



DORMER DAYS OF *Summer*

View from the pool house to the back of this remodeled Cape Cod home.

Two new dormers, improved sight lines, and more windows open up a traditional Cape-style home, beckoning to a couple's circle of family and friends.

By Larry Lindner
Photography by Amber Jane Barricman

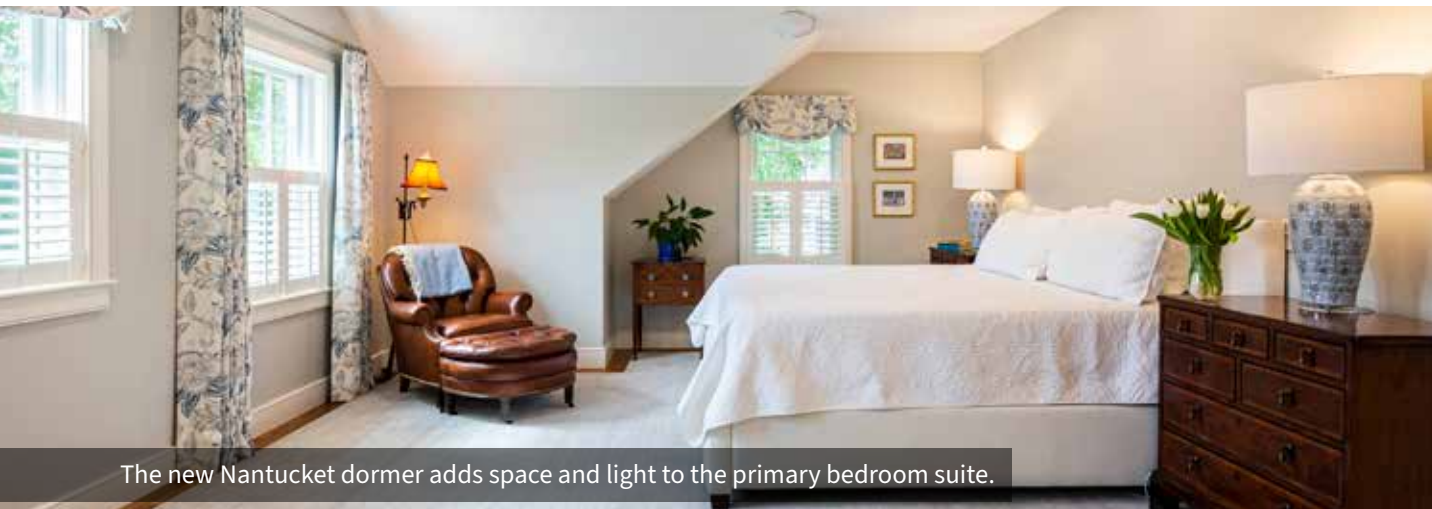
Maureen Arkle and her husband, Neil Fitzpatrick, interviewed several contractors before moving permanently from their home in Dover, Massachusetts, to their second home in Dennis. They had owned the Cape house for a number of years, using it mostly as a rental property, and now wanted to invest in some remodeling in order to make it just right for themselves. But all the firms said the only way to create a proper primary bedroom suite in the house on the Cape—one of their must-haves—was to combine the two bedrooms on the first floor, which faced a neighboring house.

“We have almost three acres of property with no neighbors on any side except that one,” Arkle says. With all that potential for privacy, she wanted the primary suite to be sited elsewhere. She and Fitzpatrick finally settled on a company that said they would put their bedroom in another spot. And they did. The drawings came back with the couple's sleeping quarters right next to the kitchen—and, again, facing that one house.

That's when they went back to one of the residential firms they had talked with originally: McPhee Associates in East Dennis. “Rob [McPhee] was really this very down-to-earth, approachable kind of guy,” Arkle says. “There was no fluff, no pretense. He just spoke the way it was. We talked with him about the possibility of staying in our bedroom upstairs and turning it into something that worked for us. That's when he introduced us to Kendra Seifert—McPhee's in-house architectural designer. She did great plans for us and was a great listener, very responsive to our ideas.”

As Fitzpatrick puts it, “She was very collaborative.”

