



Peter Rosbeck Jr. creates an Edgartown compound without compromise.

A builder's dream house

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID WELCH





When you're a custom builder of luxury homes on Martha's Vineyard and you discover a one-acre waterfront site with sweeping views, surrounded by 160 acres of conservation land just five minutes from downtown Edgartown, there is little mystery about what your next step should be.

In the spring of 2007, the now-retired developer Peter Rosbeck Sr. put four decades of real estate and development savvy to work helping his son Peter secure the property. The younger

Rosbeck, owner of Rosbeck Builders Corporation, says, "My dad found the house and recognized the opportunity immediately. We put a creative deal together and it worked. It was a dream to plan my own home."

The Rosbecks then put pen to paper to design a house they hoped would complement the extraordinary setting. The father and son knew that the lot, with expansive views overlooking Sengekontacket Pond and Nantucket Sound, could – and in their minds *should* – carry an estate that would maximize its invest-



Fronting Sengekontacket Pond, the expansive house presents a striking profile along the water's edge.

ment value. They razed the weary fifty-year-old house that stood there and created a substantial compound filled with all manner of creature comforts. Among its three buildings, the property now includes five bedrooms, six and one-half baths, a chef's kitchen, billiards room, wine cellar, workout room, sauna, and outside, an infinity-edge pool and spa.

Peter, forty-one, grew up in the construction business. During the heyday of development on the Island, his father spearheaded the creation of more than ten communities, including

Deep Bottom Pond and South Vine in West Tisbury; Island Grove, Major's Cove, and Bold Meadow in Edgartown; and Meadowview Farms, Bayes Hill, and Hidden Cove in Oak Bluffs. Peter started wielding a hammer at the age of nine, learning the trade by shadowing his father and working in the family business during summers throughout high school and college.

From septic systems to shingling and carpentry, Peter acquired the expertise to eventually run the family's custom home-building operation as his father began to spend more time



A quiet sitting area in the upstairs hall overlooks the living room below; Peter's mother, sister, and sister-in-law helped with the decorating.

in Florida and traveling. "I graduated from Boston College with an economics degree and figured I'd work one summer in the trades," Peter explains. "Here I am twenty years later. Real estate and construction are all I've ever known."

Spacious summer house

"It's hard to believe we're just five minutes from town," Peter observes, clearly proud of what he has created. Down a long, quiet dirt driveway from Beach Road, the compound he's aptly named Waterhaven incorporates many of the features he has admired in the nearly two hundred custom homes he's built for other people who have dreamed big on Martha's Vineyard.

His plan, he says, was to take a conservative approach to the project, to design a quality home that would suit his own needs but would also appeal to a future owner. "I always keep investment in mind," he explains. "Everyone has different taste, so I try not to build a house that would restrict its potential resale." And while Waterhaven reflects no obvious eccentricities, it was designed to complement Peter's lifestyle. The six-foot-two athlete enjoys fitness activities as well as entertaining friends and family. To this end, he plans that the house, when fully complete, will offer a lower level featuring cardio equipment in the workout room, a tasting table with special lighting in the spacious wine cellar, a pool table and large bar in the billiards room, and a home theater.

"I wanted the lower level to feel just like a normal living

space," Peter says. Wherever possible, he has incorporated large windows with oversized window wells on the outside walls, as well as an interior picture window in the hallway to invite as much natural light as possible into the basement rooms. He points out special details in the labyrinthine area: the antique glass door to the wine cellar that will allow visitors to see into the tasting area; the commercial-size sauna and steam rooms. "I took measurements in public facilities to be sure that they were large enough to feel really comfortable," he explains.

His goal, he says, was to create a beach cottage feel with some formal elements. "Did you see *Something's Gotta Give* with Jack Nicholson and Diane Keaton?" he asks, referring to the 2003 blockbuster that captivated many with interior shots of a well-appointed, relaxed Hamptons beach house. "That's the look I was striving for. I want this house to be a great Island summer experience."

