

# Driven by Detail

Rosbeck Builders:  
Building Homes and Reputations

By John Budris

Photography by Greg Premru



Top to bottom attention: A Rosbeck-built home is the culmination of careful site planning, experienced architectural design, the finest materials and locale-appropriate landscaping. The Rosbeck team even designs and builds the pool. For this Katama home, vintage

exterior design merged with innovative use of interior space. The ground-floor bedrooms open to the pool area while the middle-floor living and dining areas offer an ocean view.

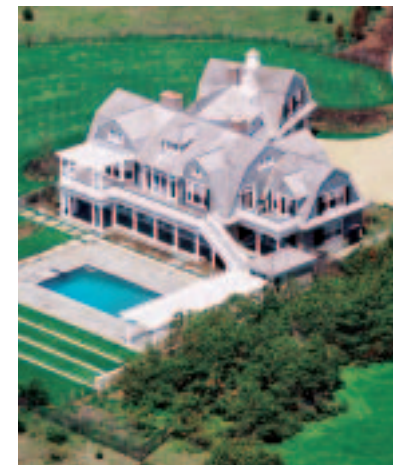
In-lay floors, custom cabinetry, and period woodwork (above, right) are some of the exquisite details that make up the Rosbeck signature.

On the corner of Peter Rosbeck Jr.'s desk rests a Christmas present only a mother who knows her son well would give. A small frame surrounds a platform of sand on which miniature, earth-moving toys are arranged just so.

That's the key kernel of information anyone would need to know about Peter Rosbeck, Jr.

He's a builder.

"Actually, it's designed to be like a Zen sand sculpture, to be still and calming," laughs Peter, "But kids go for it first thing, and I'm forever moving the pieces around too." *continued on next page*



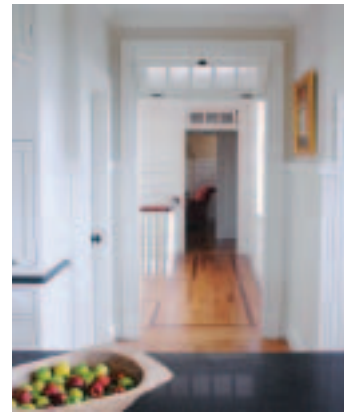
**Built for a hungry family: The kitchen (left) boasts an ample eat-in area, full pantry, generous storage and buffed, granite countertops. Gull's eye view: Precise house siting and dense landscaping (above) give a private feel with close-by neighbors. The hall of the master suite (top) offers peek-a-boo views.**

**M**oving small pieces to make grand homes is second nature to the 1991 Boston College graduate in economics. As an apprentice to his father – whose real estate developments now range from the Vineyard to Florida – Peter is no stranger to each aspect of the building process. He has the scars, splinters and calluses to prove it.

“At about nine years old, my father threw me a shovel, hammer and any other tool that might help him complete houses for the coming summer season,” says Peter. “Well, 25 years later I am still hard at work as a builder.” With his father’s developments primarily based in Florida, Peter heads up the second stand-alone company specializing in custom built homes.

“But I have to say that one of the parts of this company I love the most is building the friendships with our clients,” says Peter. “I’m sometimes a guest at their children’s weddings, and

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In this Katama home, designed by Edgartown architect Patrick Ahearn, the interior feel suggests an exquisite restoration of a vintage home rather than purely new construction. The use of workable transom windows

throughout the home (top) lend the authentic touch and a breeze. Antique bricks and period woodwork details around the hearth further accentuate the vintage motif.

builder  
**Peter Rosbeck, Jr.**  
in his own words



“I just can’t leave a trade I love so much. Not to mention the satisfaction of still being able to interface with my father when he unexpectedly shows up at a job site to expound his words of wisdom or just to throw me another tool. Two years ago my brother Ted stepped in to handle the financial side of the business, and although a family business has its challenges at times, we are all truly blessed to be able to work and see each other on a daily basis.