Kendra's solution was to design a Nantucket dormer across the front of the house. That did away with a windowless knee wall that both cramped and darkened the upstairs space. In fact, the dormer opened up the front side of the second floor more than 30 feet across, creating room for a sweeping primary bedroom with lots of headroom. The new dormer also has six front-facing



The new Nantucket dormer adds space and light to the primary bedroom suite.

windows that the second story never had before; they look out from the bedroom onto a large, private front yard. Across the road, the couple can see the beautifully tended grounds of the Josiah Dennis Manse, the 1700s home once inhabited by the man for whom the town of Dennis is named.

The variegated roofline of the dormer does double duty as a beautifier of the home's front facade. And underneath it, above the residence's front door, Kendra designed a charming overhang with intricate corbels that now lend the home a bit of a fairy tale look.

To create more closet space for the couple and a right-sized bath in their suite, Kendra also designed a shed dormer that stretches across the back of the upstairs. That afforded the couple a huge walk-in closet and a commodious bath with two sinks and plenty of elbow room. Before, the bath hardly had any room to stand. It's now about double the size it used to be.

None of these changes required adding any square footage. The two dormers simply made the square footage that was already there usable by adding the necessary standing room.

OPENING UP THE DOWNSTAIRS

Originally, the home's downstairs felt pretty cut up, with each room boxed off from the next. Opening up the flow

from one room to another was a matter of removing walls with doorways in them and replacing them with large, cased openings. This change kept each space as its own room, with its own function, but expanded the sightline and the views to the exquisitely landscaped outdoors. It also allowed the sunlight that came in from the south at the front of the home to stream through rather than remain blocked off.

Every conversion to a cased opening in the house, built in the 1960s, presented its own challenges. For instance, removing the wall that separated the living room at the front of the house from the dining room meant removing a fireplace that was housed there. The couple was talked into it by a neighbor who happened to be an architect. "Do you use that fireplace?" he asked. Arkle told him, "We never have. He was, like, 'Oh my God, take it down!' That opened the whole thing up."

There had also been a wall with a door between the dining room and the kitchen. They couldn't remove all of it because the kitchen needed that wall space for appliances. But they were able to widen the doorway from the standard 30 inches to 42 inches and create a pocket door that could slide into the wall. Says McPhee project manager Wyman Brooks, "We cheated by pushing the wall into the dining room a few inches. We couldn't have created the pocket for the door otherwise, with plumbing and other obstacles. Now, the wider opening makes a nice pass-through."



Wall opened between the dining room and living room allows light to spill in.

The pocket door, when closed, also allows people to hang out in the kitchen and adjoining family room without disturbing the couple if they want to go up to bed.

The wall between the kitchen and the family room was removed, too, making for a grand expanse. And bookcases were removed on either side of the family room fireplace to make room for more windows, drawing the eye outdoors.

Adding to the sense of expanse, the kitchen and family room ceilings were raised 14 inches. They are situated beneath part of the unfinished attic crawl space. Brooks was able to lift the ceilings higher by raising the floor in the attic. He did this by building a step-up, or platform,

in the area just above those two rooms. It didn't affect anything up there except the height at which Christmas decorations and other things are stored out of sight. The finishing touch above the kitchen and family room was beautifully coffered ceilings, with the details in the molding designed by Kendra and their crafting accomplished by Brooks, an artisan finish carpenter.

Kendra designed the kitchen layout, which included a five-foot bump-out (the only change in the home's footprint other than a cozy indoor/outdoor porch off the family room). The couple went with Ki3 Design of Natick for custom-built Shaker-style cabinetry. "They had designed our kitchen in Dover and did a fabulous job," Arkle says.



Remodeled kitchen with custom-built cabinetry by Ki3 Design.



An outdoor oasis anchored by the cabana by McPhee Associates.

To offset the white of the cabinets, Arkle chose a Sapele mahogany top for the island, which cleans up easily with vinegar and water.

In the process of pulling the kitchen together, Ki3 owner Richard Kane saw an opportunity to install French doors from the kitchen to the outside by moving the sink to the opposite side of the room. “Kendra didn’t mind,” Arkle says, which is one of the reasons she and Fitzpatrick liked working with McPhee Associates so much. “She didn’t take anything personally,” explains Arkle. “If you said ‘I’m not quite certain I like this; I’d rather have that’ she’d say ‘Great.’ It was very iterative.”

