



## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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**Creator of 'Arthur' Lists Martha's Vineyard Home for \$6.9 Million**  
Marc Brown wrote and illustrated about half of the beloved children's book series on the property



As an author-illustrator, Marc Brown's art often imitates life.

In his wildly successful "Arthur" children's book series, Brown modeled the lovable aardvark's bedroom after his son's room in Hingham, Mass. In his new animated TV series "Hop," Brown reimagined a stone bridge on his Martha's Vineyard property as the tucked-away home of a troll named Helga.

In the animated version, "I added a little door right under the bridge," Brown said. "Then it was fun to imagine what's inside."

The real-life bridge leads to the entrance of Brown's roughly 7.8-acre vacation home. For the past 37 years he has shared the compound with his wife, artist Laurene Krasny Brown. After purchasing the property for \$700,000 in 1988, the couple spent three decades restoring the circa-

1730s farmhouse and several outbuildings. There are two artist studios; Marc wrote and illustrated about half of the Arthur books at the property, he said.



A stone bridge at the entrance to the property inspired elements of Marc Brown's animated series 'Hop.' Photo: Marc Brown

Now, itching for another restoration project closer to their current primary residence in New York City, the Browns are putting the Vineyard Haven property on the market for \$6.9 million.

Marc and Laurene, who goes by Laurie, said they spent millions of dollars on improvements over the years, including adding a pool. "We're both artists—we look at a space and it's a composition," Marc said. "It has the potential for objects to fill that negative space in a way that can make it more beautiful."



The main house dates back to around 1730. Photo: Marc Fairstein/Ozoroco

The main house has five bedrooms and measures roughly 3,700 square feet. It was once part of a 225-acre dairy farm owned by oceanographer Columbus Iselin. The Iselin family farmed the property for four decades and housed child refugees there during World War II. “Our bedroom was a dormitory,” said Marc, who was told about the setup from one of the Iselin children, who grew up there and eventually built a home nearby.

The Iselins sold the farmhouse in 1976, put 75 acres into conservation and divided the rest into buildable lots for houses, which became a residential enclave known as Pilot Hill Farm.

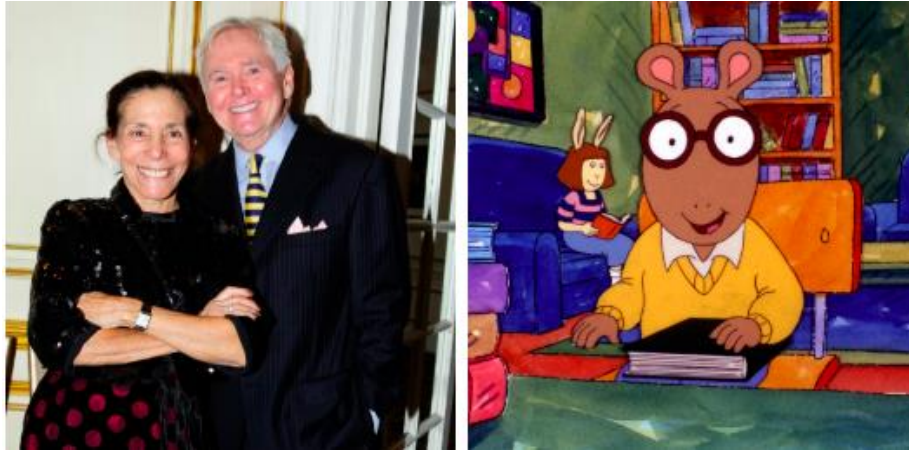


The Browns did various restoration projects and additions over the years, replacing windows with restoration glass. ‘Details are big for us,’ Marc said. Photo: Danielle Mulcahy/Tea Lane Associates



The guesthouse doubles as a poolhouse. Marc said they added the guesthouse ‘by accident’ when they decided to relocate a two-bedroom apartment that was attached to the main house. When they got estimates for demolishing the apartment, they discovered it was cheaper to move the structure across the yard and renovate it—so that’s what they did. They later added a small pool. Photo: Marc Fairstein/Ozoroco

When the original farmhouse came up for sale again in the 1980s, Marc spotted a small black-and-white photograph of it in the Vineyard Gazette newspaper. At the time, the Browns were living in Hingham and owned a smaller vacation home on the Vineyard.



Marc had grown up in Erie, Pa., and attended the Cleveland Art Institute before teaching art at Garland Junior College in Boston. In 1976, he was looking for a job when he dreamed up Arthur, while telling his young son a bedtime story. The character spawned a series of books and a TV show.

“I kept showing the photograph [of the farmhouse] to Laurie,” Marc recalled. “I had this restless spirit—I love restoring old houses.”

When the Browns bought the farm, it was in disrepair. To restore it, they hired a contractor but acted as the architects, drawing up plans and using orange spray paint to mark spots on the ceiling where lights would be installed. “We were kind of bold when I think about it,” said Marc. He made Laurie a miniature kitchen out of foam core—“like a little dollhouse”—so that she could move the appliances around and decide the layout.



