



# gray lady

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**Living room** A metallic light fixture sits snugly against the coffered ceiling so as not to interfere with the limestone fireplace wall. The ceiling and trim are painted in a Benjamin Moore white, which contrasts subtly against the “White Dove” used on the walls. A striated gray woven linen rug from Rustigian Rugs provides definition to the seating area. Meanwhile, a pair of French doors makes for easy passage onto the back deck. **Preceding pages** Jane and Soren Sorensen built the Shingle-style Nantucket beach house to accommodate year-round family gatherings.

# It

was easy for Connecticut-based Jane and Soren Sorensen to fall for the historic island of Nantucket, a crescent-shaped slip of land some 30 miles off Cape Cod. The couple strolled the island’s cobblestone streets during their courtship, summered on its sandy beaches as newlyweds, and even owned a small place there after their daughters were born.

“Everything melts away when you hop aboard that mainland ferry and get off on Nantucket,” Jane says. “It’s a charming, magical place that exists outside our crazy daily lives. Whenever we’re there, we’re always doing something low-key as a family, whether it’s biking, scalloping, or simply picnicking at the beach.”

The Sorensens bought 1.4 acres on the island back in 2012 after deciding to build a compound there—a retreat large enough to accommodate their family (the girls are 12, 15, and 17) as well as host extended family and close friends.

“We found we were spending more and more time on the island—and not just in the summer,” Jane says.

The fairy tale that culminated in the five-bedroom beach house with pristine landscaping also had a storybook beginning, with one chapter leading to another. The Sorensens’ real-estate agent referred them to Matthew MacEachern and his architectural design firm. Through MacEachern, they met local builder Edward Toole, whose sister Cynthia Hayes is an interior designer.

“It was kismet,” Jane says. “The team was so interconnected, with these layered relationships. They’d all worked together

**Dining room** Tufted chairs by Charles Stewart Company gather around a custom-designed dining room table with a dramatic black X-base. A hammered-iron light pendant finished in white paint keeps things airy and bright.  
**Kitchen** White paneled cabinetry characterizes the kitchen, along with a large island with a granite countertop. A rustic wood beam separates the eat-in nook from the rest of the kitchen.



before, had strong ties to Nantucket, and really understood the island. It just felt right.”

That was a perfect scenario for the Sorensens, who wanted a casual yet sophisticated beach house that blended with the island’s vernacular architecture. They envisioned a contemporary airy-and-bright open floor plan that seamlessly flowed outdoors.

“I arranged all the primary living spaces—living, dining, and kitchen—in a linear assembly, with direct correlation to the backyard’s pool, pergola, and patio,” says MacEachern.

Breezy rows of French doors open off the living and dining rooms, while the kitchen terminates in an eat-in bay where sunlight streams in through double-hung windows.

“To prevent the floor plan from becoming a large, undefined space, we introduced separation via columns, half-walls, and pilasters,” MacEachern says. “There are also different ceiling treatments—like the coffered ceiling above the dining room—helping the transition from one space to the next.”

A mix of materials, including a limestone feature wall in the living room, salvaged ceiling beams, and white oak floors, adds textural interest against pale white walls.

“When you have lots of polished millwork with clean lines and sharp details, the hand-hewn rustic beams provide contrast and impart a sense of casualness and history,” MacEachern says.

When it was time to decorate, Hayes and her colleague, Pamela Manchester, conferred closely with the homeowners, beginning





with the decision to choose a palette that would complement the fresh take on the home's neoclassical architecture.

"We didn't want the typical nautical blue, white, and yellow look," Hayes says. "We wanted to choose a scheme that reflected something of Nantucket, so we chose a lot of gray. It can be very gray on Nantucket." Hayes notes that the island's nickname is the "Gray Lady of the Sea" because of the thick fog that often rolls in and swathes the scenery. "We went with those soft gray and sand hues like you'd find at the beach, with pops of purple—Jane's favorite color."

The team chose transitional furniture with clean-lined silhouettes, ideal for informal yet stylish family life. A striéd wood coffee table sets the tone in the living room, which features a long linen-blend sofa facing two Ultrasuede armchairs that swivel so family or guests can also watch a TV on an adjacent wall. A pair of patterned X-benches with wrought-iron legs can be moved around as needed.

"We like to do our big pieces in neutrals but add pops of color and pattern in smaller furnishings that can be changed with time," Hayes says. "We also favor punches of strong black to lend sharp definition to and contrast with all the lighter colors. For example, in the kitchen, the wooden bar stools are painted black, but the table is stark white."

The designers made practical choices in dining room furnishings, both for traffic flow and casual seaside living. The placement and shape of the round dining room table, which comfortably seats eight, leaves plenty of room for someone on the way to the kitchen or back-



**Family room** Steel cable stair rails lead into the family room, which tucks under the eaves on the second floor landing. A roomy Lee Industries sectional and a pair of linen ottomans with wave stitching from V Rugs and Home provide plentiful room for lounging. When not in use, the ottomans slide beneath a console from Noire. The rustic bench adds organic warmth, as does the small wooden stool. **Homeowners** Jane and Soren enjoy a bicycle built for two. **Guest bedroom** A pillow from John Robshaw adds a punch of pattern to the gray-and-white palette. The "Nantucket" print is by Liz Roache.



yard. They chose stain-repellent upholstery in the dining room and vinyl seating at the kitchen's banquette, helping to create an overall setting that welcomes damp bathing suits, sandy feet, and even wet and muddy dogs—especially Teddy, the family's Wheaten terrier.

"The Sorensens wanted a sophisticated look, but we wanted to make sure it wasn't so sophisticated that it felt like city living," Hayes says. "We deliberately mixed in warmer, rustic, natural elements to balance the cool palette and crisp furnishings."

Sisal and jute rugs achieve that look, along with accent pieces like the living room's handwoven abaca chair and the kitchen's sculptural bamboo light pendant.

"We love it and are here all the time," Jane says. "Thanksgiving on the island is our latest tradition. We invite family, out-of-town and local friends. We even start the morning with the Nantucket 'turkey plunge' in the ocean—whoever's up for it," she adds with a laugh. "Usually, it's just the kids!"

**Interior designer:** Cynthia Hayes **Architectural designer:** Matthew MacEachern

**Design consultant:** Elisa Allen **Builder:** Edward Toole

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**Master bedroom** An antique mirrored headboard by Made Goods adds sparkle while lacquered grass-cloth bedside tables by Bungalow 5 and a seascape by Nantucket photographer Daniel Sutherland nod to the serene beach setting. A daybed from Hickory Chair sits in a reading nook in one corner of the bedroom—offering the ideal spot for an afternoon daydream.

**Master bath** A chevron-pattern marble floor leads to a deep tub.

