



**ARCHITECT**  
Charles R. Myer & Partners, Ltd.

**BUILDER**  
Columbia Contracting Corp.

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT**  
Gregory Lombardi Design

**LANDSCAPE**  
R.P. Marzilli & Company

**POOL**  
Combined Energy Systems

**IRONWORKS**  
Valle's Forge

**TEXT**  
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Richard Mandelkorn  
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# *Magnificent Makeover*

BY THE SEA











**Atop a stone ledge in a picturesque New England town north of Boston sits an oceanside retreat, once the music conservatory of a grand estate.**

After decades of unique renovations the conservatory and various additions had become a disjointed home. When the current homeowners bought the property, it was evident that a project this large in scale would be a major undertaking. The primary goal was to create a unified “home” organized around a main living space that was also energy efficient. Additional aspects of the project included expanding the existing foundation to support a lower level spa area with a retractable roof, rendering it useful for more than one season, and creating an accessible outdoor space that respected the natural environment.

Arthur Massaro of Columbia Contracting Corp. and construction manager Peter Black of Skinner Hill Construction explained that the rocky topography of the area, while phenomenal for protection against winter ocean storms, presented an unusual challenge. The design team consisting of lead architect Charles R. Myer, project architect Susan Dunbar worked closely with Massaro’s Columbia Contracting experts; Steve Pittman of Combined Energy Systems, landscape architect Gregory Lombardi, and landscaper Bob Marzilli’s crew from R. P. Marzilli.

The team successfully reorganized and created a new focal point for the house; seamlessly integrating the pool and multi-level terraces into the seaside landscape. With one touch of a button, the motorized retractable roof transforms the indoor pool to an outdoor oasis.





*All of the materials* from the foundation  
that were blasted during construction  
*were recycled and used*  
*throughout,* including these kitchen columns.











The main staircase is completely new. Original wood-carved finials found in the conservatory were added to the design. Steel and glass doors were repurposed to work in the spirit of the house.



The first stages of the renovation included protecting the existing foundation while blasting for a new one, accomplished by running rods under the structure and into the ledge. Large plates were then attached to the rods, followed by wrapping and spraying the foundation with gunite, a form of shotcrete dry-mix. Once blasting was completed, natural material was collected and refurbished to use for terraces and stone walls outside the home and for interior stone work. Some of the original boulders were incorporated into the landscape while stone employed on the side of the building was split by Marzilli's team.

Many of the design aspects facilitated a unified vision of the home, especially reintegrating some of the original detailing. Ceiling beams and moldings that once had been in the conservatory were taken out piece-by-piece, labeled carefully and put into storage for reassembly in the great room. Also found in storage, intricate wood carved animals and figurines that were repurposed into newel posts for the new main staircase. Another example of combining the old and new called for using steel and glass doors from the original structure throughout the house.





The team embraced the homeowners' willingness  
to work with *natural materials*  
while paying homage to the  
*history of the site*

The other main goal of the project was to be as energy efficient as possible. With the help of Charles R. Myer and his crew, the team created a home that is now a model of energy conservation. This was made possible with a geothermal system for heating and cooling, solar hot water heating panels, a photovoltaic farm, and heat recovery from the lower area. Beneath what appears to be a terrace outside the home is a pool, gym, sauna and steam room, bathroom, and kitchenette. These varied uses of the space made the plan for a retractable roof over the pool – creating a greenhouse effect – more complicated for cooling purposes. The team's energy efficiency goals were met by installing modern touches, like the sensors on the pool roof that trigger automatic closing whenever a sudden New England rain storm hits. With one touch of a button, the outdoor pool area becomes an indoor oasis.

The homeowners desired an outdoor spa they could use year round. The use of radiant heat provided a comfortable space to enjoy through all seasons and makes the most of the gorgeous setting. On the exterior of the home, Lombardi and his





colleagues embraced the homeowners' willingness to work with natural materials. The landscape team of Lombardi and Marzilli wanted to pay homage to the history of the site, despite the challenges presented by a steep slope to the water. They designed a stone wall that develops gradually from boulders native to the property. Boulders were also used to line a pathway to a pavilion where the outdoor fire pit is located.

The team component was integral to the success of the project, which was monitored by the homeowners who traveled abroad throughout the construction period. Plans were accessible via a personalized website, making email the primary means of communication. Myer concluded that the team successfully accomplished their goal working "in the spirit of the house as much as we could" and creating a cohesive home out the previously disjointed sections, integrating the pool and multi-level terraces into the seaside landscape. The end result is a comfortable, elegant and energy efficient home surrounded by landscaping that takes full advantage of the natural beauty of the property. 🌸