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A 1940's Cape emerges from a makeover without the "lines" and "creases" that once boxed it in.

To the Rafter's

by Larry Lindner
Photography by Greg Premru

The very first design decision was to remove almost 1,000 square feet of living space from the home. The new owners loved that the late-1940s Cape directly fronted a large sweep of Buzzard's Bay. But, the upstairs consisted of a warren of small dark rooms with low ceilings, and the couple was envisioning an airy vacation getaway. "Mostly what was up there had been used as an au pair suite by previous owners," the wife says. With two of their three children already out of college, she and her husband were at a stage that they didn't need the extra square footage. "We wanted to use it as a summer place—open it up and have it be really bright," she says.

Light pours in
Eliminating the second floor made for a newly dramatic ceiling height on the first. But it also allowed the contractor, Woodmeister Master Builders of Holden, Massachusetts, to install what is essentially a wall of glass along the back side of the house. With almost zero framing and reaching to the rafters, it lets in not only a much more expansive view of the bay but also much more light. The new framing "actually pockets into the roof rafters," that is, out of sight, explains Woodmeister executive Sean Reynolds.

In addition to allowing the glass panels to be much taller than conventional engineering would allow, the minimal framing—called moment framing—makes it so that the middle four of the eight panels can open directly to the view with no obstructions. The effect is something of an Italian loggia that blurs the line between indoors and out.

Woodmeister also let in more light by enlarging the doghouse dormers and their windows on the front of the home. Light now literally pours in from above.



Reflecting Surfaces—A dining table chandelier made of abalone shells, iridescent kitchen backsplash tiles, three Simon Pearce pendants hanging above the island, (below) a Made Goods mirror in the mudroom —use the light coming in to add even more luster to sun-kissed spaces.



But the couple wanted things more opened still. The main living area was chopped up by a fireplace on an inside wall that hid the view to the water. The kitchen was also “really boxed off,” the wife says. “The whole space was cut up.” She and her husband took the entire main living area down to the studs to reconfigure the layout. But how?

That’s where Jill Najnigier, principal of Boston’s JN Interior Spaces, came in. Najnigier wasn’t new to the couple; she had already designed three residential projects for them. But, this one was going to be different. Coming in early on, this project allowed her to collaborate on all the interior architectural decisions that gave the home its improved functionality, flow and aesthetic.

The overall style was going to be different, too. The client’s main home is “more traditional,” Najnigier says. “But I felt less traditional would suit this house better. With such a spectacular setting, I wanted nothing to upstage the view but rather to enhance it with a serene, breezy, organic vibe. I wanted it to feel like summer in its cleanest, crispest iteration—unencumbered.” In other words, she knew some of her choices were going to be a bit of a stretch for her client’s design sensibilities.

She also knew that opening up the entire space presented challenges. “How do you create intimacy?” she asks rhetorically. “My goal was for the home to be appropriately scaled not just for when there were a lot of guests but also when it was just the family.”

Her solution was to delineate a separate space for the kitchen, set off with a capacious island, and for dining, sitting and reading, with an area for larger groups, a new,

double-sided fireplace was positioned off to the side so as not to obstruct sight lines. The fireplace opens to both the main living area and a screened porch, inviting groups to gather inside or out.

Najnigier anchored the various spaces both with judiciously placed chandeliers, other lighting and thoughtfully placed area rugs. And while she chose a very neutral color palette set against the backdrop of a white envelope, she kept it from looking cold by employing flashes of green and blue, both soft and saturated to reflect the colors in the view outdoors. She also added lots of warm, organic touches: a floating kitchen island top made of reclaimed, rough-hewn wood that Woodmeister fashioned specifically for such use; the large stone fireplace surround; hand-blown Simon Pearce pendant lights above the island, each a little different from the others; a dining table chandelier made entirely of abalone shells, whose iridescence riffs off the opalescence of the kitchen's backsplash tiles.

