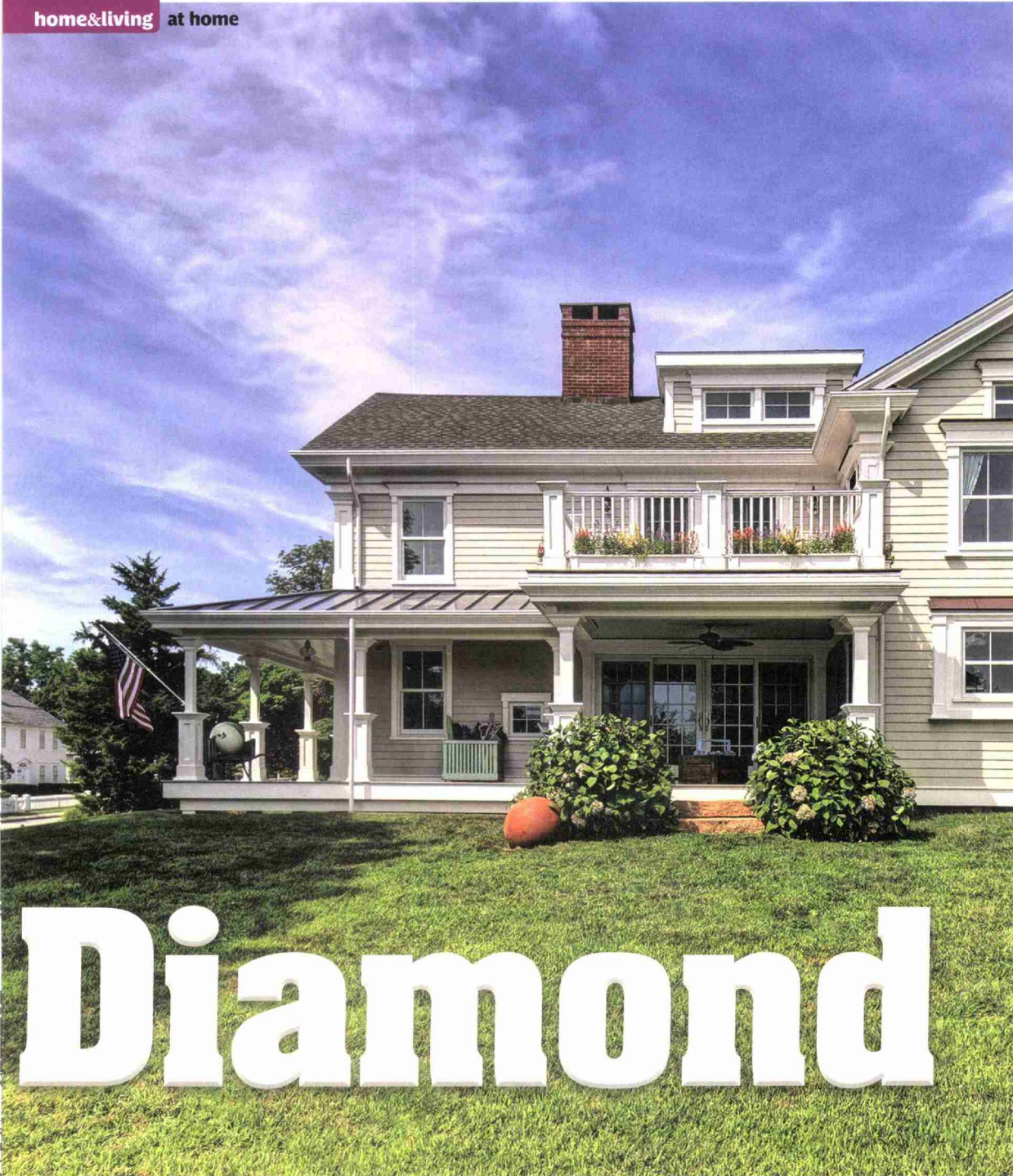
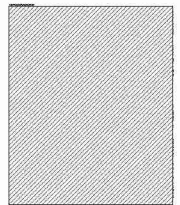
