

Build: McPhee Associates

Design: Architects Linda Neshamkin and Jack French of Neshamkin-French Architects

Cabinetry: Supplied by "Main Street" at Botellos

Landscape Design & Build: McNamara Brothers

Historic Preservation



History Sails Again

FOR DAVID AND MARGE FRENCH, vacationing in Chatham—with its bustling Main Street, salty maritime history and pristine beaches— was something they looked forward to every year. The two history buffs would walk through Chatham's historic district after dinner, marveling at all the old homes, one day hoping to have one of their own. After 20 years of window-shopping, a home on one of their favorite streets was put on the market.

By Rachel Arroyo • Photography by Dan Cutrona



A short door leads to one very long closet in the master bedroom. Multiple skylights flood the space with light. Facing page: The front of the historic home in Chatham's Old Village.

The modified half Cape was built in the 1850s and needed many improvements to preserve the structure. As a birthday present for David, Marge's brother- and sister-in-law who own an architecture firm in Charlestown, MA, offered up their expertise, and designed a set of plans that would restore the home but also incorporate a few modern upgrades.

"Wherever possible, we wanted to keep as much of the old house as we could," says Marge. So, to head the project, they contacted McPhee Associates in East Dennis, a design-build company that came highly recommend to them by a family member. "They just wanted to do the right thing for the house for the long term," says Rob McPhee, vice president of the firm, who worked on the project. "It takes a special person to want to commit to preserving the history of a home."

The kitchen received a total transformation, from "very 1970s" to classic with a touch of contemporary. The wood-finished ceiling gives the space a nautical feel.



Above: An alcove in the kitchen is just big enough for a compact wet bar area and a small dining set. At right: The family room, at the rear of the home, has modern touches such as red leather chairs and a sculpture from local artist Steve Swain.



Nautical Kitchen

As the heart of the home, the kitchen saw the most improvements. “The kitchen was something we knew we wanted to update right away. It was very 1970s,” says Marge. To add space, McPhee Associates, following the architectural plans, bumped out the kitchen, taking some space from the oversized deck, which created just enough room for a small wet bar, informal breakfast dining area and a half bath with a cleverly placed access door to the deck and outdoor shower.

Guests coming from the beach are now able to wash off in the outdoor shower, put their clothes in the washer/dryer in the half bath and head directly into the house via the kitchen without having clumps of sand marching in along with them.

To open up the room even more, the low ceiling, a common feature in older homes, was raised. Taking a cue from the town’s rich sea lore and the home’s proximity to the lighthouse, wood paneling—made to look like the hull of a boat—was affixed to the ceiling. “The wood ceiling was an idea that Bob McPhee had.

It was brilliant,” says Marge about Rob’s father and the president of McPhee Associates’ idea. “As you look up at the ceiling, you feel like you are in a boat on the water.”

A subtler splash of seaside charm is seen in the warm, teak countertop, blue tumbled stone backsplash, white cabinetry, which was sourced from “Main Street” at Botellos in Mashpee, and the Bross Blue granite counter, which “...is dark with a blue overtone that reminds you of the ocean,” says Rob.



Left: The dining room, located in the oldest portion of the home, is arranged with period-appropriate antiques. Facing page: In the living room, a gas fireplace flanked by custom-built shelving was added. The floors, ceiling beams and door are original to the home.

Old-Fashioned Dining

Walking from the kitchen into the dining room is like stepping back in time; the ceiling is low and the original wide-plank pine floors slope slightly. To complement the obvious age of the room, Marge bought a side buffet and long dining table from Country Side Antiques, both custom made from reclaimed, antique wood.

The original built-in decorative columns still flank the entrance between the dining room and the adjoining living room. But the living room access to the first-floor bath, which was shared with the small guest room off to the side, was covered up to make room for built-in shelves on either side of the new mantel and gas fireplace with granite surround.

Suite Compromise

The result of a compromise gone well, the second floor was originally two bedrooms and a small bath. But in order to put a bath in the small guesthouse, which was little more than a shed, the homeowners were required to eliminate one of the rooms in the main house. "It was a great trade-off because now we have the whole second floor to ourselves," says Marge. The former door at the top of the stairs was recycled and is now the door to the master bath, which replaces the missing 2nd bedroom. Inside the bathroom they took advantage of the sloping roofline and built a custom shower with a cozy nook to sit in.



Above: To allow the installation of a bathroom in a new guest house, formerly a mere shed, the homeowners needed to eliminate one bedroom from the main house. The end result is this spacious master bedroom.

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Finishing Touch

Good at troubleshooting, McPhee Associates “could roll with the punches,” says Marge. When the walls in the house were too thin to put in a proper electrical outlet, they installed an electrical surface mount box and when they saw the front yard sloping to the street at a steep angle, they recommended the McNamara Brothers in Harwich to build a fieldstone retaining wall. “It’s a decorative feature and it keeps the yard level,” says Rob, adding, “It’s a nice aesthetic feature as you drive down the street.” Marge agrees: “We really feel like that’s one of the special finishing touches on the house.” 🏡



in the details

1 Nulco 2350 light fixture with satin nickel finish chain from Granite City Electric (52 White’s Path, South Yarmouth; 508-394-1262: www.granitecityelectric.com).

2 A cabinet from the home was refinished to create the vanity for the lower level bathroom. Granite countertop in “Absolute Black” from Cape Cod Marble & Granite

(38 Rosary Ln., Hyannis; 866-376-5731: www.capecodmarble.net). The sink is by Bates (P1212) and the fixtures are Kohler’s “Bancroft” in polished chrome with white handles. Both are from Kitchen & Bath Solutions at Snow & Jones (167 White’s Path, South Yarmouth; 508-394-0911: www.snowandjones.com).

3 The wine cooler from Marvel (6SWCEBSGR) is from KAM (201 Yarmouth Rd., Hyannis; 800-649-2221: www.kamonline.com). The cabinetry, by Grabil in “White Dove”, was purchased from Main Street at Botello’s (6 Bowdoin Rd., Mashpee; 508-477-3132: www.botellolumber.com).

4 Teak wood raised bar top from Botello and “Bross Blue” granite countertop from Cape Cod Marble & Granite. The backsplash is “Anatolia Picasso” Travertine 5/8” random strip mosaic tile purchased at Cloutier Supply (128 Great Western Rd., South Dennis; 508-398-2136: www.cloutiersupply.com).