Marc painted most of the home's wood floors, using his wife's color choices. Photo: Danielle Mulcahy/Tea Lane Associates



The kitchen has open shelving. Photo: Danielle Mulcahy/Tea Lane Associates



The main house has five bedrooms. Photo: Danielle Mulcahy/Tea Lane Associates

The couple chipped away at various other restoration projects and additions over the years, installing french doors in several places.

Marc claimed space above the carriage house for his studio, where he built a standing desk and added storage for his illustrations. "I've got art from some 140 books," he said.



Skylights bring natural light into the library. Photo: Danielle Mulcahy/Tea Lane Associates



The Browns furnished the home with antiques and American folk art. Photo: Danielle Mulcahy/Tea Lane Associates



They added a brick terrace with columns and a pergola. Photo: Danielle Mulcahy/Tea Lane Associates

Laurie—who collaborated on 14 nonfiction picture books with Marc before focusing on fine art—converted a former horse barn into a studio. She also works in a one-room shed where a previous owner kept a tractor.



The property has two artist studios. One was once a barn with a chicken coop, but Laurie converted it into a studio with fluted columns. Marc's studio, above the carriage house, has a 4-by-8-foot standing desk. PHOTOS: DANIELLE MULCAHY/TEA LANE ASSOCIATES (INTERIORS); MARC FAIRSTEIN/OZOROCO

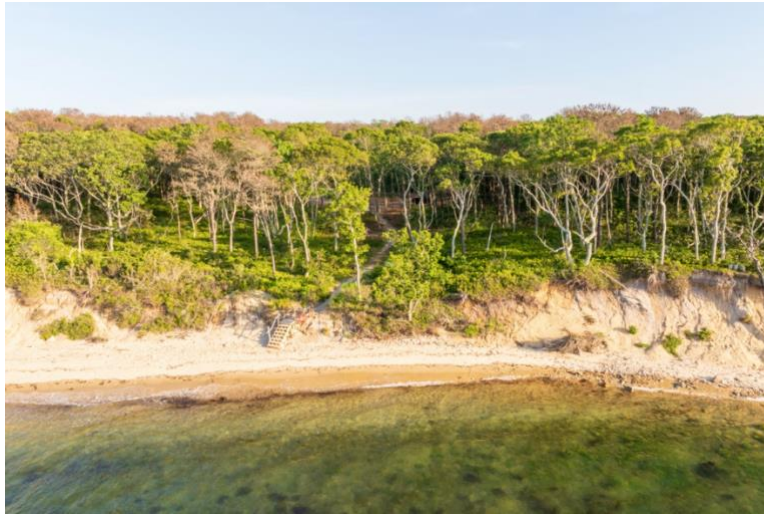
Over the years, the Browns spent summers at the farm and habitually visited between Christmas and New Year's Eve and for a week in the fall. In 1991, they rode out Hurricane Bob at the farm and watched 42 locust trees—which grow tall but have shallow roots—"fall like dominoes" during the violent storm, Laurie said.

After losing so many trees, the couple planted dozens of new ones, establishing "a little arboretum," Marc said.



The Browns have planted dozens of trees on the property, including tulips, lindens, river birches and paperbark maples. Photo: Marc Fairstein/Ozoroco

The property was always a second home—although they lived there full-time from around 2006 to 2008 when they sold their home in Hingham and moved to Laurie’s native New York City, seeking a new adventure away from suburbia. They purchased a small house in the West Village, which they gutted and rebuilt. Though they will no longer have a home on Martha’s Vineyard, the Browns said, they are excited to tackle another house-renovation project.



The property is part of the Pilot Hill Farm enclave, which has beach access. Photo: Marc Fairstein/Ozoroco

Pilot Hill Farm is on the more developed eastern part of Martha’s Vineyard, but the enclave has an “up island” feel that is more rural, said Alexis Holden of Tea Lane Associates/Forbes Global Properties, who is marketing the property with colleague Elle Lash. Last year, a smaller property in Pilot Hill Farm sold for \$4.574 million, records show.

Like other second-home markets, Martha’s Vineyard home prices skyrocketed during Covid, and buyers depleted much of the island’s available inventory during the pandemic boom. Prices have remained robust, said Lash, but inventory is now returning to prepandemic levels. “The market is not feeling the pressure anymore,” she said. “For some sellers it does feel like, ‘Wait what happened? Where did the frenzy go?’”

[https://www.wsj.com/real-estate/luxury-homes/creator-of-arthur-lists-marthas-vineyard-home-for-6-9-million-838c2ba5?mod=author\\_content\\_page\\_1\\_pos\\_1](https://www.wsj.com/real-estate/luxury-homes/creator-of-arthur-lists-marthas-vineyard-home-for-6-9-million-838c2ba5?mod=author_content_page_1_pos_1)