



This ain't the first rodeo for "The Young House" in Mattapoissett. Here on the shore of Buzzards Bay, near Ned's Point Light, the lot for this home was once part of a larger property, an estate belonging to a former resort. Back in the early 1980s, the owners of the resort-turned-residence decided to subdivide their land, a significant downsizing that opened up nearly two acres of prime real estate, most of which was a manicured lawn leading from the road down to a seawall and a long, stone pier jutting out into the harbor.

Often, when a house comes to be known by name in a small town, it is one that has stood for generations. Perhaps it has colonial roots or is built of granite from a local quarry or has some distinguishing feature such as a built-in lighthouse. Not so with "The Young House" in Mattapoissett. Instead, this fixture along one of the most popular walking routes in its picturesque hamlet dates only to 1985, and until its more recent renovation, the home itself bore no real characteristics of particular charm. It wasn't the sort of house where walkers would stop to steal glimpses of extraordinary architecture or



From Ranch TO CAPE, Dallas to DOCKSIDE

by Chris White
Photography by Neil Alexander

detail. It was just a house, like so many other houses one might pass in any town on Cape Cod, on the banks of Buzzards Bay, or in any suburb in New England. Even its driveway, running straight to the garage, was utilitarian and non-descript. What distinguished the house, instead, was its owner, Dick Young.

If you've ever played golf, you should thank Dick Young for his contributions to the game, to the sport—for Young came of age in his father's company, the Acushnet Process Company, which invented the modern golf ball in 1930.

Based in Mattapoisett's neighboring town of Acushnet, the Process Company was founded by Phillip "Skipper" Young; it "deresinated" latex and sold rubber to various industries. When Dick Young was a boy growing up in Fairhaven, Skipper had developed a fondness for golf. After one match with a doctor friend, the elder Young became convinced his poor showing on both the fairway and greens had less to do with his lack of skill than it did with the quality of the golf balls he was hitting. They didn't fly or roll consistently. After a few cocktails, he convinced his doctor friend—who ran the x-ray unit at a



local hospital—to take images of golf balls. Turns out, Skipper’s suspicions proved correct; the x-rays revealed wild inconsistencies in the shape of the rubber cores. Skipper, an MIT-educated engineer, knew immediately that the distorted centers of these balls would cause them to roll and fly erratically; he decided that since he already ran a rubber processing company, that he should be able to start manufacturing and selling balls with uniformly spherical cores. It took about five years of product development, but in 1935, Skipper Young had driven his new ball into prominence. The ball that would bear the name Titleist had arrived, and it would go on to become the #1 ball in golf.

Skipper’s son, Dick Young, worked his way up through his father’s company, learned from the bottom on the factory floor, and followed the same path through MIT. In 1955, he became CEO of the Acushnet Company (as it later became known), of which Titleist was the most famous product. Each ball still runs through an x-ray imagining test, and the balls are still produced at U.S. factories, mostly in New Bedford and in other Massachusetts locations. Titleist is a true small-business-makes-good story, and Dick Young became a renowned member of the wider New Bedford community. He retired from Acushnet in 1976 after 21 years at the helm, but remained active in philanthropy until his death in 2015, at age 98. He had founded the Acushnet Foundation back in 1951, and in his “second

career,” he quietly supported nonprofits, often through donated work. In 2015, foundation President Craig Dutra stated in *South Coast Today* that, “[Young] was the single largest benefactor for the city in 40 or 50 years.”

Despite the family’s contributions to golf and to the community, the 1980s design of The Young House didn’t really translate to contemporary sensibilities and the broader needs of future owners. When the home came on the market in 2018, the realtors worked with Will Saltonstall, principal at Saltonstall Architects in Marion, to develop sketches of possibilities for the property’s future. As he recalls, “It was basically a 4,000 square foot ranch with an aging indoor swimming pool and an unusable attic. The floor plan was choppy; there were hardly any windows.” His vision was to open things up, to bring in the view, the coastline, and the sea—to maximize the home’s location.

At the same time, the Sammis family from Dallas, Texas, had gathered in Newport for their daughter’s wedding. Bruce Sammis had grown up staying with his grandparents at their home on Point Connett, just a couple of miles down the shore from The Young House. He and his wife Sarah had met in college, and they had been visiting the area ever since, even after his grandparents’ house had sold. For a number of years, they had been looking to buy, and they had put an offer down on a house back in about 2013. While staying in





Newport for the wedding in 2018, Sarah decided to look at some listings online, and then she arranged to drive up to Mattapoisett to have a look at the house. She saw potential—particularly in its location—so she and Bruce moved forward and wrapped up the deal. They reached out to Saltonstall to begin the planning process and onboarded contractor Tim Costello, principal of Costello Fine Homes in Marion.



