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# Rhode Island

M O N T H L Y

## Baby Boom

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In the formal entrance court, which was inspired by the ancient Athenian Stoa of Attalos, cheerful, unassuming begonias and petunias now flag the way to the marble entry set behind Ionic columns.

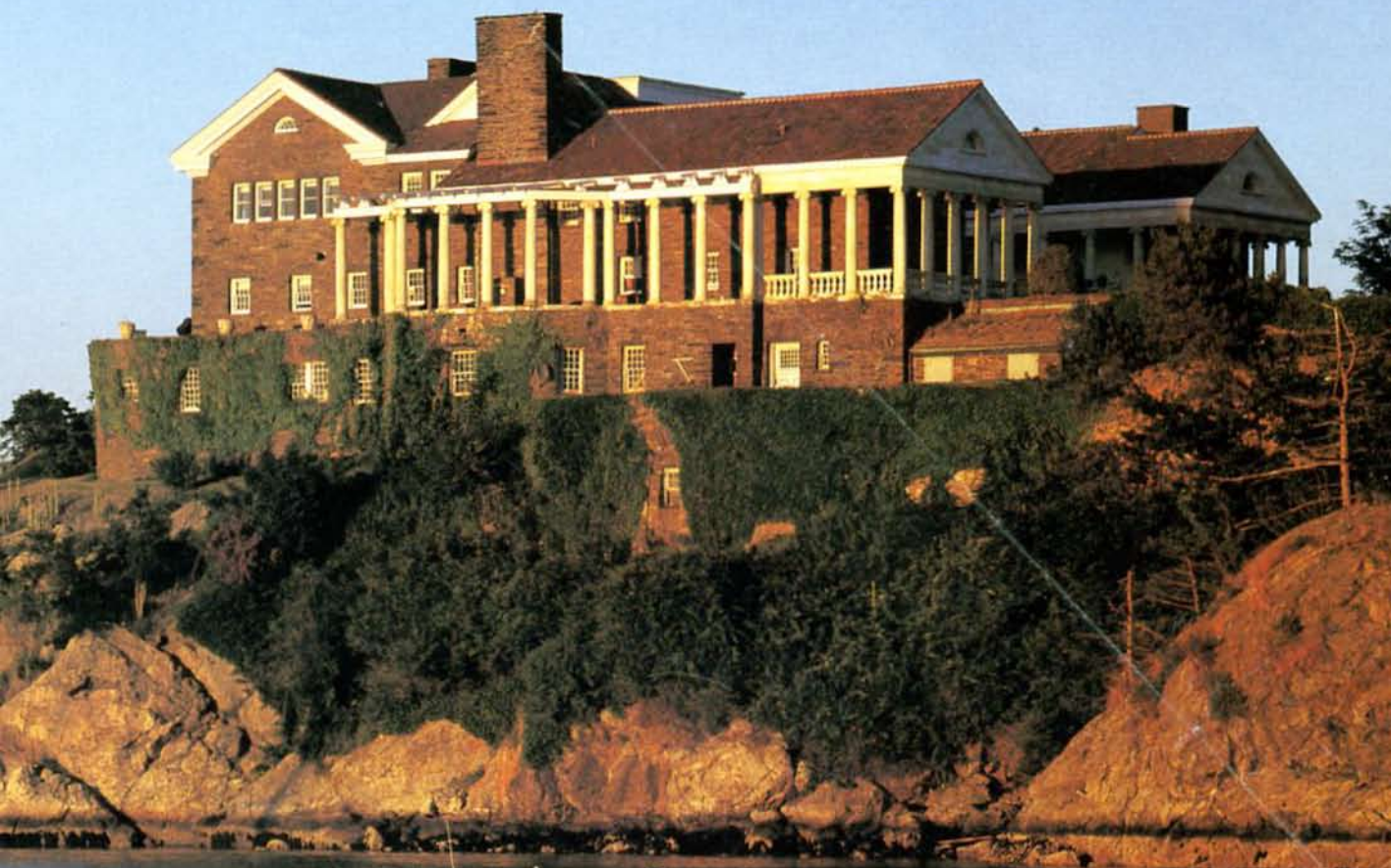
# Cliffhanger



With a new owner, and a restoration in progress, a century-old Newport mansion begins its transformation from classical manor to modern home.

By Megan Fulweiler

Photography by Aaron Usher III



**A**rchitects, designers, and historians all will tell you: every home has a persona, a compilation of the years. The fair seasons when sweet times settled in as gently as dust on the furniture, the wild months when storms ravaged health and happiness — these good and bad cycles, inescapable and unpredictable as they are, give a home its unique ambiance.

Beacon Rock is the sort of place that gives a visitor a sense of real drama. Once home to noted American sculptor Felix de Welden, the landmark, perched above Newport Harbor, now belongs to attorney Brian Cunha. Rocky years — as jagged and dangerous as the promontory itself — have taken a toll. But beyond the carved marble entry, new life is stirring.

Still, this is no classic restoration. The present owner (along with help from South County interior designer Kim Sliney) is slowly introducing contemporary colors and upscale amenities. It's a transition for the mansion from showhouse to livable home. Where once, only European acquisitions and fine antiques flourished, now there's a trendy, professional-quality range for cooking,

a whirlpool for soaking, comfortable sofas for sitting. Friends Rollerblade down the drive across the double-arched stone causeway that Frederick Law Olmstead landscaped back at the turn of the last century.

Always a house of contrasts — mathematically precise Greek design in a natural, rugged setting — Beacon Rock has simply added a few more juxtapositions. If you think about it, it's a reasonable response to our age. Better sneakers piling up by the formal, oval reception room than cobwebs.

And, of course, there are some elements that will never change: the sound of water lapping at the stones below, the whistle of the wind, the harbor music with its clangs and bells. "I love this house," Cunha says. "I'm a sailor and it's the best place in town for a sailor to be." As it happens, Commodore Edwin D. Morgan, who commissioned McKim, Mead and White to design Beacon Rock more than a hundred years ago, was a sailor, too.

Newport's cliff-top estate Beacon Rock, designed by McKim, Mead and White and with landscaping by Frederick Law Olmstead, was completed in 1891.

Just off the spacious, dark-blue and white master bedroom is the new master bath complete with this separate space — behind pocket doors — for the sink.





Beacon Rock will be featured in the Waterfront Home Tours, sponsored by the Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation on October 11 and 12. Call 847-4242 for information.

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An outdated kitchen was whisked away to make room for one that would work for today's needs. The present owner says this is his favorite room for watching the comings and goings of the boats below.



The mahogany-paneled octagonal dining room will always be the right sort of spot for dinner in Newport. A new custom table is on order. The arch marks the way to the book-lined living room.

INTERIOR FLOWERS; THE SECRET GARDEN, JAMESTOWN.