

Nantucket Meadows

A sprawling shingle-style estate settles into the fields of this “far-away” island.

Long and narrow, the driveway to the Meadow estate on Polpis Road is lined with island wildflowers, dense with evergreen vegetation, and curves like an old river—offering glimpses of the Outer Harbor and what is to come. Like courses of a gourmet meal, graceful portions of an apple orchard, a fish pond, hard clay tennis courts, a rustic barn, and 300 acres of adjacent conservation upland and salt marsh are served to visitors. The final curve meanders to the east wing of a stunning shingle-style house that would be as much at home along Newport's gracious Bellevue Avenue as it is on Nantucket.

By any measure, the Meadow house, at 15,000 square feet, is one of the largest and most impressive on Nantucket, and yet it fits the landscape as naturally as beach grass does on the side of a dune. Gently placed near the

top of a knoll, the home overlooks the historic Life Saving Station Museum and the distant Coatue, a thin sliver of sand that separates the Outer Harbor from Nantucket Sound and runs like a sleek marathoner from Great Point to the jetty. In the Meadow house, the old and the new are blended in a way that conceals modern amenities, such as floors warmed with radiant heat, a fire sprinkler system, satellite dishes for impeccable television reception, high speed internet connections, a boiler system capable of pumping 1,000 gallons of hot water on demand, a lower level gym, and wine cellar, and a plush movie theater.

Twenty-six months in the making (eight months to design and eighteen months to construct), the Meadow house, originally intended as a summer residence, was completed in May 2000.

TEXT BY GREG O'BRIEN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFFREY ALLEN

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■ Though sheltering 28 rooms, the Meadow house does not dominate the landscape. "In a shingle-style home," says architect Bill McGuire, "a lot of the house is inside the roof. It helps bring down the scale and makes the house feel more intimate."

The fine work of architects William McGuire and Stephen Theroux of Nantucket Architecture Group and the Los Angeles-based interior designer Karin Blake, not to mention the intoxicating lure of Nantucket itself, charmed the Meadows into selling their contemporary home near the Beverly Hills Hotel and relocating here year round. A pleasing mix of styles—covered porches and gabled dormers evoking the genteel 1880s and a free-flowing, post-and-beam barn-like interior—pleases every member of the Meadow's extended fourteen-member family (four grown children, their spouses, and six grandchildren). Life is also sweet for "Ace," the family rottweiler, an imposing but friendly sentry at the side door. Ace roams the placid six-acre grounds with the swagger of a shellfish warden chasing after poachers. There are more deer and rabbits on the property than in a Disney movie.

"Within the first year, we knew we had made the right

decision," says Steve Meadow, a transplanted New Yorker who ran a highly successful Los Angeles textile business. Too young and with too much energy to retire, he formed a development company on Nantucket.

Meadow is the essence of a family man—bent on delighting his children and grandchildren and his wife of 37 years. "I wanted a house large enough for all of us—a place that feels like home when you walk through the door." At times, all six bedrooms, each with its own private bath and stunning view, are filled. "We wanted an open house where everyone could be together," says Mary, who grew up in Texas.

"I didn't want a typical home," adds Steve. "I wanted something unique."

And that is what he got. Shielded by a terraced garden of tall grasses and flowers that bloom from spring to fall, the home inches up on a visitor. The front of the house remains



■ The six-acre property encompasses an infinity-style pool and cabana, courtyards, and walking paths. The grounds provide a living portrait from the shelter of the covered porches.



hidden from view until encountered close up. "The idea," says Steve, "is that you don't experience the power of this incredible home until you are inside."

The front entryway welcomes without overwhelming. The vestibule is appointed with English folk art—a reception bench, a dough bin, and a sign from the old English pub the Raven & Ring—all playfully distracting from the great room, with its ceiling peaking at 28 feet, massive fieldstone fireplace (one of six in the house), antique oak floors, and panoramic views of Nantucket Sound. Passenger ferries glide in from Hyannis, seen through the ken of the antique telescope. Special lighting is a practiced art at the Meadow home; ceiling and wall lights are arranged with the care of a surgeon to soften the room. There is no television viewing in the great room, only reading and talking. The Meadows have hosted many island charity functions in this casual room, furnished with folk art and antiques, such as nineteenth-century snake andirons and Nantucket Lightship baskets.