One other big change to the home was turning an outdated Florida room into a smart-looking space for an upscale bar (built by Ki3), a large closet, and a larger laundry room than the home had previously. The first-floor powder room was also moved there from the family room. “That opened up the family room further,” Arkle says.

DECORATING TOUCHES

For interior decorating, Arkle chose to depart from the traditional style she had used in her Dover home and instead go “more transitional, more casual. We like to entertain,” she says. “We like everybody to feel comfortable.” She made a lot of choices on her own, including the dining room set from Arhaus Furniture, but worked with Cindy Porter of Fresh Cape Designs in Yarmouth Port to choose, for instance, the dining room chandelier, the dining room rug (from Restoration Hardware), and the dining room draperies.

In general they went with neutrals. “That’s the way I dress, too,” Arkle says. “I don’t wear florals or stripes. I like calm. I like order. I don’t like chaos. And I like things that are pretty—simple but elegant.”

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Landscape architect Andrew Garulay at Yarmouth Port Design Group added élan to the home’s surroundings by designing plantings for its beautiful three acres, bordered on one side by Chase Garden Creek and wetlands that keep the residence in total privacy on its east side. Artistic Grounds of Barnstable executed the work. A centerpiece of the outdoor space is a beautiful pool with an integrated hot tub, surrounded by sweeping lawns.

Dustin Wolfe, lead designer of Artistic Grounds, subbed the pool out to Easton Pool & Spa in Walpole. “Normally the wait is three years,” Arkle says. “I don’t know what Neil did to make it happen. Dustin also gets credit as well for the fabulous stonework,” Arkle comments. “The stanchions out front, the fire pit, the



Creative hardscape and stonework by Artistic Grounds, (right & center).



Open and airy family room with coffered ceilings.

driveway, the design and execution of the hardscaping—that’s all his.”

Centered at the far end of the pool is a cabana built by the McPhee crew. It makes the whole of it look like a scene out of an A-lister’s Los Angeles retreat. Connecting to an outdoor shower that McPhee installed to go with it, the cabana is a favorite hangout of the couple’s son when he comes down from Boston.

Arkle and Fitzpatrick enjoy their project all the more because of the great relationship they developed with McPhee Associates. The couple didn’t just appreciate the openness between them and the frank, down-to-earth discussions. Arkle says that “if the crew had a challenge,

they would not pull us into it. We didn’t find out about it until they had a solution. There was no, ‘Oh my God, we have a problem! What are we going to do?’ Also, she says, “No matter what you ask for, the answer is yes.” An example: Arkle and Fitzpatrick wanted a medicine cabinet on an outside wall, which you can’t do because of insulation issues. So the team built a faux wall behind the cabinet to make it work.

Says Fitzpatrick, “Even though it all happened during Covid, these guys didn’t miss a beat. We even took off for Florida for three months during the construction. That’s how much we trusted them. My buddy, when he was having work done on his house, was over there at least once or twice a day.”

Fitzpatrick and Arkle like, too, that the construction team recommended and executed improvements where they could. One instance of that was in the bathroom next to the bedroom above the garage, where the couple’s son sleeps when he comes over. When the workers opened a wall there, they found an extra foot of space in the framing that they could incorporate into the room. It doesn’t sound like much, but it added just the amount of space that allowed the bathroom not to feel squished, as it had been.

The McPhee team, for their part, appreciated the couple’s own down-to-earth manner. “Maureen and Neil were fantastic,” says Kendra, “very, very nice people. I really enjoyed working with them.”

“That was the bonus,” Brooks says. “All the personalities worked.” He also says that “while like any project, this one had challenges that necessitated some design on the fly, “there were no huge showstoppers. If there was a showstopper,” he says, “it was the world we were living in—trying to get our hands on materials, dealing with guys out from Covid. We’d lose crews; we had to do things out of sequence.”

But it all came together. “A lot of it was built for ‘Come on down!’ Fitzpatrick says. “We built it for friends, family, and memories. And it has worked out quite well. Everybody keeps coming back.”

Larry Lindner is a contributing writer for Cape Cod Life Publications.

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