



Code Red

By Andrea E. McHugh
Photography by Chris Hunter

“In the mid-west, if you want something **DIFFERENT**, you just make it **BIGGER**,” says Cincinnati, Ohio native Mike Southworth. “When you only have a 4000-square foot lot, you have to consider **OTHER OPTIONS**.”

A new construction invites all sorts of fun and functional choices for homebuilders. For Mike and Michelle Southworth, only a distinctive home sporting splendid character and crafty originality would do, but it was important to keep with the integrity of their simple Common Fence Point neighborhood. The couple nested with welcoming friends as the home was being built, and country drives to unspoiled, rustic towns including Little Compton planted a seed in their heads. “We were really inspired by the actual barns we had seen that were converted into residences,” says Mike. While many of these structures are centuries old, the Southworths came up with the unique idea to feature a barn door as the focal point to their under-construction abode.

An experienced builder, Mike crafted the 410-pound door by hand, using 5/4-inch-thick red cedar wood. The design, beveled tongue and groove, has varying width boards spanning four, eight and twelve inches. Working with hardware specialist Michelle Souza at Humphrey’s Building Supply Center in Tiverton, he installed a custom-made exposed tracking system, anchored by a pair of silver horseshoes set on the home’s exterior, that allows the barn door

to slide easily across the front entry of the house. The unusual but well-suited twig pull hardware in silver patina adds whimsical rustic flare and is the perfect finishing touch on the door, but function weighed equally with design in importance. “It needed to be a solid installation that could support that kind of weight,” says Souza, who chose the handle to coordinate with the tracking system.

What wasn’t so easy, though, was finding the perfect shade of red to give the door proper recognition. “My wife had gone through about four quarts of red paint and it still wasn’t right,” recalls Mike. “One afternoon we were driving through Adamsville and at the same time, my wife and I said ‘That’s it!’ as we passed a red barn.” Hard-pressed on what to do, Mike looked to his mother, who happened to be in the back seat. She offered some sage motherly advice.

“You are in New England now, Mike. Just knock on the door and ask about it,” she persuaded. “They expect that sort of thing here.” Not fully convinced to do so, it was Michelle who mustered up the courage to approach the home on the property. “Next thing I know, this man leads her into the barn and she emerged with a half-gallon of the perfect red paint and a good luck wish from the farmer,” Mike says with a



Andrea E. McHugh

The 410-pound door slides easily across the custom-made tracking system.





laugh.

Not only does the door evoke style, it has a host of practical applications as well. In addition to providing ample protection against inclement weather, the door is often moved over the main entry door to shade against a powerful morning sun. When not closed over, a decorative trio of yellow doors adorned with impressive pediments remains exposed. Serving as the main entry, the 4-by-9-foot front door is flanked by two smaller doors affixed with custom-made, full-length bronze screens, inspired by traditional farmhouse entryways, and, “to catch the sea breeze,” gushes Mike.

Though only completed a few months ago, the home already has a fun and useful reputation. “It’s how nearby neighbors give directions now,” says Mike, admitting that owning a recognizable landmark has proved a humorous outcome of the project. Lingerers passersby and picture-snapping Sunday drivers have become standard fare for the Southworths, but you won’t hear any complaints from this family. “It’s flattering really,” says Mike, “and a great way to meet new friends.” 🏡

DESIGN BOARD

Barn door handle by Rustic Bronze from Emtek // Main door hardware by Padua // Door paints by Pittsburgh Paints, all from Humphrey’s Building Design Center, Tiverton // Yard rooster from Bill’s Sales, Portsmouth