Partition walls in the great room are few by design. The room flows north into an inviting, snug dining area with a long, narrow oak table and antique ladder-back chairs, east



into an open, modern kitchen and breakfast area separated by a chest-high bar that allows visitors to converse without obstruction, and west to a large 20-foot by 40-foot screened-in porch where alfresco dining is as common as a wrack line at low tide.

The kitchen, with its faded barn board ceilings, is one of the most intriguing rooms in the house. Its focal point is a sturdy oak center island with two-and-a-half inch thick white marble and hidden refrigerator drawers. Wood ceilings, floors, and plate racks soften the stainless steel appliances, giving the room a rustic country air. The oak pantries located off the kitchen are well stocked—from dry and canned goods to antique silverware, an assortment of white Old English ironstone platters, antique porcelain plates, and enough condiments and spices to open a super store. "If you can think of it, we probably have it," says Steve. Does he worry about guests or family members dropping or chipping expensive plates? "Other than children, nothing in life is so perfect that it can't be replaced."

Beverly Hills residents for thirty years, the Meadows first came to Nantucket about fifteen years ago after visiting their children at a summer camp in Maine. They were hooked from

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■ The post and beam-style kitchen was designed to accommodate three generations and is equipped with a six-burner double griddle Garland commercial range, commercial-grade refrigerator, dual dishwashers and dual sinks. The plate rack was custom built by Karin Blake Interiors. The light fixture, made from a railroad bucket, overhangs a Pennsylvania antique table. The Windsor chairs are reproductions.

the start. In 1992, the couple purchased a modest federal-style home on Westchester Street, an impulse buy, and began vacationing here with the family. "As the kids grew older, we started having grandchildren," says Steve. "The house was on a busy street and was too small. We needed more room."

Steve purchased the Polpis Road property along with its existing residence in the summer of August 1997. "It had been on the market for two years," he says. "I bought it in five minutes." Later that summer, he walked the property with architect McGuire in a driving nor'easter; Mary waited in the car. They quickly decided to give away the existing structure and build a new house further up the hill. "The main thrust was to have the Meadow home fit the site," says McGuire. "It doesn't appear as a two-story house. We wanted the house to seem small on the land, not to overwhelm." It doesn't. The pas-

toral shingle-style home, with a signature low roof, is intimate, and it was this intimacy that enticed the Meadows to trade in Pacific time for Eastern Standard.

True to form, Steve sold his Beverly Hills home in a day. The transition to a simpler life was as smooth as a polished stone on the shoreline. "The contrast is striking," he says. The Meadows have an eclectic mix of friends on Nantucket. "There is no stereotyped, rarefied group here," Steve says. "Everyone gets along." An avid bike rider and fisherman (Steve is on his fourth boat—a 26-foot Regulator), he notes, "I'd rather go fishing with my well driller than my accountant any day!"

By choice, Steve keeps a busy schedule. In addition to his development work, he serves on the boards of the Nantucket Cottage Hospital and the Artists' Association. His home office



■ Among the many specialized spaces of the lower level of the home is the wine cellar, where select bottles from California and Europe are chilled to 52 degrees. Vintage garden chairs sit at an antique wine tasting table.

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■ An intimate, informal space off the kitchen, the family room has been decorated with folk art, including a whirligig acquired from a Buenos Aires hotel lobby, a blacksmith work table, and a six-foot pond model over the fireplace. The George Smith sofas are upholstered in Ralph Lauren fabric.

off the kitchen is equipped with the latest technology. It is close to the foot of a stairway that leads to the east wing of the house and three second-floor bedrooms—two adult rooms with views of Nantucket Sound, one with a covered porch and a view of the fish pond. The third bedroom is a bright, cheery children's room, equipped with toys, whimsical folk art, a hideaway television, two cribs, and four trundle beds. Bet the kids can't wait to visit? "That's the whole point," says Steve. "Make it as comfortable as possible."

