When Lisa and John Morton decided to build Waveland, their Annapolis home, they struck a deal with John's sister to purchase her portion of the "family farm"—40 acres of prime waterfront property on the Severn River. Remarkably, no deed existed. Will had transferred the property down the family line, astounding lawyers. "The only document in existence is the original grant from the King of England," explains Lisa. "With this compelling history of the property, we see ourselves as stewards of this outstanding marriage between land and architecture," she adds.

Envisioning a home portending a timeless architectural presence, the Mortons turned to Hammond Wilson Architects after seeing photographs of a house designed by the Annapolis architectural firm showcased in a shelter magazine. Smitten by the design and assured by the firm's stellar reputation in and around the Chesapeake Bay, Lisa reflects, "We considered no other architect for an undertaking of this import."

Eager to begin building their dream home, the Mortons were surprised to find the land deemed one of the top ten Native American sites in Anne Arundel County, due to earlier excavations of the property, which yielded unique Indian artifacts. Prior to the removal of the first bucketful of dirt, the Mortons were required to support a major archeological dig, which unearthed a Native American hatchet head dating back 2000 years, and arrowheads, showcased in the home's living room.

Construction finally began in 2010 on their shingle-style home—reminiscent of the couple's two former Nantucket residences, which they'd enjoyed for decades. The home's traditional design gives the elegant residence a timeless essence, yet the floor plan and incorporation of technological advances bring it into the 21st century for day-to-day ease of living and dedication to energy efficiency.
"One of the things we love about the house is the open floor plan," says Lisa. With no wall separating the dining and living rooms, for example, as well as wide, welcoming stairwells, the design encourages an easy flow from room to room, as well as floor to floor. "Green" features drive efficiency. With a team of LEED-accredited architects, Hammond Wilson projects emphasize sustainable design. A geothermal heating system allows for low energy use and cost, as does the home's spray and foam insulation. Low-emittance window glass (which contains argon gas to reduce heat loss, but admits solar gain), also maximizes energy efficiency. Windows abound. Indeed, the L-shaped house design, which follows the shoreline, provides a water view from every room.

A large, formal porch at the center of the home (with a direct view of the United States Naval Academy across the river), is the main hub for the Mortons, as well as a prime spot for entertaining family and friends. The view has a sentimental quality for John, who graduated from the academy. While dining al fresco in the warmer weather, the Mortons can watch the sun, splashing the sky with pink and peach, as it sets. Sailboats dot the shimmering water in this "picture postcard" spot, where serenity is easily found. Lisa has placed a large, stone angel at the porch's center, lending a sacred quality to the locale. In the second story, gabled dormer windows capture views of the water in all directions and create variations in the roof line, which also lend architectural interest when seen from the backyard and shore. In the early evenings, dusk infuses the house with a warm glow.

The Mortons enjoy entertaining and stage informal gatherings in the kitchen, where a black granite fireplace creates a homely ambiance. Lisa, who often attends antiques auctions and loves "the hunt" of tag sales and flea markets, scored a true "find" with the antique weather vane gracing the kitchen fireplace. Other eye-catching accessories include a whimsical, brightly painted vintage carousel horse and an antique clock face from a French train station, which Lisa converted into a hanging lamp. While Lisa turned to an interior designer initially,
she ultimately followed her own strong design sense, creating comfort without sacrificing sophistication.

A creative soul, Lisa devotes much of her time to weaving Nantucket Lightship baskets, a craft she learned while living on the island. Her baskets—refined versions of those produced by Native Americans who for fieldwork and storage—decorate the home. On a wooden swing in a guest room sits a cradle Lisa designed and wove for her grandsons. Today, the Mortons’ four young grandsons visit Waveland frequently to play outside and in the upstairs “kid compound”—a suite filled with oodles of toys and a master train set. In the boys’ bedroom, a vintage retail sign—“SONS”—hangs over four beds arranged in a row. Lisa’s office, which doubles as a craft center, is an artfully designed refuge for her creative endeavors.

One of the home’s distinctive features is dog friendly. Their English bull terriers, enjoy a special suite which has a dog shower and fireplace. Lucky dogs. A drive-through garage with a front and back door allows easy access to and from the house.

Established in 1976, Hammond Wilson Architects was founded by Bob Hammond. When he retired three years ago, he handed the reins to his partner Leo Wilson, who joined the company in 1992. Wilson says the intent of the firm is a “creative approach to sensible design.” With a childhood home on the New Jersey Shore and a family boat docked in Annapolis throughout his early years, Wilson’s affinity for all things related to waterfront living is longstanding. Since the founding of the firm, over a hundred homes have been designed for waterfront living, and the expertise of the design team is often sought by those with prime waterfront properties. Regional and national organizations have bestowed more than 30 awards on the company, for design and sustainability.

Christopher Frank, a senior associate architect at Hammond Wilson, who oversaw the Morton project, says, “I enjoy doing residential versus commercial projects because you get to work closely with clients. It’s rewarding to share in their enthusiasm about the outcome.”

“I often walk around the property and marvel at the beauty of the house from all directions,” John Morton says. “The house hugs the land; it just fits the setting. You get a sense that it’s been here a long time. In the end, the house far exceeded our expectations.”