

NICE HOUSE



SAMUEL G. WHITE
THE MONACELLI PRESS

BEACH LANE RESIDENCE

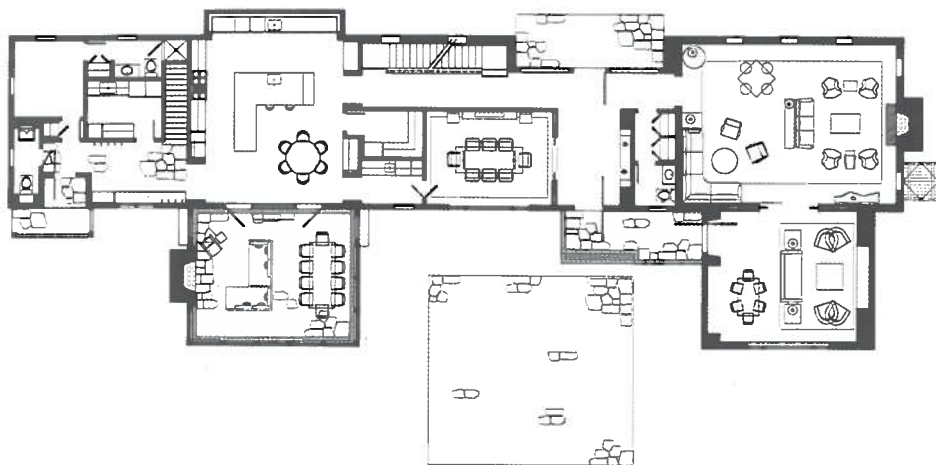
Wainscott, New York



ALAN WANZENBERG ARCHITECT







The screened porch was absorbed into the projecting wings that frame the paved terrace. Historical details include the low brick

foundation, narrow clapboard siding, and thin trimboards at the gable ends.

CERTAIN COUNTRY ROADS RESONATE with the history of the land. Along the East End of Long Island, these roads are framed by mature deciduous trees and lined with houses and barns in measured rhythms. Structures were built close to the roads, separating shallow front lawns from deep tracts of working farmland at the rear. The landscape along these roads has looked the same way for a long time, and those who build there today are well advised to respect the historic pattern of development, the agricultural history of the land, and the vernacular building traditions of the region. The architecture of this house arises directly from a nuanced understanding of that rural vocabulary. While the design is fully contemporary, it is deeply informed by the past.

Alan Wanzenberg arranged the house as a straight bar, stretched on its longitudinal axis and set close to the road to divide the lot into a well-proportioned front lawn and a large private rear yard. Two outbuildings—a garage and a guesthouse—are shifted tight to the side lot line to preserve open space and to simplify service access. The pool is set at the back of the site. The directness of the layout is reinforced by the architectural treatment of the outbuildings. The garage and guesthouse are realized as simple gabled structures clad in natural wood siding, but the reference to agricultural building types conceals a high level of sophistication. It is very





difficult to design buildings that look so completely undesigned.

The massing and elevations of the main house take that rigor even further. The house is conceived as a long gable with a minor extension for a service wing. A rectangular bay punctuates the front elevation and the roof line but does not disrupt the otherwise unbroken plane of the street wall. Two equal gabled forms project into the rear yard, framing a terrace between them. A large screened porch is contained within the overall volume of the house. Smaller porches at entrances are created by simple, unsupported projections or by extension of the roof itself, an expediency inspired by Yankee carpenters and reinterpreted with formal elegance. Long straight lines of painted clapboard reinforce the simple geometry of the whole, detailing is minimal to the point of invisibility, and there are no paint colors other than white. The main floor is set unusually close to the ground, allowing the rooms to open directly onto paving set almost flush with the lawn.

Opportunities presented by site, functions, and budget yielded a larger house than its historical precedents, but



The kitchen window transforms a view of the farms across the street into a room-sized mural. A continuous molding at door height organizes the multiple cabinets, appliances, and door openings.



the planning has a directness and simplicity that evoke traditional patterns. Rooms on the ground floor are conceived as well-proportioned boxes, and walls on the second floor inflect to meet the slope of the roof.