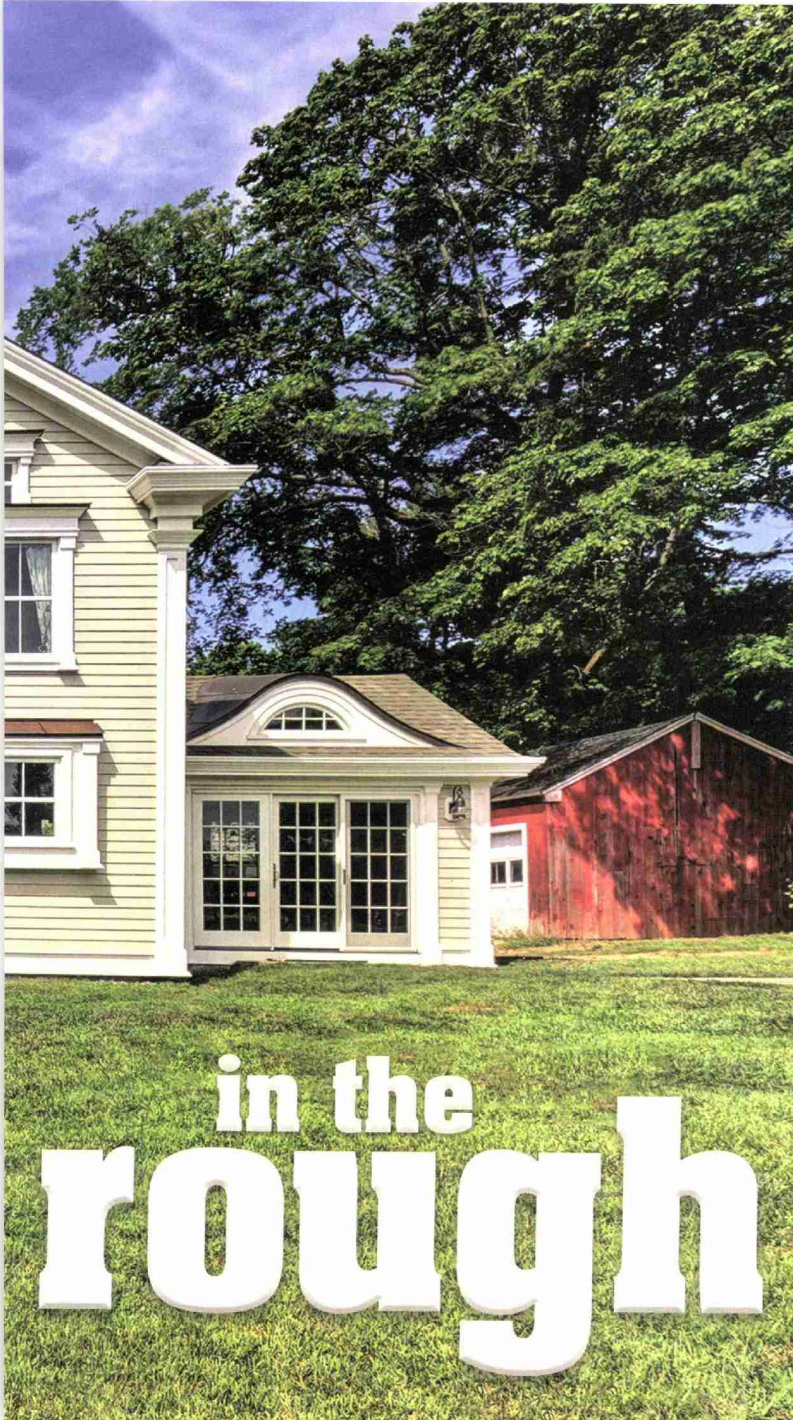