Several years ago, a client asked him to build a large room designed to replicate the interior of a boat. Adapting the concept for his own house, Peter created a half-bath on the first floor that features gleaming mahogany beadboard paneling on the walls

Facing, clockwise from top left: The dining room with its antique stained-chestnut table; the brick-and-bluestone living room fireplace awaits its first blaze; Peter Rosbeck on the patio; the screened porch with its fieldstone fireplace; a mahogany-topped center island in the gourmet kitchen; and a detail of the kitchen's beach-stone fireplace.





Built-in storage in the master bedroom has clean, simple lines and accessories to complement the home's waterside location.

and ceiling, antique wide-board oak flooring, mahogany cabinetry, red and green ship's lights adjacent to a rope-framed mirror, and a decorative clinometer – an instrument used on boats to determine pitch and roll at sea. The result: a one-of-a-kind take on an everyday powder room.

While the house is equipped with a profusion of Peter's favorite design details – the antique-glass working transoms, elegant curved staircase, and textured natural finishes, including a variety of hardwoods and stone – it is the sum of the parts that makes Waterhaven a builder's own dream realized. "It's how the details are assembled that creates the uniqueness," he explains. "There are countless details, many of them invisible to the eye, that make this house what it is. I owe a lot to my crew. They're among the best artisans in the trades and this house really shows off their talents."

Working in winter

As Peter went through the process of acquiring Waterhaven, there were hints that the country was entering an economic downturn, but he didn't suspect how serious the recession would become. Work began to slow down and he worried about keeping his crew busy.

"The house turned into an opportunity to keep my crew, my brother's crew, and subs like Walter Smith Plumbing & Heating busy during a rough time," he says. His brother Ted's company,

Island Pools & Spas of Edgartown, designed and installed the infinity-edge pool and spa. "We worked on my property in between other jobs when business slowed down," Peter explains. "I never intended on finishing as much of the house as I did, but we ended up completing most of the basement level just to keep the guys on the payroll."

The house, he says, is a work in progress. While the basement is now finished space, the wine cellar, gym, home theater, and billiards room remain to be outfitted. "Some of that might happen this winter, depending on our schedule," Peter says.

As with many past Rosbeck Builders projects, Peter's home became a family affair. With his father's counsel during the purchase, design, and construction phases, his brother Ted's expertise in pool and spa installation, and his mother, Karen, sister Daenya, and sister-in-law Lea's interior decorating assistance, Waterhaven slowly became a reality. The family was accustomed to collaboration. Over the years, as his father would develop communities on the Vineyard and build model homes, they would lead a nomadic life, moving from one model to another as customers would fall in love with the house Peter Sr. had built for his family and make him an offer too good to refuse. Back home in Newton, where Peter spent his childhood off-seasons, the Rosbeck family lived in a modest dwelling. "Oh God," Peter says. "I've torn down a lot nicer homes than that one." He adds, in a slightly worried tone: "Don't tell my mom I said that."



The master bedroom has a fireplace and en suite bathroom; the curved staircase (below) was inspired by another Peter built for one of his clients.

While he would never work on a client's home without establishing a firm budget, Peter says he was "afraid to set one" for his own property. "The house became a passion. I love it. It was like creating a baby. It did get away from me, because I added and added when we didn't have a lot of work. I kept growing the project. This winter we'll put a cedar closet in the basement."

