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# TRADITIONAL HOME

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IN TIFFANY BLUE & HERMÈS ORANGE





# Softly Spoken

A RESERVED  
YANKEE THROUGH  
AND THROUGH,  
LOUISE BROOKS  
CREATES A FAMILY  
HOME AS QUIETLY  
ELEGANT AS SHE IS

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**S**ailing and the sea are in the Brooks family DNA. Ever since Louise and Ned Brooks were married 30 years ago, they have summered and sailed in and around Martha's Vineyard (Ned is commodore of the Edgartown, Massachusetts, Yacht Club), and the three Brooks children grew up on sailboats and sandy beaches.

So it's not surprising that a parcel of land in Rowayton, Connecticut, overlooking Long Island Sound and its bobbing sailboats, captured the couple's sea-loving hearts. "The impetus for building this house was to get down by the water," says Louise, an architectural designer who planned the home. "Now my husband can look out our bedroom window and see his boat moored in the harbor."

Ned, a real estate developer as well as an accomplished sailor, had been on the lookout for in-town property. He and Louise had grown tired of maintaining the acres of wooded land and gardens at their home in New Canaan, Connecticut. Their children are in their 20s and on their own, so a big family house wasn't required.

"Technically, we didn't really downsize in terms of the house's square footage," Louise explains. "We downsized the property surrounding the house, and we created a more relaxed, open floor plan."

The tall, narrow house sits on a bluff overlooking the harbor, with the rear facade toward the water. The front exterior, with painted-yellow shingle siding, black shutters, and a cedar shake gambrel roof, is classic New England, in keeping with the old fishing community. Shell cutouts embellish some shutters, and scallop motifs are carved into the perimeter of the front door in recognition of the family's sea heritage. The Brooks family crest includes three scallop shells, Louise explains.

Interiors are sea- and view-focused, too, with banks of large windows—many with transoms—and a broad boxed window in the living room. ("I've always coveted a window with real curved glass," Louise admits.) The family sitting area by the kitchen has so many windows it feels like a "glassed-in sunroom," the designer says. The same effect is played out in a dining alcove. "It's meant to feel like a porch that has been enclosed."

**Living room:** A backgammon table from Oorah—the custom furnishings company Louise Brooks cofounded with two friends—and two side chairs nestle by a bow window, allowing gamers to enjoy harbor views.

**Key:** Interiors are traditional from the get-go, including the curving staircase. **Exterior:** From the street, the new shingled house belies its age, with features such as a gambrel shake roof and a fanlight above the front door. **Preceding page:** Rattan side chairs and upholstered foot chairs complement the trestle table in the dining alcove off the living room.



Rooms flow easily one to the other, with few walls to block traffic or views. There is no formal dining room. Instead, a light-filled alcove next to the living room holds table and chairs, with French doors that lead to an outdoor dining area on the terrace.

While the floor plan is open, the house feels traditional, thanks to Louise's classic architectural touches: elegant crown moldings, wide baseboards, rope trim on a mantel, built-in shelves, and a floor-to-ceiling plate rack with beadboard back and curving corner brackets.

The coastal setting played into the home's interior design but not with obvious motifs like anchors and sailing flags. "This is our primary residence, and I didn't want it to be a beachy home," Louise explains, "so we went with the darker floors and classic details, such as the clean, simple trims."

Louise is known for her white and ivory interiors, and this house would be no exception. "White is my favorite color, and we just added some sea-blue turquoises in the kitchen and bedroom for a coastal feel," she says.

A longtime friend, Rowayton interior designer Lynn Morgan, was Louise's trusted sounding board and adviser. She was totally on board with the clean, neutral palette. "In this particular house, it's the views that were the inspiration," says Morgan. "You look out to their beautiful terrace overlooking the water and the boats. It just called for serenity."

"We decided let's keep it white and maybe do some coastal gray colors. It's really what the rooms called for," she adds. Morgan reupholstered many of Ned and Louise's existing seating pieces in