home&living at home



PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM FUHRMANN





**With an eye
toward island
architecture,
a home builder
restores an 1840s
farmhouse just
in time for his
new family.**

BY JENNIFER CARMICHAEL

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Jarrett Kravitz has a trained eye for properties with potential. So when the builder of high-end homes and restorer of antique abodes saw this circa-1842 farmhouse in Clinton just five doors away from Long Island Sound, he knew it was something special. “I was absolutely in love from the moment I laid eyes on it,” he says. He also knew it wasn’t going to be an easy project.

Despite never being on the market and sitting abandoned for nearly a decade, the house attracted interest from buyers, yet the two elderly sisters who owned the home and grew up in it felt a sentimental connection. “They did not like the idea of someone coming in and knocking the house down or putting in a subdivision,” says Kravitz, owner of Advantage Contracting, originally based in West Hartford and now, like him, based in Clinton. “I was focused on bringing the home back to its former glory, and also making it ready for the next 150 years of its lifecycle.”

When Kravitz bought the house in 2015, the state of disrepair was such that a sapling was growing through what is now the kitchen floor

and vines were crawling up inside some of the wall cavities.

Having grown up in an antique farmhouse in Canton, Kravitz had an appreciation for old-world charm. And while vacationing on Block Island, Nantucket and Martha’s Vineyard, specifically Edgartown, he became smitten with the islands’ historic architecture. “I liked the chunky, ornate trim on the many beautiful, old sea captains’ homes and farmhouses, so I modeled the exterior detailing after this style,” says Kravitz, who took about two years to completely gut, restructure and remodel the roughly 2,300-square-foot, three-bedroom, three-bath home, while running his company.

Kravitz moved into the home in June 2017, living there by himself until Samantha came into the picture. While working out of a coffee shop in Simsbury in September 2018, there was only one table available, so he shared it with her. By May 2019, Samantha, along with her then-10-month-old son from a previous marriage, moved from her 1876 period home in Simsbury to her new home with Kravitz. “I knew that I wanted to use this as a family home,” says Jarrett, who

Homegrown:

With their own memories of growing up in antique homes, Jarrett and Samantha Kravitz hope to create a lasting family history here for young William and a baby girl set to arrive any day now.

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A new purpose: Reclaimed materials were used throughout the home, including in the kitchen. American chestnut was used in the island frame with tapered legs, as well as in the bullnose trim below the Rohl farm sink. The three hanging pendant lights were custom made from vintage explosion-proof barn cage lights, original glass light shades, reclaimed chestnut accent rings, and repurposed rototiller sprockets from Kravitz's grandfather.



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Mastering the bedroom: To add space and elegance to the small master bedroom, Kravitz added six windows, vaulted the ceiling, and installed custom 10-inch-tall shiplap trim on the wall for a nautical style. The existing wide-plank Douglas fir floors from 1842 were preserved and refinished.





Well-placed feature:
During demolition of the three-season room, Kravitz found a 28-foot-deep stone well under the floor. "I never imagined I would find such an unusual architectural feature," Kravitz says. The well is now illuminated from the bottom and the top is covered with bulletproof glass and an antique cast-iron, storm-grate cover. "Taking the time to turn this fully functioning water well into a focal point was worth every bit of effort."

is expecting a baby girl with Samantha in June. "And it's exciting to see this home filled with so many wonderful memories." One such memory was made in mid-May when Jarrett and Samantha exchanged wedding vows on the home's porch.

Even though the home was completely rebuilt by the time Samantha came on board, she brought the interior design to a new level of sophistication. "Everything fell into place," says Samantha, an early childhood mental health consultant. "We definitely breathed new life into this house in so many ways. Jarrett structurally, preserving the architectural features of the period, and then us together, living and growing as a family.

"I loved the old charm," she adds. "I grew up in my grandparents' house—the same house my father grew up in. So, Jarrett and I both had a full family heritage of where we came from and a path that brought us to our current life."

