



Completed in January 2014, Rafe Churchill's 2014 Bulfinch Award-winning house on Ford Pond in Sherborn, Massachusetts, is an exceptional rendering of the Shingle style. Enjoying several waterfront acres, the structure emulates Newport, Rhode Island's Isaac Bell House—of which the client is very fond. Based on that reference, principal architect Churchill and his team studied Shingle-style homes in both Rhode Island and Maine to inform the design program.

Typifying the style, visual complexity, eclectic sculptural compositions, and expansive horizontal massing characterize the home. Of course, detailed shingle patterns and millwork, porches and a rear balcony that encourage a tactile interaction with the outdoors, Palladian and small oval windows, and asymmetrically arranged gables all feature prominently. A coursing of shingles over the front entrance, a shingled stair tower, a wood-shingled roof and siding, and decorative elements on the front porch railing and chimneys further push the concept.

The design suits the client's full-time needs, as the family of three resides there year round. Prior to retaining Churchill, in fact, the client had been living on the property for a year already. She grew attached to the land, the gardens, and the orientation of the original house, which was ultimately torn down and replaced. "It can be a challenge to work with clients who have been living in a house or on a property for some time, and have set ideas about what is successful and should be kept," says Churchill. In this case, the challenge was the house's orientation. "The hard part was defining how the house would sit on the property because we didn't believe the existing house fully utilized the site." After much discussion, they decided to shift the house 30' to the west (the former house was justified to the east) to optimize the view.

"People typically want a view from every room in the house," notes Churchill, "and they usually want a view of the same thing—whether it is a lake, a mountain, or a field—they want to see it out every window." For this project, as with many others, the team took pains to explain that it is not the same view that makes a house interesting and memorable. "You want different

Below: Handsomely situated on Ford Pond, the Sherborn home takes full advantage of its natural environs; every room enjoys some type of view, whether of the water or woodland. Churchill stresses each should offer a different experience. Opposite: Heavy mahogany doors are a Rafe Churchill signature element that perfectly complements the rich detailing of the transom windows framing it.



Left: A fieldstone-surround fireplace, plenty of natural light, warm earth tones, and layers of texture make the family room a most welcoming space.

experiences in each room," says Churchill. "The library might have a view of the pond and the kitchen might have a view of the pond, but they should be different experiences with slightly different views. It takes time to explain that, but in the end it has proven to work every time."

The level of detail defining the exterior continues inside. The main floor—with its entry hall, living room, sunroom, kitchen, dining room, and study—is notably decorative. "On a lot of houses, this level of detail is reserved for just the interior, whereas the exterior is traditional but understated. With a Shingle-style house like this, there's opportunity to explore the millwork and detailing on both sides," notes Churchill.

The main entry hall includes wood paneling and a coffered ceiling, as well as a winding staircase that hangs off the tower walls to provide a consistent space around the stairs, which are "delicately suspended within the tower." The living room also has a coffered ceiling, plus areas of wall paneling below the windows and a "somewhat ornate" fieldstone fireplace.

It was for this sophisticated interior millwork and cabinetry that the firm received the Bulfinch Award. And it was the choice of the traditional Shingle style that enabled such elaborate expression. "Our projects are based on historical references," explains Churchill. "We don't necessarily reference specific projects, but we make observations of house museums or landmark buildings." They glean information by taking photographs and measuring millwork, cabinetry, and profiles. "From that, we apply these details to the interior."

Rather than concentrating on one or two rooms as is more typical, this project carried the same level of detail throughout the entire house, though "the program lightens up in the bedrooms," says Churchill, adding that unlike "other projects where you have elements of authenticity, this project is consistently authentic."

