

HIC & G

Hamptons Cottages and Gardens



A HAMPTONS ICON!

FALL COLORS • RENOVATION GUIDE

Dream a Little Dream of Me
Written and Produced by Pamela Abrahams
Photographs by Keith Scott Morton

A HISTORIC COTTAGE ON A HILL MOVES ON TO THE NEXT STAGE OF ITS LIFE WITH RE-PURPOSED WOODS, BOLD BRUSH STROKES AND AN OWNER'S UNERRING VISION

NINE YEARS AGO, while living in San Francisco, Paul Rogers awoke from a life-changing dream. Emotions stirred, he vividly remembered the details—being dropped off on a blustery fall night at The John Jermain library in Sag Harbor and walking up a windy cobblestone hill to his home. He took this as a message.

Three weeks later Rogers met with a real estate agent in the idyllic little East End whaling village. He told the agent about his spiritual connection to historic structures and of warm memories of childhood summers spent on the South Fork. She politely said, “I have eight houses to show you, but I already know which one is for you. Would you like to see it first or last?” Motivated by his dream, Rogers responded “first!” without hesitation. And that was it. He purchased the charming old whaler’s cottage on top of the hill in Sag Harbor’s historical district.



Rogers, a renovator by trade, lived in the cottage for the first six years, developing a bold renovation plan. During that time he had the good fortune to work on a number of historic renovations in the village with builder Bob Tortora. Through these projects, Rogers learned to respect these historic homes. “I am always amazed by people who buy a house and immediately renovate. You need to live in the house, see how the light moves through it, understand the flow and then you can begin to improve upon it,” he says.

When conceiving plans for his own renovation, he aimed to make every room flow, reference the others and blend old and new elements seamlessly. He mocked up a design for his contractors. Major changes included removing almost all the interior walls and reversing the main staircase. He then enlisted NYC-based architect Gregory Zack to elaborate on these plans and bring them up to building code.

When the cottage’s walls and ceilings were opened, they revealed brightly painted pieces of wood, some covered with wallpaper and others possibly pieces from old ships. Determined to reuse as much of the original wood as possible, including the great old-oak lathe that had supported the roof’s shingles, Rogers and his crew went through the pile almost every day and pulled out the four to six nails per square inch that were imbedded in the filthy lathe. Ultimately, that pitted wood—smoothed, sanded, puttied, primed and painted—became the walls of a new kitchen and

sitting area. Fourteen antique interior doors were stripped, their hardware refinished. “You can’t imagine how long it takes to completely remove the years of paint from a single door, much less 14,” says Rogers. A newel post from a friend’s home adorns the new staircase, whose steps were created from old barn boards.

After industriously recycling these materials, Rogers wanted more than bland white walls. Inspired by the home of the friend who once owned that newel post, he developed a jewel-like color palette of rich reds, deep blues and spiced golds, opting for a warm cream for the ceilings. The 14 antique doors, their original wood patina glowing, offset the painted old attic boards that panel the walls. What pulls it all together is a repeated color way and what the crew named “Whaler’s Gray,” the trim paint used throughout. This warm gray hue finally came to fruition after nearly 100 samples were mixed and tested. The color, used on all the trim and window frames, provides continuity and balances to the prominent colors and eclectic furnishings.

Rogers paid close attention to every detail of the 18-month renovation process. Now, his respect for re-purposed materials and structures is apparent in each light-filled room. “I love coming home to my house. It’s so filled with history, but now it’s my history, too.” Who says dreams don’t come true?