The discipline that defines the elevations becomes more inclusive inside, but the sense of overall control never slackens. References to Georgian, craftsman, and midcentury modern design combine to create a tight palette of images that are literate in expression, subdued in tone, and flawless in execution. The elegant stair rail and expressive joinery at doors and cabinets are particularly impressive. All elements of the interior design, including furniture, fittings, and even artwork, seem to have been conceived simultaneously. In a few years, they should be enriched by the patina of life in the form of children's sports trophies, house presents from weekend guests, and impulse purchases at antique shows. The authentic character of this architecture would be a welcoming host to layers of corroborative detail.

Walls of painted clapboard siding give the study a transitional quality appropriate to its location in plan. Wanzenberg was responsible for the interior design as well as the architecture.

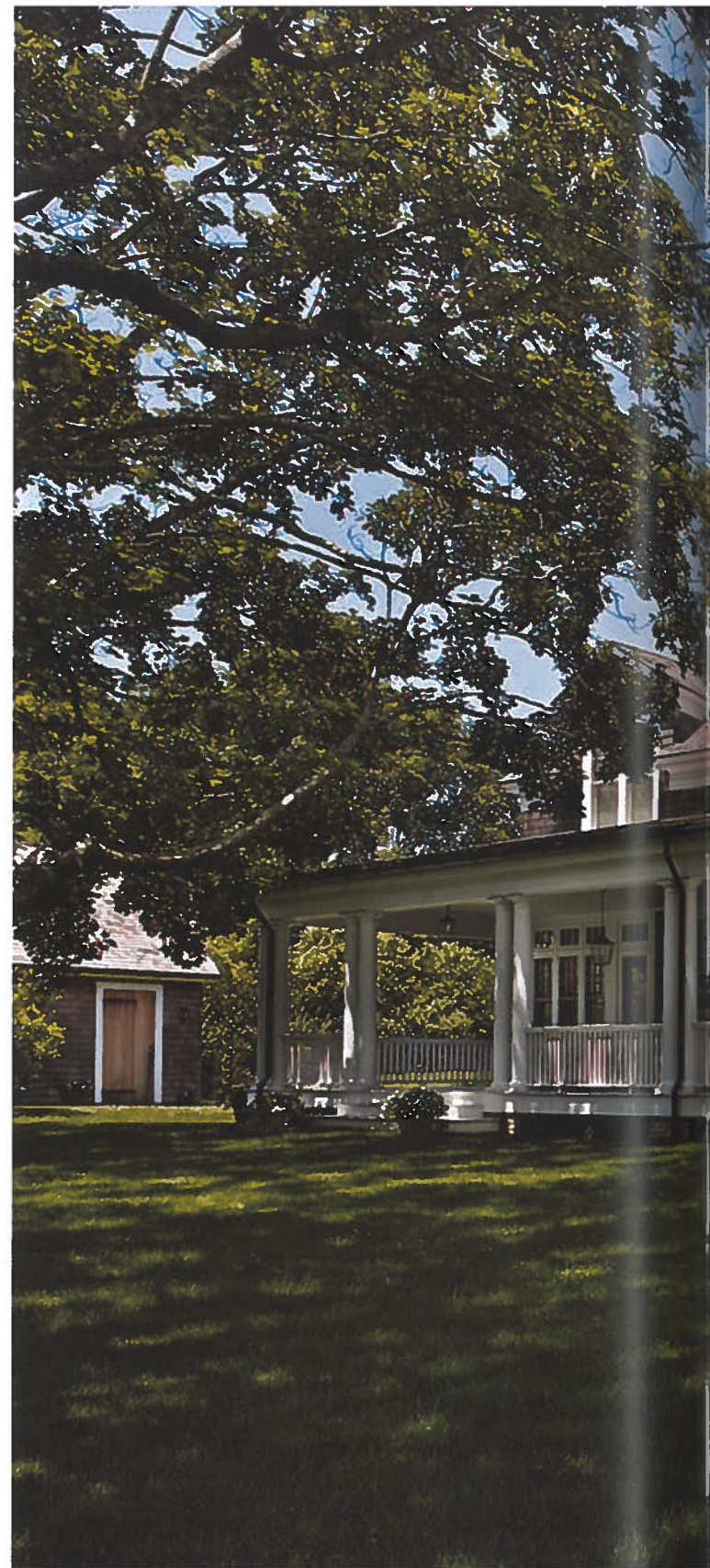


HALSEY LANE HOUSE

Bridgehampton, New York



PLATT BYARD DOVELL WHITE ARCHITECTS



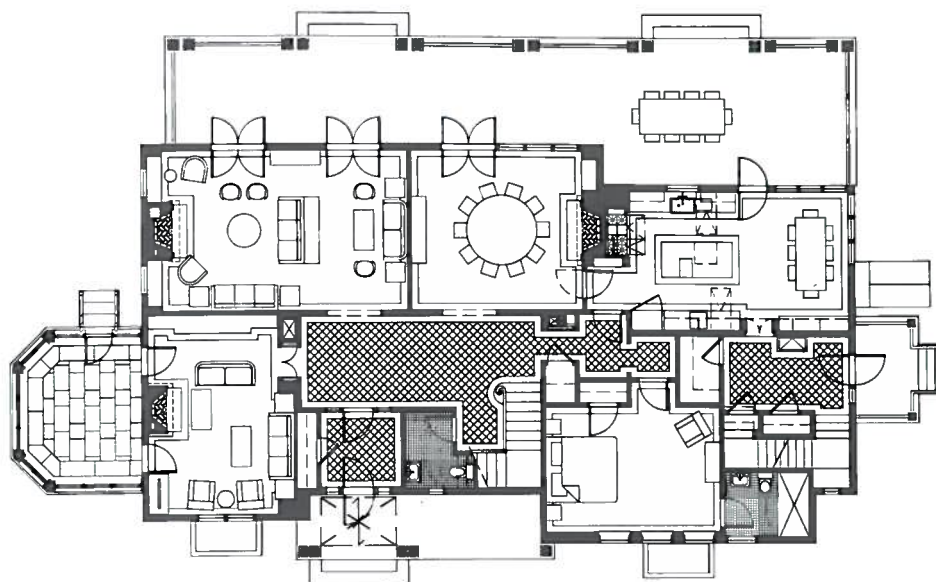




A NEW HOUSE INSERTED into an established context should be conceived in a familiar regional style and clad in materials that quickly take on the patina of age. If the new house is shaded by mature trees and designed to suggest that it had been enlarged over time, it will appear as if it had been there forever.

This house followed all of those strategies. Its two-acre corner lot was surrounded by potato fields and original farmhouses with simple gabled forms, cedar shingles, and white trim. More recent houses had upgraded that basic vernacular to colonial revival, a natural idiom for the Hamptons, but new houses shouldn't be too fancy or they look out of place in the agricultural setting. To avoid that transgression, this house was developed with high-style details assembled in a low-style manner. Deliberate asymmetries suggest a history of natural growth, as if an earlier owner had added a wing or extended a porch with the proceeds of a highly successful potato harvest.