The west wing's first floor accommodates two comfortable bedrooms, one with a fireplace, crown molding, and floor-to-ceiling bookshelves. It overlooks the screened-in porch. The other, on the front side of the house, is more masculine—plenty of wood and large pieces of furniture. Like all the bedrooms in the house, it is set up for immediate use—awaiting the children's return.

The master bedroom suite is on the second floor, at the head of a curved "floating" staircase. A large window had to be popped out from the front of the house during construction just to install this engineering marvel. By grand standards, the master bedroom was kept modest to leave room for the children and grandchildren. What they may have lost in space, they have made up with view. The fire-placed room overlooks a sweeping vista of the Outer Harbor. A covered porch, the perfect spot for reading, resting, or absorbing the natural surroundings, adds to the room's size. There are creature comforts—like the wide, flat screen television recessed in the base of the large oak bed frame that rises on command.

The lower level of the house is a work in progress, "We originally said we wanted just a gym," says Steve. The gym, where Steve and Mary can be found working out three days a



■ (above) One of the guest rooms has been outfitted in Ralph Lauren fabrics and a Ralph Lauren iron bed. The hand-woven rug is by Woodard and Greenstein.

week, is equipped with tread mills, exercise machines, and free-standing weights. This space begot a steam room with piped-in music, which begot a full shower and bathroom with a Jacuzzi, then an area for yoga, then a large comfortable children's room for pool, television, ice cream sodas, and chatter, then a massage room, then a wine cellar where the temperature is a constant 52 degrees, and then the *piece de resistance*—a 26-foot by 20-foot movie theater that would impress Steven Spielberg with its special effects: fourteen speakers, a fifteen-foot wide screen, hundreds of DVD movies at the command of a handheld computer prompt, wine colored carpet, antique velvet couches (the kind you sink into like a goose-down pillow and never want to get up), and two velvet lounges in the front row. No one has finished watching a movie here, Steve says, "They all fall asleep."

After watching a movie—*Ace Ventura* is playing today—it's time for some air. The grounds of the estate are open and yet compartmentalized. The rolling backyard is manicured like a golf fairway; narrow paths cut into surrounding natural vegetation that leads to secluded areas—a net covered berry patch, a heated 20-foot by 40-foot infinity-style pool with a cabana, a children's swing area, hard clay tennis courts, an

■ (below) A custom oak chest at the foot of the master bed harbors a flat screen television that rises at the touch of a remote control. ■ (below left) The master bath with slate floor and glassed walk-in shower, makes room for two with double oak vanities and porcelain sinks. The vintage tub is by Kohler.



apple orchard where the deer eat more of the seven variety of apples than members of the Meadows family do, and a manmade fish pond, stocked with over one hundred brightly colored fish that rush to the

surface like a scene from a James Bond movie when Steve or the grandkids feed them pellets.

A quick tour of the Meadow house lasts for more than three hours, and a visitor gets the impression there is even more to see. Throughout the morning, Steve talks constantly about his children and grandchildren and of how much joy they bring to his life. It is clear this man of great means and even greater vision misses them. If you build this house of dreams, he seems to be saying, they will come.

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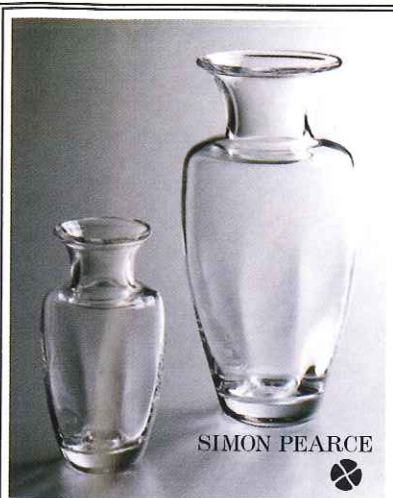
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