

A Beautiful Blend

A renovation to smooth the edges between architectural eras lets a waterfront Massachusetts home wear its layers of history with style.

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It started out as a simple

kitchen renovation. | The pretty house tucked along the North Shore of Massachusetts had previously been used as a summer residence, but its new owners planned to live there year-round. Originally built in the 1870s as a mansard-roofed cottage with a wraparound porch, the house had undergone many changes throughout the years. An octagonal tower, typical of the Victorian era, was added in the 1890s. Colonial Revival details arrived in the 1920s, and two large, flat-roofed additions appeared in the 1960s. Though its new inhabitants were happy with their house, the outdated kitchen, untouched for forty years, wasn't exactly conducive to making nightly meals or entertaining friends. | "My husband wanted to take it slowly and just paint," recalls the

ANTIQUES IN THE DINING ROOM INCLUDE A FRENCH SIX-ARM CHANDELIER AND AN AMERICAN BANJO CLOCK. FACING PAGE: THE ENTRY SIDE OF THE HOUSE FEATURES A VICTORIAN OCTAGONAL TOWER.



DESIGNER ELIZABETH BROSAN HOURIHAN FOUND THE WRAP-AROUND DECK'S RESTORED ANTIQUE WICKER FURNITURE AT A DEALER IN MAINE. FACING PAGE: THE "OCEAN ROOM" APPEARS AS IF IT'S CANTILEVERED OVER THE OCEAN.



wife. "But as we got into the project we realized we needed to do more." The couple called on Carpenter & MacNeille, a local firm of architects, designers and contractors, who came up with a plan that included floor plan changes and new cabinetry, countertops and appliances.

THE MORE THINGS PROGRESSED in the kitchen, though, the more obvious it became that the house, in its current state, didn't quite suit the couple's lifestyle. For instance, a wall the kitchen shared with the garage (one of the flat-roofed additions from the 1960s), robbed the kitchen of its

outdoor views and its own entrance. A separate garage structure would make much more sense. The owners also felt that the living room at the other end of the house was too big and awkward, disproportionate in scale to the house's original design. They asked architect Robert MacNeille and designer Elizabeth Hourihan to look at the entire house with an eye toward how they might make it more livable by today's standards. They were adamant, though, that the house retain the character that first drew them to it. As much as they wanted a house that worked for the twenty-first century, they didn't want a brand-new house.

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"It was a challenge to decide how far to take the renovation and where to stop," says MacNeille. "Whether we're talking about existing floors, walls or doors, we had to make a case-by-case decision of whether to take it out or replace it. What remains is a thorough mix of old and new."

The resulting architecture is a thoughtful extension of the original structure and its period alterations. Rooms are gracious and open to views and ocean breezes, yet scaled to the size and proportion of the existing architecture.

The second floor holds the sleeping quarters, while the first floor is organized around a new hall, or gallery, that connects the renovated kitchen at one end of the house with the renovated living room—now dubbed the "ocean room"—at the other. The stair, entry, dining room and library are all stops along the gallery. "We did the



opposite of what most people are doing," says the owner. "Rather than opening up to big spaces, we created intimate spaces."

Hourihan turned her keen eye and attention to detail to the house's interior. Furnishings are an eclectic collection of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century antique furniture and accessories, maritime art and historic fabrics. "We worked with things they had and brought in new pieces to complement them," says Hourihan. "It was the combination of the two that made it so interesting and what makes the house so warm and wonderful. The furnishings and the home really became one."

The designer chose textiles for the dining room that match the owners' treasured collection of rose medallion porcelain. Before finding the perfect pink shade for the Shirred paneled damask drapes and fine grasscloth wallcovering, "we must have looked at a hundred coral colors," recalls Hourihan.

The handmade, customized Beaumont & Fletcher silk embroidered linen on the circa-1780 Hepplewhite chairs that flank the dining table was so fine that Hourihan hired an upholstery conservator from the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, to apply it. "The client is someone who really could appreciate that level of design," says Hourihan. "Not everyone would want to go in that direction."

THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE, a diverse collection of antiques reflects the true collaboration between Hourihan and her clients: the pair of eighteenth-century Chinese clobbered jar lamps in the ocean room; a circa-1880 Persian Bidjar rug at the entrance to the mudroom; the 1873 *Yacht in Heavy Seas* maritime painting by William Broome in the master suite; and the circa-1770 Georgian-style mahogany chest in the library. "I do love antiques," says the owner. "I just like the timelessness of them, the feeling that some of these pieces have been used by other people and have a history."

The owners were thoroughly involved throughout the entire design process. "Maybe more than they would have liked," the wife says, laughing. "It was really a



THE KITCHEN'S BLACK AGA STOVE MAKES A BOLD STATEMENT AGAINST BUTTERY OFF-WHITE CABINETRY. FACING PAGE, TOP: DESIGNER ELIZABETH BROSNAN HOURIHAN AND ARCHITECT ROBERT MACNELLE. FACING PAGE, BOTTOM: THE ELEGANT, BUT FUNCTIONAL, MUDROOM.



THE LIGHT COLORS OF THE TRANQUIL MASTER SUITE ARE A DELIGHTFUL CONTRAST TO THE REST OF THE HOME'S SLIGHTLY DARKER SCHEME. FACING PAGE: THE WINDOW TREATMENTS IN THE MASTER BATH ADD SOME SOFTNESS TO THE ROOM.

great partnership because they stretched me in some ways and I think I pulled them in others. It was definitely a give and take, and I think we got the best of all of us.”

At the far end of the new waterfront addition, the living room appears cantilevered over the ocean and affords breathtaking views, hence its moniker, “the ocean room.” In addition to the main seating area’s large, brown-striped velvet sofa, blue linen club chairs and an antique barrel chair, the owners and Hourihan devised a cozy seating area for two near the large wall of windows.

The “simple” renovation eventually encompassed three-quarters of the house, as well as an addition and garage.

The room’s yellow walls were initially a source of debate between the owners and Hourihan. “This is where Elizabeth stretched us a little bit,” says the wife. “The color we used throughout the house and hallways and in the ocean room was a really strong golden yellow. When it first went

up, my husband kind of flipped out; he’d said he didn’t want a yellow house because where he worked was yellow. But Elizabeth gently nudged us in this direction and it’s what gives the house its warmth. It just glows at night.”

UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF MacNeille and Hourihan, the “simple” renovation eventually encompassed three-quarters of the house, as well as a substantial ocean-side addition and a new three-car garage. The ungainly 1960s additions were removed.

And the kitchen that started it all? It’s now the perfect

blend of old and new, where a traditional black Aga range and a modern microwave are tucked amidst carefully chosen countertops, cabinetry, lighting and accessories.

“We couldn’t be more pleased with our ‘new’ old house,” says the owner. **NEH**

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