Sarah, who had studied interior design in college and had designed the family’s home in Dallas, decided that she would take on this new project as well. In early conversations, the collaborators debated the best approach to transforming the home. Saltonstall recalls, “We considered taking the house down and starting from scratch, but the owners and our entire team ended up pushing towards renovation.” Costello adds, “They were conscious of the community and wanted their entry to be more seamless.”

Sarah Sammis also appreciated the position that the home had held for over thirty years. “It was a newer ‘old’ house,” she says, “but it had history; Dick Young had built it.”





One of the chief challenges was the puzzle of how to both preserve the house's understated appearance while simultaneously increasing its size to fit the family's wants, needs, and aesthetic values. Saltonstall says, "We had these discussions about making it 'Texas big,' and yet, they wanted to keep things traditional on the exterior while going coastal modern inside."

From the street, you would never know that The Young House has nearly doubled in size—to an eight-bedroom home of 7,000 square feet. The original, simple driveway is still there, but it's now a secondary entrance designed for catering vans and other service vehicles. The new main entrance is more elegant, an unassuming circular drive around a venerable maple tree. Costello notes, "The new driveway offers a view of the water on your way in, and it allowed us to relocate the main entrance and entry porch. And still, one of the things I like best about the home is that it still looks very modest."

That Saltonstall and Costello were able to so absolutely transform this home while barely expanding its footprint seems almost magical, and the way the home unfolds seems almost to defy physics. Based on the simple Cape exterior, the interior entryway is almost shocking in its scale. The ceiling is high; the paneling, staircase, and banister are ornate and foreshadow the fine carpentry throughout the home, and the textures are rich, natural,

and clean. Natural fiber rugs and stair-carpeting announce the coastal elements of the interior design theme, and a large mirror in the open second-story hallway seems to create even more space. The effect of entering the home is a bit like walking into a dollhouse only to find its interior is all full-sized. Saltonstall explains, "The house had no finished space upstairs, so we took the roof off and increased its pitch. It yielded a ton of new space. The owners were blown away by the volume."

While the entryway sets the stage in the new home, the most obvious and dramatic transformation was the kitchen. Envision an indoor swimming pool — a rectangle the color of Scope mouthwash, framed by a border of bright green astroturf, and encased by shingled walls and a white, peaked ceiling that might belong in a chapel's alcove. Now imagine that time and chlorine have infused a chemically stagnant sheen onto the room. It would take a certain degree of creativity and imagination—and even courage—to believe that the space could evolve into a magnificent kitchen, the heart of the new-and-improved home. And to call the new space a kitchen really does it a disservice; it's more of a great room that includes a formal dining area, a sitting room, and an island topped in book-matched high-end quartz with bar seating. While the original, Costello recalls, "had only two tiny windows," the new walls are practically all glass; the view is so immediate, it almost appears that



boats in the harbor are floating in the lawn. And the new ceilings truly feel cathedral like, their custom millwork white and lustrous, with exposed beams that seem to recall a possible history—what the house would have wanted had it been built in an earlier era. There was enough space that during construction, Costello set up his full woodworking shop in here and used it to create all of the built-in elements and cabinetry for the entire home. The room is truly expansive; Saltonstall says, “It was a radical change that connected it with the harbor, which is what this home is all about. And this is a Texas-big island!”



The Sammis family has been delighted with their new house, which turned out to be a silver lining in this bizarre year of the pandemic. They enjoy the “walkability” of their location, which has allowed them to feel more connected to Mattapoissett. Sarah says, “People here are great, so friendly, and we have great neighbors on both sides; one raises bees and makes honey.” 2020 was their first summer here, and Sarah says, “It was actually perfect because my husband and everyone could work from home. We were able to stay all summer, and one of our daughters was able to be here for a whole month.”



In 2021, the team is set to complete the landscaping started by the project’s landscape designer Christina Hutton of Bartlett Gardens. The plans include the addition of gardens and the installation of a small “dipping” pool along with a pool house that will double as an outdoor gathering spot with a fire pit. “It’s been a fun project,” says Sarah. “Will and Tim were so receptive to everything; we had no issues. Because they were local, that was a cool thing; they really knew what to do.”

Chris White teaches English at Tabor Academy in Marion and is a frequent contributor to Cape Cod Life Publications.



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