

The heart of the guest-house is a floor-to-ceiling stone hearth, which was constructed using reclaimed granite from a bridge in Salisbury, MA.

photo provided by M. B. Masonry



## Set in Stone

BY ANDREA MCHUGH

One doesn't have to look hard to find the footprints of Cape Cod's past scattered about. Stone walls dating far back as the Pilgrims' first foray into the New World offer a glimpse into the one of the oldest construction methods in existence: masonry.

"That's part of the reason I love it," says Brian Boley, proprietor of Sandwich-based M.B. Masonry. "It lasts forever." The survival of some of the best-known architectural structures around the globe—Rome's iconic Colosseum, the Egyptian Pyramids, the Great Wall of China, and the Parthenon in Greece—can all be credited to good masonry. That longevity, attributed to meticulous craftsmanship, is what Boley so admires and looks to emulate. And some of Boley's finest stonework is on display in a recently built guest-house in North Falmouth.

One young mason channels old-world methods to give a thoroughly modern guest house traditional charm.



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The nearly \$2 million project, which overlooks Rand's Canal, was built by Sea Dar Construction, a firm with offices in Boston and Osterville. Builder Peter Kimball notes that while the home was intended to merge modern luxury with creature comforts, it also needed to accommodate the large extended families of the homeowners as well as their active lifestyles, replete with swimming and entertaining. The interior and exterior spaces also had to blend together seamlessly while offering privacy. At the same time, square footage and environmental requirements needed to be carefully considered. "All of these projects are in environmentally sensitive areas, so there are a lot of restrictions on where you can build," says Kimball. "There are almost always either zoning or space constraints."



photo by Stacey Hedman



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Waterfront building space on the Cape is limited, with scores of new construction projects replacing dilapidated summer homes and beach shanties. “We’re not building houses on expansive lots. We’re building them where there used to be little beach houses,” adds Kimball. The zoning and environmental considerations, he explains, were the crucial components that civil engineers, architects, builders, and most other contractors took into account when designing this new structure. Architect Stephen Hart of Hart Associates in Belmont agrees, adding that the biggest challenge was fitting all of the pieces of the project—the house, the pool, the hard-scaping—on a finite footprint while abiding by all the regulations. Though a guesthouse and not the primary residence on the property, careful attention was paid to the details throughout the project.

Hart says that although the shingle-style home is about 4,000 square feet, he’d consider it a “fairly compact three-bedroom house.” Hart redesigned the main residence on the property just over four years ago, taking an existing domicile and giving it a “drastic renovation.” It was the launching point when the homeowners commissioned him to devise the vision for the guest home more recently. “They’re supposed to look like cousins, if not sisters,” he describes.

Compact, top-grade materials became—quite literally—the cornerstone of the project. Kimball says locally quarried granite from Quincy and Weymouth (with some from New York State) was chosen for all of the exterior stonework, which he and Hart sourced and Boley was tasked with crafting. Each stone, brick, tile, slab of granite, and mass of marble Boley uses was hand chosen, chiseled, shaved, fitted, and embedded into the structure. Each stone took roughly 15 to 20 minutes to shape. “I try to make my work look dry-stacked, like there’s no cement or mortar,” Boley says. To attain that appearance, the exposed mortar is raked out about one to two inches deep. The methods in which the stones are placed are also telltale signs of good masonry. In a wall, stones smaller than the size of a fist are a red flag, he warns: smaller pieces are generally used to fill in the gaps that shouldn’t be that large in the first place. “A nice wall has the same ratio of big to small stones all the way from the bottom to the top,” Boley adds.



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The almost seamless placement and ratio of large to small stones are telltale signs of good masonry.



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His workmanship hasn't gone unnoticed. "Typically, we're working on multimillion houses, and at first, I may have been apprehensive about working with someone his age. But he proved himself," concedes Trevor Kurz, president and founder of Kurzhaus Designs, Inc., which is opening a new location in South Harwich. "I like Brian's approach. I feel his aesthetic is more a period look. He's got a fresh look at things because he's young." Hart agrees that on this project, Boley's

hand was impressive. "He's eager to please, and talented," Hart says.

A floor-to-ceiling stone hearth is the heart of the guesthouse, constructed of oversized, solid, reclaimed granite slabs from Old New England Stoneyard north of Boston. The design is reminiscent of a Colonial hearth in its "H" style construction, but it has a history all its own. "The hearth and the mantle pieces all came from an old bridge that had been taken down in Salisbury," Kimball says, referring to the Massachusetts coastal community bordering New Hampshire.

Taking a cue from the interior, the pool and adjoining stone patio fuse sleek design with utilitarian function. Built by Hyannisport's Viola and Associates, the guesthouse pool is small on space but big on design. Visually compelling with an infinity

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Carefully selected and spaced stones frame the garage's handsome wooden doors.

photo by Stacy Hedman

edge that allows the water to flow calmly into a catch basin below, the gentle hush of flowing water is both serene and soothing. Beyond its beauty, the pool features a pressure-driven mechanism to create an artificial current that the swimmers in the family use as a training challenge.

While the overall affect of the eye-catching home and meticulously manicured grounds is one of stately grandeur, it is a compound that is well used by the homeowners. For the time that they are they, it feels like home.

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*Andrea McHugh is a freelance writer who lives in Newport, Rhode Island.*

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A soaring chimney's stones reflect the hues of sea and sky.

photo by Stacy Hedman

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