

When the Fisher family's 1960s Long Island beach bungalow started to crumble, they sought an architect who'd preserve the home's humble roots and mellow vibe, while subtly bringing the place up to date.



# LONG ISLAND FOUND AMAGANSETT NEW YORK

Story by Jaime Gross  
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Project: Amagansett Beach House  
Architect: Page Goolrick



In the summer of 2007, Charlie and Rebecca Fisher noticed something odd about their weekend house, a boxy 1960s cottage in Amagansett, Long Island: "When the washer was on the spin cycle, the whole place would shake," says Rebecca. That's when they knew they couldn't put it off any longer. It was time to renovate.

The Manhattan-based Canadian couple had bought the house three years earlier, drawn to its space-efficient, family-friendly layout (four bedrooms and two bathrooms in 1,200 square feet) and its location 60 steps from one of the loveliest beaches in the Hamptons. Over the years, they'd rented various share houses in the Dunes, as the neighborhood is called, and they remember admiring this one on their evening walks. "There was a big juniper pine and maple out front," says Rebecca. "It looked like a really happy place." One spring, the home became available to rent, and they booked it. A month into their stay, a real estate agent called: The owner wanted to sell the house. Were they interested?

The couple decided to go for it. The house was small and scruffy, and the seller was motivated, so they snagged it for \$15,000 below the asking price; they paid an extra \$1,500 to buy it as-is and furnished, complete with sagging beds in the kids' rooms, board games in the closet, and a fully stocked kitchen. The Fishers and their three children loved the laid-back vibe of the place ("We come in Friday night, take off our shoes, and don't put them on again till Sunday—it's that kind of mood here," says Charlie) and the luxury of having the beach so close it felt like an appended backyard. It soon became apparent, though, that the uninsulated wooden structure "was starting to come to the end of its useful life," as Charlie puts it. "It was turning into cheese-cloth—you could hear and feel the wind whistling through all the gaps and cracks and crevices."

They didn't picture an extensive renovation. "We just didn't want it to fall down on us," says Rebecca. Intimidated by the idea of working with an architect ("I don't know how to talk to them, don't have the vocabulary, and I thought they might laugh at our budget," says Charlie), they turned to dwell.com and looked through some of the architects on the site. Two or three clicks in, they found Page Goolrick.

"Her projects looked exactly like our style—lots of light, lots of bookshelves—decorated the way we envisioned our house," says Charlie. "It also struck me that she said she loves the efficiency of sailboats and likes working with small spaces." An initial phone call put him at ease. "I had the notion an architect would want to make the thing theirs—so you could tell it was her house. But Page was pleased we wanted to retain the character of the existing building."

To the Fishers' surprise, Goolrick's design process started not with grand architectural moves but with a slew of specific nuanced questions. Where does Rebecca put her bag when she gets in? Do your kids sit down to put on their shoes? When you have ▶



The open-plan living-kitchen-dining area is a repository of design icons, both classic and contemporary. There's a Louis Poulsen pendant lamp over the Eero Saarinen dining table; Mirror Ball pendants by Tom Dixon over the kitchen counter; and

Tab F1 floor lamps from Flos behind the Edward Wormley-designed Dunbar sofa. In the living room, chairs modeled on Jens Risom's swivel design enable people to face either the sofa or to spin 180 degrees toward the kitchen.

Eight-year-old Emily  
peeks out from a sliding  
panel door with matte  
marine hardware that  
will age gracefully  
in the salty sea air.  
In the living room  
(opposite), ten-year-  
old Henry cuddles with  
three-year-old Grace. ▶



“I think an architect’s job is to celebrate  
what people really care about and simplify  
and streamline the rest.” —Page Goolrick



Because the ocean is so close to the house, the Fisher family treats the beach like an extended backyard. In the living room (opposite left), a warm, woody palette reigns, with a few blue-gray notes to create a serene mood. The color of the Fishers' front door (opposite right) was inspired by an old Land Rover Defender's hue, which Charlie had Benjamin Moore custom-match.



people over, do you barbecue? Where do you like to curl up with a good book? Goolrick explains: "To solve design problems, you have to look at how a family really lives and works. I think an architect's job is to celebrate what people really care about and simplify and streamline the rest."

To that end, Goolrick embraced the particular challenges of oceanside living and selected materials that "just evolve and soften over time, like driftwood," and require little maintenance. She essentially rebuilt the house using dry construction methods, foregoing inflexible, crack-prone materials like plaster, Sheetrock, and Spackle in favor of those (like wood) that can expand and contract.

The exterior, once flecked with peeling paint, is now clad in cedar plywood paneling scored with a router every eight to ten inches, so you can't tell where the standard four-by-eight sheets begin and end. Only four things in the house are painted: small areas in the bathrooms, the bright blue front door (a color Charlie first spied on an old Land Rover Defender and had Benjamin Moore custom-match), the bookshelf in the living room, and three blue-gray sliding panels in the kitchen. Everything else—the floors, walls, and newly exposed ceiling rafters—is stained or oiled wood. Anticipating the weathering effects of the salty sea air, Goolrick intentionally selected matte stainless steel hardware: "When ▶



Amagansett Beach House  
Floor Plan

- A Entry
- B Bedroom
- C Bathroom
- D Living/Dining Area
- E Kitchen

