation allowed the installation of a stone-walled grotto and wine cellar.

At left: An inviting sitting area arranged at one end of the great room. Above: The kitchen is spacious, sleek and a perfect place for friends and family to gather.

Bradford Design also conceived the expansive hardscape surrounding the property, including a waterfall fountain with a reflecting pool basin, while collaborating with a landscape designer for additional landscaping. The water feature separates an outdoor kitchen area and a raised outdoor seating area where the panoramic views can truly be appreciated. "[The water feature] is a focal point from the dining room as you look to ocean," says Aubin. "The waterfall falls over into the basin and you can walk across the pool on stepping stones, adding a little life to the backyard."

From an exterior that incorporates the waterfall fountain with a dramatically lit outdoor pool, to an outdoor kitchen with an accompanying sitting/eating area and a spa tucked into a corner of the landscape, to an interior complete with a wine grotto and tasting area, this home is its own coastal resort brimming with custom woodworking throughout such as Brazilian cherry stairways and mahogany lined dining room walls. Luxurious finishes in every room work to enhance the beautiful and functional features found everywhere in the house.

The master bedroom features a private terrace overlooking the water and a soothing tone-on-tone palette.

Beautiful and functional

Without a doubt, one of the most unusual features in the home is the wine grotto and tasting area. This area, which is below the house but still accessible to the backyard via a walk-out, is lined in stone and has a climate controlled wine cellar with storage for 3,200 bottles and a separate tasting area.

"We essentially drove an excavator into the dining room and started digging," says Aubin, adding that they trucked 110 loads of dirt off site to create the wine grotto. They also had to pour a new foundation and tie it into the existing one and then bring in a team of stonemasons to line the walls.

With a stunning fireplace as well, the entire space is ideally suited for intimate wine dinners. "You can access it via a stairway that leads off the dining room or via the outdoor entertainment area," Teto comments. "There is a natural progression through the house either way."

Speaking of the outdoor entertainment area, which extends across two-thirds of the house and opens into the great room, the outdoor space is comprised of a kitchen with a serving island and stools and has a pergola to provide shade. There is also an additional patio with an awning that extends at the push of a button over a striking sculptural steel frame to provide protection from the sun or summer rain creating a 26x36 foot outdoor room.

With a house this large and complex, the owners didn't want
to have to wonder how the house was going to run. There is no need to walk around shutting off lights in every room of the house – you can control all lighting from a single touch remote, according to Aubin.

"If you stay for the weekend, you can push one button – the 'Away' button – and everything goes back to the original timer," he notes. "You can program it to your lifestyle." SNEHOME

Above: This water feature, one of several at the home, allows one to 'walk on water.'