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■ Custom mantel and built-in wooden cabinets constructed by Hamel Woodworks.

■ The home's dining room is spacious, yet intimate. Soft green paint creates a simple, sophisticated backdrop to such Asian accents as the onyx fireplace and the painting above the hearth entitled *Yi Woman* by Xue Mo, purchased from the Tao Water Art Gallery in West Barnstable.

Personalized

Elegance

*A West Barnstable woman carefully
crafts the home of her family's dreams.*

Chris Caldwell and her husband, inveterate travelers, learned a long time ago to keep what they love close and to let extraneous things go.

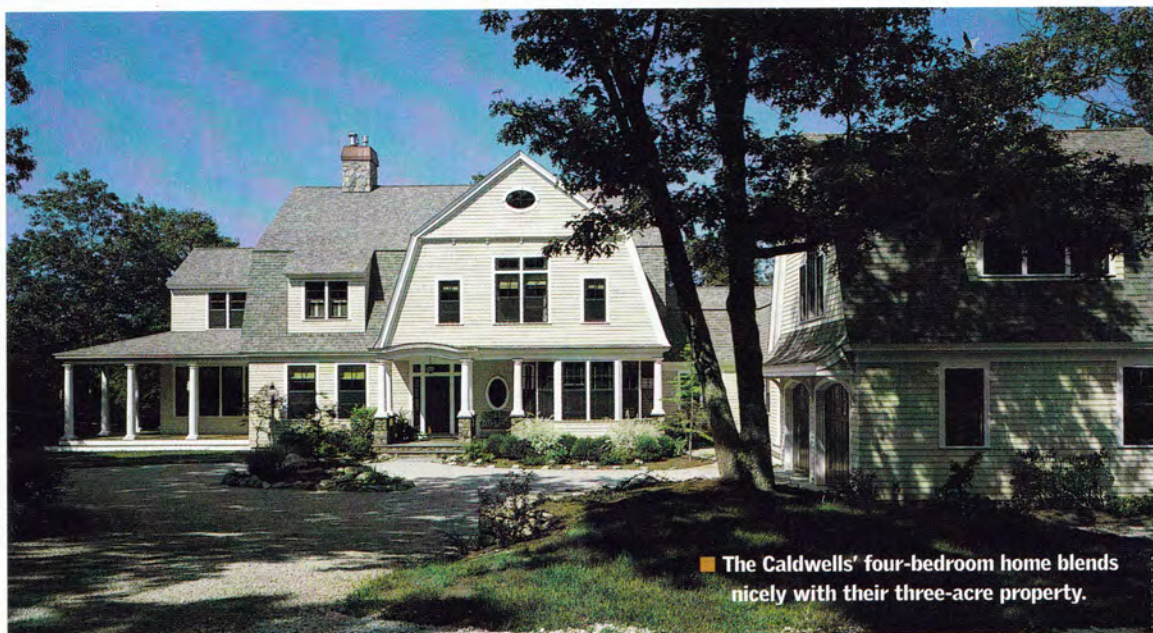
"There is something about collecting things that have meaning to you," Chris Caldwell says. "Amassing things that have no meaning, that add nothing to your life, is a colossal waste of energy." Instead, the Caldwells surround themselves with selective items that remind them of their families, friends, and experiences. "I'm a minimalist, so everything we have is useful in some way, whether it is a small sculpture or a piece of comfortable furniture."

Chris applied this same philosophy when she planned the family's West Barnstable, gambrel-roof

home, accomplishing a remarkable feat: a house that is luxuriously large—5,600 square feet of floor space with ten-foot ceilings—but also intimate and warm. Acting as general contractor, she handpicked virtually every component, from the Brazilian cherry floors to a gorgeous coffered ceiling, from the rich woven fabrics to the intriguing color palette.

Her imprint is one of elegance, minus the hard edges of formal grandeur. "I tend to like things with formal bones but with a relaxed finish," Caldwell says. Charmingly offbeat touches also show up here and there. "A house should have some quiriness," she adds with a smile.

The two-story home, with milkweed-yellow shingles and deep green trim, is nestled on a three-acre



■ The Caldwells' four-bedroom home blends nicely with their three-acre property.

