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Body & Soul

ONE OF AMERICA'S LEADING COASTAL ARCHITECTS,
CHARLES HILTON, DESIGNS A MASTERFUL HOME IN
CONNECTICUT OVERLOOKING LONG ISLAND SOUND

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photographs by **Woodruff/Brown Architectural Photography**
and **Stefen Turner Aerial Photographer**





Grand design
The revered lines of New England's Shingle Style lend this beautiful estate home in Connecticut a familiarity that stirs the heart and soul.



Woods and water
William Rutherford of
Rutherford Associates
in Old Greenwich, Conn.,
completed the design of
the three-acre property,
ringed by a thicket of
woods and the waters
of Long Island Sound.

To see a dazzling transformation

of wood into exquisite artful form, look no further than this handsome family home perched on a point overlooking Long Island Sound in Riverside, Conn.

The classic Shingle Style residence, designed by Charles Hilton of Charles Hilton Architects in nearby Greenwich, changes simple, straightforward wood into an ethereal showstopper.

In the entry hall, the stairway's custom newel post and balusters, partnered with three different spindle designs reminiscent of ropes, shine with nautically inspired lines.

White oak floors, ranging from wide plank to narrow and laid in both herringbone and straight patterns, reflect the sunlight streaming through deep windows framed in elegant custom molding.

In the breakfast bay and upstairs master suite, ceiling beams – gorgeous in their heft and form – mimic traditional New England wooden boat frames. This is

clearly a home designed for both the body and the soul.

“Great millwork is one of our unique signatures,” says Hilton, a member of the American Institute of Architects and the sole principal of his eponymous, multi-award-winning firm that specializes in fine residential architecture.

While Hilton happily took the helm throughout the construction of the Riverside home, he also drew from his talented 19-member staff and his associate partners, Daniel Pardy, RA, and David Newcomb, AIA. Pardy oversaw much of the home's beautiful wood-crafted design elements.

The earthy touch of wood and stone coupled with the revered lines of the Shingle vernacular lend the home a soul-stirring familiarity, especially for people who love New England and its popular coastal aesthetic.

“These are elements that are very familiar to everyone,” Pardy says of the imposing house, designed to serve



generations of families. "It's part of our built fabric."

The clients, a couple who use the 11,800-square-foot home year round, wanted an architectural style that would sit comfortably on the land and allow Hilton's staff abundant freedom to create spaces where family and friends could enjoy the spectacular waterfront setting.

"The water and views were the focus of every major space in the home," Hilton says. "The choice of Shingle Style allowed us the opportunity to dress up and formalize a home of this significance while keeping it comfortable enough to live well day to day."

Comfort, tradition and room for their now adult children to visit were paramount to the couple. The home's two floors, with six bedrooms, offer plenty of places – both indoors and out – to gather or escape quietly for a peaceful recharge.

A long central porch on the home's waterside, adjoining screened porch, separate pergola-covered porch and curved projecting porch equipped with a fireplace offer places to breathe the sea air and enjoy



Exceptional team work. Principal Charles Hilton (center) worked closely with his associate partners, David Newcombe (left) and Daniel Pardy, on the design of the Riverside residence.

PHOTOGRAPH BY NICHOLAS ROTONDI PHOTOGRAPHY





the views. In element weather, the homeowners may be whisking around Tod's Point, just offshore, in their speedboat or kayaks.

The water, naturally, rules the roost in the home's setting and design. Hilton understood this from the beginning of the project. "What I find really special about the character of the water here is that it's always changing," he says. "You can be here when it's raining or foggy, when the tide comes in or out, and it's always different – spectacular but different."

The interiors, cloaked in white- and gray-toned walls, with silky blue and green décor touches, complement the breathtaking water views.

Shingle Style, with roots in 19th-century waterfront summer homes built for wealthy urban dwellers, quickly became an iconic tradition in American architecture.

The Riverside home's exterior embodies the style's classic hallmarks and blends seamlessly with other houses in the locale. "One of the nicest things about Shingle Style is its tactile, earthy nature," Hilton says.

Cedar shingles clad the home's sheltering gabled roof and glimmer in the sun. Two massive brick chimneys, placed on either side of a Chippendale-railed widow's walk, crown the rooftop. Just below, the front door – framed with traditional leaded sidelights and transoms – beckons on dusky evenings.



The eye is naturally drawn to the second story's flared shingled walls, bolstered by the first floor's stonewalls. The fieldstone is another crucial part of the design, Hilton says. "These old houses had big, old stones dug off the property," he explains. "We worked very hard to get those large stones, which anchor and tie the house to the land."

Hilton has practiced in Greenwich for 27 years. He primarily designs residences but also takes on pro bono architectural projects, such as the new Greenwich, Conn., 9/11 Memorial, and contributes

Welcome home
 Architect Charles Hilton and leading interior designer Amy Andrews of Katherine Cowdin, Inc., of Greenwich, Conn., fashioned stunning interiors that complement the architectural style perfectly.





financial help to the construction of homes and schools in Third World countries.

He had undertaken several previous projects for the Riverside homeowners and was confident about all-important client communication when they asked him to build their new home. "The first time you work with someone, you're really getting to know them," Hilton says. "In subsequent projects, you build on that trust."

The trust factor surely was strengthened by Hilton's robust list of awards and accolades, which include an appearance on *Ocean Home's* 2015 Platinum List last spring and, most recently, being named to the inaugural *Ocean Home 50*, an exclusive list of the top 50 coastal architects in the United States and Caribbean.

One of Hilton's first big steps in the home's design was to organize the private contractors who would bring their individual and collective talents to the project.

The white oak floors – created from new wood that was aged by fuming and treated with the same finish for consistency – are by Historic Floors in Greenwich, Conn.

Hilton and the interior designer, Amy Andrews of Katherine Cowdin, Inc., also based in Greenwich, shopped together for hardware, tiles and other décor details.

William Rutherford of Rutherford Associates in Old Greenwich completed the design of the three-acre landscape, ringed by a thicket of woods and the ever-present water.

Everyone – contractors and Hilton staff alike – shared ideas and tasks along the way. "It's a very collaborative environment here," Hilton says.

Woven into the home's framework is a bounty of

technological wonders that support wise and efficient energy use. The firm supervised the installation of a Yanmar cogeneration system, which burns natural gas to make electricity, capturing almost all the energy that is often wasted.

The system, combined with a geothermal HVAC system and a very tight building envelope, makes the house a paragon of "green" construction. The modern technology is hidden in the bones, notes Hilton, "so it feels like a very old, warm, traditional home."

Hilton Architects, known for developing environmentally sound solutions to design challenges, worked hard to maintain the integrity of the Riverside home, especially with its siting on a flood plain.

The real test, Hilton says, came when Hurricane Sandy hit in 2012 just after the home's completion. "I was nervous," he says, especially when news reports of extensive coastal damage were first broadcast.

He and the homeowners couldn't have asked for a better outcome. "Post-storm inspections revealed the flood elevations were spot on, and all building components performed exactly as planned," Hilton says. "The house came through the storm unscathed."

The home's beautiful design, combined with Hilton's exacting standards of architecture, construction and attention to detail, has created a private and elegant residence that will be enjoyed for generations to come. **OIH**

THE DETAILS
For more information,
visit hiltonarchitects.com.

Inside and out
The Riverside
home's exterior
embodies the
Shingle Style's
iconic hallmarks,
offering beautiful
outdoor spaces
for its owners to
relax in comfort.