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the

right house can change your life. Toronto-based designer Philip Mitchell and his partner, Mark Narsansky, purchased this 1860s seaside Gothic Revival in Chester, N.S., in 2009, originally intending to fix it up for rental income. "We wanted to restore the home and its floors, trim and millwork to the way they originally looked, while layering in modern conveniences, such as in-floor heating. I'm a huge preservationist," says Philip. That explains why they conducted painstaking research at the local library on design details in similar historic houses in the quaint village. Their diligence won them the 2010 Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia restoration award. Moreover, the 1,800-square-foot home ended up stealing their own hearts. Halfway through the restoration, the couple decided to keep Morning Tide (the site's historic name) as their own vacation retreat. "We fell in love with the house and even more so the village," Philip confirms, adding that the draw is so strong, they plan on making Chester their primary residence in the future. Here's how the eight-month-long project came together.

seaside treasure

TEXT LESLEY YOUNG | PHOTOGRAPHY KATIE CRANE

Designer Philip Mitchell restores an 1860s East Coast charmer to its former glory.

1. SLIPPERY SLOPE

"The challenge with every sloped ceiling is how to make the area feel as big as possible and not have the slope detract from the actual room itself," says homeowner and designer Philip Mitchell. Here, he centred the bed on the wall regardless of the placement of the window and sloped ceiling, and further camouflaged

the impediments with a gallery of vintage bird prints. "The artwork is a clever yet attractive distraction," he says.

DESIGN, Philip Mitchell Design, philipmitchell-design.com; **NIGHT-STAND**, Patina Antiques; **ROMAN SHADE, BED-SKIRT, EURO SHAM & LUMBAR CUSHION FABRICS**, Kravet Canada; **DUVET COVER, COVERLET**, Au Lit Fine Linens; **PILLOWCASE FABRIC**, Primavera; **BIRD PRINTS**, D & E Lake; **custom FRAMING**, Forma Fine Framing.



2. GRAND SCHEME

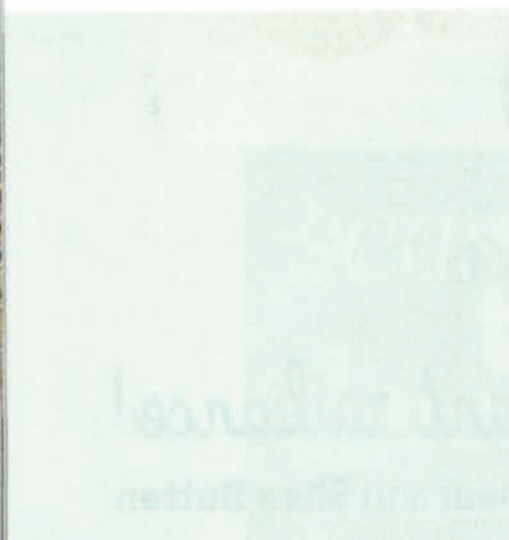
The front door was painted black, a nod to the home's Gothic Revival roots. "Overall, I wanted the impression to be more formal than cottagey," says Philip. He finished the look with restored antique hardware and reproduction sconces.

Custom HOUSE NUMBER & LETTERS, The Lunenburg Chiselworks; **lantern-style SCONCES**, Ginger's.

3. EASY PEASY

Because the home was originally intended to be a full-time rental, the backyard was designed with maintenance-free elements in mind: Pea gravel was used in place of grass and striking blue hydrangeas bring long-lasting colour. Reclaimed-brick pathways delineate several outdoor rooms.

TOSS CUSHION FABRICS, Lee Jofa.





4. MUSICAL CHAIRS

Multiple seating arrangements – including a games table and reading nook as well as the main sitting area – are indicative of a grand old home and make the narrow living room appear bigger than it actually is, explains Philip. He selected the furniture (leather club chairs, a cane sofa and antique sidechairs) separately to create an effortlessly collected

feel. "I love stripes," he adds about his choice of rug. "The variation in colour makes it the ultimate transition pattern, where you are able to tie in all the colours in a room."

Creamy White OC-7 **WALL & TRIM PAINT**, Benjamin Moore; **SOFA & TOSS CUSHION FABRICS**, Télio; **CLUB CHAIRS, RUG, ELITE; SIDECHAIRS**, Patina Antiques; **SIDECHAIR FABRIC**, Kravet Canada; **DRAPERY FABRIC**, Lee Jofa; *Another Dream* **ARTWORK** by Joshua Jensen-Nagle, Galerie de Bellefeuille.

5. UNDER COVER

A found 18th-century mantel helps to restate the home's original character and charm. Panel moulding was added to give it a custom look. The highly coveted Deichmann pottery was made in New Brunswick.

POTTERY, Cynthia Findlay Antiques; **SCONCE**, Ginger's.



I like it when things look as if they've been collected over time rather than matching perfectly.

6. PHOTO FINISH

Antique maps of the East Coast hung along the staircase take advantage of the high ceiling and initiate conversation among guests. Even though Philip had the prints framed at the same time, he chose different frames and mats for every single picture to "age" the gallery. He also preserved the staircase exactly as

it was found, adoring the gingerbread trim. It's the kind of detail that is expensive and difficult to recreate. "The newels and spindles were exceptional. I also loved that the stairs were well used, so I didn't touch the finish. I just painted the decorative trim and spindles cream," explains Philip.

Striped **STAIR RUNNER**, Elite; **MAPS**, D & E Lake; custom **FRAMING**, Forma Fine Framing.

7. HEART OF THE HOME

"The kitchen is everyone's favourite room," says Philip. Its welcoming vibe is in part due to its warm cream and green colour palette, which is carried through to the dining room to provide continuity. He adds, "The bead-board backsplash suits the age of the home and doesn't

make the space look quite as new as it is."

CABINETRY, Bellini Custom Cabinetry; **CREAMY WHITE OC-7 CABINETRY PAINT**, Olive Branch 2143-30 **TRIM PAINT**, Benjamin Moore; **CAMBRIA COUNTERTOP**, Bella Marble and Granite; **CALACATTA MARBLE ISLAND COUNTERTOP**, Caledonia Marble; **SINK**, Kohler; **FAUCET, LIGHT FIXTURE, CABINETRY HARDWARE**, Ginger's; **ROMAN SHADE FABRIC**, Primavera.



8. HAPPY MEDIUM

The ultimate balancing act between old and new occurs in the dining room: Philip removed a wall to open up the space to the kitchen, yet carried the original moulding throughout. "We really wanted to preserve those charming elements," he says. Similarly, deliberate care was taken not to match

the finish of the new dining table - custom made - with that of the antique breakfront and chairs (reupholstered in a warm caramel leather) in order to get a curated look.

CREAMY WHITE OC-7 WALL PAINT, Olive Branch 2143-30 **WAINSCOTTING PAINT**, Benjamin Moore; **BREAKFRONT**, 507 Antiques; **DINING TABLE**, The Lunenburg Chiselworks; **DINING CHAIRS**, Patina Antiques; **DRAPERY & DINING CHAIR FABRICS**, Kravet Canada.

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