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The 1740s farmhouse was moved to its current location in 1929. In 2020, James Doyle Design Associates reimagined the two-acre site for their clients.

Next LEVEL

James Doyle Design Associates create a welcoming landscape for a 1740s saltbox farmhouse—complete with vegetable and cutting gardens, entertaining spaces, and a pool. **By Tovah Martin**

IT WAS JUST the right moment to make the leap. Living with the landscape surrounding the painstakingly preserved 1742 sea captain's saltbox no longer matched the family's evolving lifestyle. When the historic house was moved to its current location, in 1929, it was sited to perch nicely on its two-plus acre site. But ledge runs beneath the site and the

slope of the land is so dramatic that the house could be sited only on a diagonal. Although the current homeowners have been in residence since 2008, installing gardens felt like a prohibitively daunting project to tackle while they were raising their young family of four children. In 2020, they were ready for the next step in the property's evolution.

Landscape designer James Doyle

loves a challenge. While architect James Schettino was creating additions to the house, with increased glazing and opened views to the outdoors, the team at James Doyle Design Associates (JDDA) was finding ways to make the outdoors frame-worthy and totally alluring. Beyond beautiful scenes, the homeowners wanted a hardworking landscape. Their want list included

“Stone walls are sacred in New England. The fence is an important unifying element to create the proper bucolic setting.”



outdoor entertaining/dining patios, a vegetable/cutting garden, and meadow areas. They hesitantly inquired about the feasibility of a swimming pool—a request that was particularly tricky, given the ledge underneath. JDDA came back with a series of site-sensitive solutions, including a plan for the swimming pool. Meanwhile, a formerly unusable barn was rebuilt by Kevin Cady of East Coast Barn Builders, who found a Canadian post-and-beam replacement. Everything had to communicate with the historic house, but James Doyle is perfectly at home with period sensitivity. Making a visual connection between components was

not exactly a piece of cake given the grade changes, but he navigated it with the greatest of ease. Even before one arrives at the property, the stage is set. Anthony Tavares, lead designer for the project on the James Doyle team, designed an enclosure that merges the essence of a traditional post-and-rail fence with a sleeker silhouette. It reads like hemstitching in the property’s fabric. With Tavares’s signature concern for details, the sleek cedar was specifically chosen to be knothole-free, while the detail of the leaded copper caps looks smart while also extending the life of the visual partition. That fence merges

into a rebuilt stone wall curvaceously rounding the corner and underscoring the New England roots. As Justin Quinn, who developed the master plan at JDDA, summarizes the concept, “Stone walls are sacred in New England.” James Doyle agrees: “The fence is an important unifying element to create the proper bucolic setting.” That maneuver is just the beginning of an experience that blends old and new. A member of The Stone Trust, Tavares is adept at using stone to create a mood. Specifically, he plugged in the rough surface of sager stone to evoke the past—even using that stone for bespoke seating

beside the fire pit. Where a smoother surface is necessary, bluestone does the bidding, with a large footprint and spaces between pathway blocks for a dramatic effect. Stone serves many functions on the property, including as a segue from the parking court to the house. Originally, the driveway cut in front of the house. The JDDA team’s softer solution was to create a parking court discreetly on the side. That move was key to solving the the flow, beautifying the property and creating more space for recreation. James Doyle’s signature hedge and tree placement also partitions space and serves as accents in the landscape. For

Top The swimming pool is connected to the main house but visually integrated into the landscape, surrounded by differing planting textures. **Above** The home was restored and renovated by Schettino Architects. The front of the house is framed by dry-stacked stone walls and boxwood. **Opposite** Bluestone and sager stone were combined to create connections and passageways between the different areas of the property. A meadow slopes down to the side of the house, where a farmer’s porch with bluestone floors is found.



Top The roadside fence adds to the agrarian nature of the property. **Above** The new garage/barn sits between the house and broader landscape. **Top Right** A new and colorful perennial/kitchen garden sits on axis with the house. The garden is enclosed with manicured hornbeam hedges. In the center is a gravel pathway. **Opposite** A new meadow with tall grasses is established.

continuity in a landscape being asked to serve so many functions, Doyle applied two forms of European hornbeam—the species is used for hedging and a fastigate form is enlisted as focal points. Why hornbeam? “It holds its leaves through winter,” Justin Quinn explained. “The past year’s leaves drop in early spring and are replaced by fresh, vibrant green foliage.” In other words, hornbeam is invariably well dressed.

Not only are the areas immediately surrounding the house carefully scripted, but they also have a dialog with the interior. Outdoor dining is easily accessible and visible from inside via accordion glass doors; a separate lounging area is fitted with an outdoor fireplace; the pool was given an outdoor shower screened in evergreen ilex. In close collaboration with the architect, the veg/cutting garden is easily visible from the kitchen window, but the food/flower garden is fitted

with a deer-proof fence screened by hedges.

As the landscape moves away from the house, the mood becomes more relaxed and freeform. Although a modest section of mown lawn still affords the family sports and activity space, most of the outer area is seeded with a No Mow mix of various fescues. Pathways are provided throughout that low-growing meadow for access and dog-walking purposes.

That textural meadow is key in giving the scene definition as well as instant roots. “The clients now use the whole property for function and enjoyment,” James Doyle says.

The homeowners agree: “All of us genuinely appreciate the landscape, daily, from inside and outdoors. The landscape design takes our living experience to a whole new level, all year round.” It honors the history of the place while celebrating today’s lifestyle. ☺ **FOR RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 114.**