Kravitz enjoyed blending their decor in what was formerly his bachelor pad. "She made the man cave much more family oriented. There is a turquoise reclaimed sliding barn door in what is now the cutest kids' room, and we just finished the nursery."

A character-laden attic, complete with a floral fabric wall, thanks to Samantha's feminine touch, is a fun spot. Previously unfinished, this low-ceiling space is now a bunk room and a place to hang out.

"We both have nieces and nephews, and our own two children will one day have friends over, so we thought it was important as a beach house to have extra space for everyone to come," says Samantha, who was up there cutting shiplap and on her hands and knees sanding the original pine floorboards. "As much as Jarrett is proud of all of his hard work with the whole house, this is the area that I'm most proud of. It's such an unexpected space and I have so much fun up there playing with the kids."

On the outside, a stunning wraparound porch and an upper-level sundeck gives the feel of breezy coastal living, and both are favorite hangouts for the couple. "We also enjoy sitting under the covered porch, listening to the storms and feeling the spray in the air," Samantha says. "Once we slide those four-panel French doors open, it becomes a huge living space that brings the indoors and outdoors together."

An open-concept downstairs visually connects everything. From the front door, you can see straight through all four rooms that

lead to the back wall of the dining room. Jarrett also enlarged every opening between rooms as much as possible, including raising the header heights, to make the first floor feel larger. A coffered ceiling with beadboard inlay in the kitchen and lounging room adds architectural interest. Throughout the downstairs, new wide-plank white oak flooring was chosen for both its antique look and durability.

"For the most part, I worked within the original footprint of the home except when expanding what was a three-season room at the back of the house," he says. "It didn't have a foundation and what was there structurally was just sitting in dirt. So I just ripped the room out completely, except for keeping the vaulted ceiling, and made a slightly larger room for dining."

Reclaimed chestnut beams and planks from the demolition of the house were repurposed throughout the home for items like the built-in kitchen bench seating, island legs, custom kitchen island pendants, and ceiling beams in the dining area. In addition, the Newport-era hanging pendant in the foyer was refurbished and a blown-glass shade was made by Jarrett's sister, Naomi Kravitz.

While Jarrett incorporated design elements as a nod to the past, he wanted an energy-efficient, modern home that would be cherished for generations. So, every nook and cranny in the home is filled with spray foam and airtight sealed, which makes for virtually non-existent utility bills, he says.

"To try to renovate an old home is challenging enough, never mind making it energy efficient," Jarrett says. "But it's actually more energy efficient than a brand-new-construction Energy Star house. It's insane how little energy and fossil fuel it takes to keep this house heated and cool all year round. Last year, we spent about \$700 on utilities."

For comparison, the Home Energy Rating System Index for any new-construction Energy Star home has to be a 3 or less on a blower-door test, which helps determine a home's airtightness. Jarrett's house rates as a 1.1, nearly two-thirds more efficient.

Jarrett also used exterior building materials designed for maximum longevity. New, energy-efficient windows and doors; clapboard siding to withstand the toughest elements; and a mixture of standing-seam copper roofing and paint-coated aluminum standing-seam roofing, which offers superior performance and provides architectural detail, all help keep it maintenance free, he says.

"We both work hard, so it's nice to come home and just relax," Jarrett says. "It's actually difficult to make ourselves go on vacation now because we're enjoying our house and living by the shore." ■

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Old meets new:

Designed to have an old-world coastal vibe, the master bath features Moroccan-style cement floor tiles and a semi-gloss white beadboard ceiling. Porcelain plank wall tiles in the shower were installed with dark-colored horizontal grout joints to create the illusion of shadows between the planks. The shower floor is an Island Stone pebble blend.

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Hidden hangout: Previously unfinished, the attic is now a bunk room and lounging space.



Sitting pretty: A more centrally connected space downstairs is intended for year-round entertaining. Twelve feet of Marvin glass doors open to the wraparound porch. The front door was restored with reproduction German antique glass, and the ship's wheel came from a Mississippi steamship via the Elephant's Trunk Flea Market in New Milford.