I like to think of myself as a facilitator, providing cadence and direction with a central focus or goal, which is that our clients will be pleased with their new house – hopefully ecstatic. During the building process, clients often ask me for advice and my personal opinion, and it is quite satisfying to offer a builder’s perspective or to research a good answer because I am a builder – and building is what I do day and night.

Of course, I make up only a small portion of our team. Bucking the historical practice of solely coordinating sub-contractors, we have a steady program of selecting the best skilled tradesmen as employees, by offering steady work and job benefits not often available in the construction trade. The people I work with all have very extraordinary talents and skills, and this allows us to build very special homes. I am extremely fortunate to be surrounded by such exceptional talent, and I consider each one of them part of our extended family. No one better represents this than our head foreman, Jeff Wass, who has worked with my father and me for 25 years and is like an older brother to me.

The growing demand for

our services has escalated most likely because of our consistent quality and workmanship on a timely basis. We concentrate on our work at hand in order to move on to the next project, rather than take on too many projects concurrently. This job concentration also allows us to build houses in half the time, which clearly pleases the clients.

Working on an island, our team must work daily with clients and vendors to make sure materials are on the jobs on time – this aspect of building has taken on new dimensions in recent years with the vast sea of exciting and unique products, as well as our client awareness of special products and materials. We encourage clients to get involved and send us pictures, samples, or just ideas from their travels for us to research and possibly incorporate in their new house. These little nuances and features make the many years of living in the house to come very personal.

The aesthetics or visual impact of our homes would fall far short for our clients’ and neighbors’ expectations if not for the addition of professional landscaping. Fortunately, the high-end houses that we are building are embellished by architecturally designed landscaping features that not only provide useable outside areas, but privacy for neighbors.

Today, most of our houses are surrounded with stone walls, brick patios, natural pools, shade trees, indigenous shrubs, and waves of colorful flowers. The Island is blessed with very talented and hard-working local landscapers, such as Mike Donaroma of Donaroma’s Nursery & Landscaping Services, Fred Fournier of Landscape and Joel Anthony.

I know all of us at Rosbeck Builders take pride in not only orchestrating the development of fine Island homes, but also making the journey reasonably enjoyable. We are a team, and we merge the clients, architects, and landscaper to create a house that becomes a home. Completion brings a satisfying sense of fulfillment – often celebrated with a move-in barbecue for all. Yet, at the same time, we feel a loss by turning over a product that we had nurtured and grown.

I am privileged to carry on a tradition that my father started and fortunate to have his ongoing support. With Rosbeck Builders, you truly join a team of exceptional craftsmen and craftswomen, and I am very proud to be their facilitator. ”



**The Rosbeck Crew:**  
(front l to r) Peter Rosbeck, Stacey Forend;  
(2nd row) Wender Ramos, Melinda Byers,  
Jeff Wass; Ted Rosbeck (middle),  
Matt Hawksbee (r); (back row) David Kuehne,  
Scott Roberts, Damien Hathaway,  
Travis Pachico and Aaron Boyd.



The carved spindles and mahogany banister are consistent with a home more than a century old.



Hardwood flooring in the kitchen (top) continues the vintage impression of the kitchen. The side elevation (above) accentuates the gambrel profile and highlights the middle level living areas with ocean-view deck.

it gives me great satisfaction to know that the homes we build will factor into the best memories of their lives.”

Some of his clients, in fact, are second and third-time customers, a testament few builders can claim. “We of course have all the contracts, conditions and clauses, but once we shake hands, the paperwork goes into a folder, and we rarely ever take it out again,” says Peter.

The other great pleasure, he concedes, is building long relationships with his company team. His 15 full-time employees see their places on that roster as careers, not just jobs. “Our turnover is remarkably small,” says Peter, “And some of our guys have been with me since the beginning.”

Among the trade secrets passed from father to son, according to Peter, is the need to surround oneself with quality people. “That we have superior craftsmen, that’s a given,” says Peter, “But everyone in the company is just a good person, plain and simple, the kind of person you want as a friend, too.”