The house was designed for a professional urban couple with adult children. Their requirements included separate, formal spaces for the living room, dining room, and library, plus enough wall area to display a collection of contemporary art. More casual activities take place in the kitchen and, during warm months, the south-facing porch. A screened porch off the library is a more secluded retreat.



On the walls of the entrance porch shingles are replaced by clapboard and painted a warm lemon color to compensate for the northern exposure. Trim profiles and other finishing details were directly inspired by the late-nineteenth-century colonial revival style.





The owners had to obtain a zoning variance in order to preserve the trees, which form a dappled canopy over

the south lawn. During the summer most activities take place around the porch.







Four bedrooms upstairs are used by family and close friends; one downstairs anticipates a time when a ground-floor bedroom becomes a necessity. The basement is similarly configured for recreational uses now, with provisions for construction of additional bedrooms.

The interiors combine a literate application of traditional space-making with an equally traditional vocabulary of finished carpentry, cabinetwork, and custom molding profiles. The effect is to reinforce the spirit of an older house, particularly in the entry, stair hall, and formal rooms. The same details suggest a high level of old-fashioned comfort in bathrooms and kitchens, while they reflect more contemporary arrangements of space, fittings, and equipment.

At the same time, the house is full of quirky details, such as an attic-like study off the master bedroom, a private porch for the guest bedroom, or knee-height windows in the dressing rooms. The effect of these idiosyncrasies is hard to measure. They suggest that something has changed over time, making the brand-new house seem older, and, in fact, the owners are frequently asked when they finished their renovation.

The kitchen combines light and views with easy access to the porch, lawn, back stairs, and family parking. Trim details include custom plinths and corner blocks for the fluted door and window casings.

The interiors mix furniture, fixtures, and art from a wide range of periods.





The vestibule door and leaded sidelites, the dining room china cupboard, and the living room mantel were inspired by American houses of the colonial and federal periods.