BY MARY GRAUERHOLZ
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TOM SOBOLIK



■ From sage chairs and a sandstone hearth to wooden waterfowl on the mantel, the living room's decor reflects the dunes of Sandy Neck, visible from the room's back windows. Joe Hamel of Hamel Woodworks in Hyannis constructed built-in wooden cabinets to the left of the fireplace to hide the family's large-screen television.

lot with views of Sandy Neck's dunes in the distance. Crowned with a stone chimney and brightened by sunlight streaming through 99 windows, the house, viewed from the front gardens, is a welcoming, warm haven. As an inviting gesture, Caldwell placed an urn filled with a living pineapple plant—topped by one perfect, real pineapple—by the front door, her version of the traditional sign of welcome.

The design of the house evolved over several years. "Originally we considered a staid hip-roofed colonial. It was very traditional," Caldwell recalls. In the end, she and her husband decided upon a Victorian-era country home. "My husband loves Victorian architecture," she notes.

Once they were on the road to the house of their dreams, Caldwell, a mother of two who works as a real estate manag-

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er and a window display designer for Banana Republic in Mashpee Commons, assumed the role of general contractor. "It's the most fun I ever had," she confides.

Architect Timothy Luff, principle of Archi-Tech Associates, Inc. in Cotuit, says that Caldwell succeeded where few homeowners do. "It's impressive," Luff says. "It's a daunting task for a homeowner to take on, and it takes a special person to pull it off." Luff worked with senior associ-



■ In this private parlor, eight-foot French doors open to the covered porch, a favorite spot for evening entertaining. Just outside, Chris planted a garden consisting entirely of plants with white blossoms to add "a little sparkle" to the evening's ambience.



■ The Caldwells did not want a water view; instead, they prefer the changing, multilayered view of a meadow, the Great Salt Marsh, and the dunes of Sandy Neck. "When the sun rises, it's like looking into a lit painting," says Chris.

ate Jose Lima to develop the Caldwells' house plans. R&R Construction Custom Homes Co. in Centerville built the home.

"She came prepared with fairly refined ideas as to what she wanted to see, in terms of style and details she thought were important," Luff says. "She still allowed us to express that in a way we felt was appropriate. It wasn't paper-doll architecture, meaning that she did more than just bring magazine clippings of things she wanted for the house."

Most definitely, this home is not cutout construction. Case in point is the home's entryway, a simple, almost spare space, with deep-persimmon walls and a Brazilian cherry floor. It needed to be large enough to "stack" people who might come to the door in groups, but not superfluously large. As Luff says, "A foyer shouldn't feel like it has more space than it really needs. If the space is well thought out, it is designed based on what is proportional and what is necessary."

To the left of the foyer is the dining room, which was roomy enough last Thanksgiving to serve 21



■ Custom kitchen cabinets and island constructed by Hamel Woodworks.

■ Chris had her kitchen cabinets painted white, glazed a mushroom color, then distressed to give the room antique elegance. Small glass compartments above the cabinets house decorative glass items like pitchers and serving bowls, which are used for entertaining.

Personalized Elegance

guests. Light pours in from six-foot-tall windows, casting a glow on the dining room table, the onyx fireplace, and, over the hearth, a striking painting entitled *Yi Woman* by the Chinese artist Xue Mo. A glass chandelier, a souvenir from a trip to Italy, hangs over the table and lends “a little sparkle,” Caldwell says. “Cut crystal would have been over the top.”

Caldwell’s interior designer, David Shinn of David Shinn Interiors in Mashpee, points out that the pear-green dining

room walls blend pleasingly with colors in neighboring rooms. “Chris had a color palette in mind for the family rooms, really pretty shades of sea glass, coral, and taupe,” says Shinn, who helped guide the color process throughout the house.

Besides a coordinated color scheme, the main living areas downstairs also benefit from an airy, open feel. Although not enormous, the rooms are appealingly spacious, sweeping from one to the next. “You can increase the volume of a room dramatically with high ceilings,” Caldwell notes.

Her architect was on precisely the same page. “A fair number of people traditionally feel that to achieve a sense of spaciousness, they need a vaulted or cathedral ceiling. Therefore, they give up space on the second floor,” says Luff. Instead, he and the Caldwells decided upon modest