Indeed some of these friendships

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The master-suite bathroom (above) features a double, marbled-topped sink, custom vanity, whirlpool tub with double windows and ocean view. A hidden door (left) utilizes otherwise wasted space beneath the stairwell.



run deep. Jeff Wass, one of the company's seasoned foremen and colleague for 25 years, is Peter's childhood pal, a friend whom he concedes roughed him up a time or two in the backyard when they were just kids. Peter admits his great fear is some television series the likes of "This Old House" will scoop Jeff away to be the next on-air host.

"And our other project managers," says Peter, "These guys are in charge of multi-million dollar projects, so their

ability to represent the company in many more aspects than just building is as important as what they can do with tools."

Intrinsic to the success of the Rosbeck team is the design "brain trust." Special plans provide an opportunity to build special houses – homes that complement not only their surroundings but also the needs of their inhabitants. Peter teams up with top line architects to design and re-shape some of the most enticing waterfront properties on the Island. "A few years ago, we completed a

wonderful compound on Katama Bay designed by Peter Pometti of Architectural Innovations of Cotuit, who had worked with my father for decades," says Peter, "He has a real knack for creating great open spaces within existing structures that have space constraints."

With the tragic loss of respected Island builder Rick Colson in a plane crash, the Rosbecks stepped in to work on a design by Hutker Associates of Vineyard Haven. The task completed a

detailed Makonikey waterfront residence, which now perches on a dramatic site overlooking the North Shore. "We are about to commence construction of another of Hutker Associates' designs on a spectacular parcel on the top of Peaked Hill in Chilmark," says Peter.

But the most visible Rosbeck building projects evolve by working with the master of Edgartown design, Patrick Ahearn of Ahearn-Schopfer & Associates. "Patrick has such a strong sense of what makes an overall design and fenestration read truly historic Edgartown architecture," says Peter. "His homes are clearly identifiable, yet look like they've weathered the Island for a 100 years."

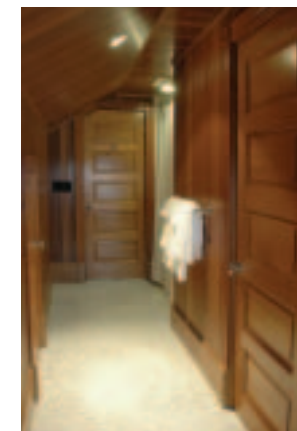
By combining the best features of the old whaling houses of downtown, Ahearn designs a more balanced and elegant Edgartown house – if such a higher level Edgartown architecture could really evolve, according to Peter.

Working with architects with varied concentrations and vision has helped shape the Rosbeck company's versatility and construction techniques. Peter admits that at the close of every project he's learned a new trick or two. "And, who knows, on this Island, the next client or architect could come from anywhere in the world."

But in the final analysis, when the shavings are swept up and the final polish applied, what Peter Rosbeck leaves behind is a finely crafted, custom home. "When you go to build, there's always little wrinkle things you have to work out, that you don't see when the design is first put down on paper."

For Peter's first-time clients, those moments long before construction wrinkles ever appear are the most magic. He likens the process to a kind of gestation, during which celebrated milestones always occur. His favorite unfolds at the building site, even before the first stake is placed. "Recently I was with a client on his beautiful piece of land, high on a hill looking out to the ocean, not a tree or shrub yet disturbed," says Peter, "And I reminded him to savor this magic moment, as he had no idea what was about to come."

The client, however, was in good, callused hands. Peter Rosbeck, Jr. had every detail to come secure in his tool box. **vs**



The third floor hideaway office and study beneath the eaves has the feel of a meticulously restored yacht. Mahogany from floor to ceiling, an eyebrow dormer, and peek-a-boo ocean views add even more authenticity to the nautical motif. "So to fit that into a normal attic, which typically just becomes storage space, a throw away for things that should go to the thrift store, that's a challenge, both from the building and design standpoint," says Peter.