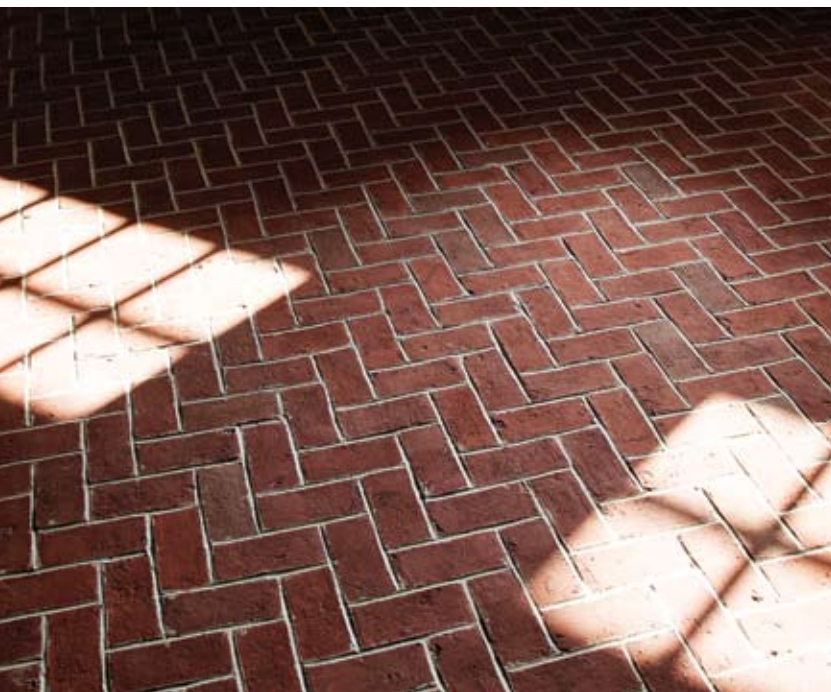
With the major living areas of the property completed in time for the 2010 season, Peter had hoped to attract summer renters before occupying Waterhaven himself this fall. With its hefty weekly asking rate of \$35,000, he envisioned recouping the cost of the property's furnishings. But because the economy is still struggling, he says, he rented it for just under five weeks and recovered only half to three-quarters of his furnishing expenses. After he moves in, he says he'll tackle renovations on another Rosbeck family home, this one on Hines Point in Vineyard Haven.

Large-scale design

Waterhaven was designed with luxury in mind. While the property was developed with some green features, including radiant heat in select rooms, a highly efficient septic system, a special pool filter that eliminates the need for chemicals, low-maintenance composite trim on the exterior, and native plantings, Peter lays no claim for achieving eco-friendly goals.

And although Waterhaven has an imposing presence as







DANA JINKINS

The view from the house extends northeast over Sengekontacket Pond, across Beach Road, and to Nantucket Sound in the distance.

viewed from Beach Road across Sengekontacket, its expanse is somehow minimized when entering its circular driveway. Divided visually into sections, the main house features stone work, a gambrel roof, and natural shingles that are echoed in the carriage house, pool house, and landscaping. Bluestone patios, stone walls, plantings, and grading are used to ground the house, attaching it to the surroundings.

Single with no children, Peter clearly doesn't need the 8,000 square feet afforded by a three-level main house (plus carriage house guest quarters and pool house), yet he seems unperturbed by its scale. "I live here year-round," he says. "I have no problem with big homes. If they fit in with code, if you can afford it – the maintenance, taxes – then you should have the right to build what you want." He believes that the larger homes on the Island benefit everyone: in tax payments that go toward building and improving public services and institutions, in wages to craftsmen who construct and maintain the properties, and in creating a donor base for nonprofit organizations.

"I don't think we should worry so much about the size of homes on the Island. We should be more concerned about the character – the way Nantucket is. There are plenty of

aesthetically unattractive smaller houses and buildings that detract from the beauty of the Vineyard, yet no one talks about those. It's the larger houses that help keep the trades flourishing and support families who have two or three kids to put through college."

While the Rosbeck name is often attached to many of the Island's larger homes, Peter is quick to point out that the company builds houses of all sizes, including a meticulously crafted 1,200-square-foot fishing cottage on Chappaquiddick. The common element, he says, is attention to detail.

"My father taught me to be a student of the business," he explains. "He offers me advice all the time. The majority of our talks focus on real estate and construction: new methods, design, and features. There's more to it than just the building. I enjoy being involved in the whole process. It's what's made me the builder I am today."

The team that built the house:

- Rosbeck Builders Corporation, Edgartown
- Alexander & Dyke Air Conditioning & Refrigeration, Edgartown
- W.H. Bennett / Home Electronic Design, Vineyard Haven
- Contemporary Landscapes, Vineyard Haven
- Crane Appliance, Vineyard Haven
- Island Pools & Spas, Edgartown
- Jeffers Electric, Oak Bluffs
- Olde Cape Interiors, Orleans
- Walter Smith Plumbing & Heating, Edgartown ♦

Facing, clockwise from top left: The infinity-edge pool's spillover trough is flanked by native plantings; the gravel-and-granite circular driveway; a stone wall borders the outdoor kitchen and dining area; window boxes planted by Peter Sr.; the carriage house with guest quarters upstairs; and herringbone brickwork overlays the radiant-heated garage floor.