The wife was at first resistant to the chandelier, Najnigier says. "It's not a shy piece, and she just wasn't sure. But now that it's in place, she loves it. The pieces you're most uncertain about—the

ones that for you present the biggest risk—often end up being your favorites," she says. Along with using natural materials, Najnigier warmed up the living area with a layering of textures—accents of grasscloth wall coverings, textures and patterns of the wool rugs and artwork selected for particular spots in the home. "I wanted the art to connect to the setting but not in the cliché coastal sense," she says. That's why, for example, she chose a painting called "Uprising" by artist Elsa Muñoz for above the fireplace. "What I loved about it was that the sea was turbulent and unsettled—an element of moody contrast to the serene setting we had established in the home."

For the mudroom, Najnigier commissioned a painting by Beverly, Massachusetts, artist Morgan Dyer. "I was looking through her portfolio, and I came across an abstract that, like many of her works, was inspired by the sea and the sand. I asked her to reinterpret it in colors that would both accent and complement the home's furnishings."

There's also a vintage map, five and a half feet wide, in deep, alluring blues that details the original proposal for a local golf course at which the husband



Special Touches—An entryway console table custom-designed for the spot by interior designer Jill Najnigier (top left), a vintage map (middle), and a nautically inspired jute rope light fixture in the laundry room (bottom left).





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weren't too formal for their seaside setting. Some of the seating nods toward the traditional, too. For instance, even though the two chaises have very clean lines, they are studded with nailhead trim. "By mixing classic and modern elements, the home feels both timeless and fresh," Najnigier says.

In the wings

The main living areas were not the only spaces Najnigier made over. The home has both a master bedroom wing with an office/sitting room and ensuite bath and a wing on the opposite side with three more bedrooms and baths, and she worked her magic in those areas, too.

For the office, she designed an étagère that features sculptured wood in a wave pattern as an acknowledgement of the home's perch at the edge the water. The middle section opens with a touch latch so there's no hardware to distract from the look, and the bottom section consists of two hidden file drawers.

In the master bedroom, she gave another subtle nod to the nautical by choosing a pendant light entwined in rope. She also updated the fireplace surround with shiplap wood paneling, which balances well against the highly textured Japanese paper weave wall covering. The fireplace serves as a focal point between two doors whose glazing allows for spectacular views from the bed out to the bay. It's a great panorama to wake up to.

For the master bath, Najnigier's client had a long wish list: a soaking tub, huge-walk in shower with glass to the ceiling to hold in the steam, linen closet, double-sink vanity with plenty of counter space and separate water closet with its

own door. Done! She adjusted the ceiling height to accommodate the glass panels so they could run cleanly from the floor all the way up, stole some space from a closet in the mudroom on the other side of the wall to let a linen closet sit flush against a surrounding bathroom wall, and nestled a tub into the corner without making it look shoved in. "The organic shape of the soaking tub has movement; its positioning in the spot feels purposeful," Najnigier says.

The deft placing of the tub helped give her the space she needed for a separate water closet with its own door and a vanity with two sinks. She didn't have to move any windows to achieve the desired effect, which would have added to an already involved process.

In the opposite wing, Najnigier designed bathrooms for the couple's son and their two daughters, along with a guest bath. The son's bath includes a nautical touch with the rope-accented wall sconces along with a contemporary barn door-style sliding glass shower door. The bold color palette consists of a deep grey/blue vanity and warm wire-brushed oak mirror. The colors of the matte finish penny tile

floor—both strong neutrals and softer ones—pick up the other colors of the room and pull everything together.

In the girls' bathroom, the pearlescent glass tile backsplash set atop the vanity changes to various shades of pink and blush depending on how the light hits it. And it accentuates the polished shell mirrors, along with the walls, painted in Farrow & Ball's Skimming Stone. It's a color that lands somewhere between salmon and blush. The vanity's weathered wood warms things up while adding contrast, and mosaic flooring of marble dust and resin in a textured cobbled pattern completes the look.

The powder room, too, has special touches, including a Najnigier-designed vanity of wire-brushed oak topped by a sink integrated into a striking concrete tablet. A wall-mounted faucet allows the strong, straight lines to make a clear, uninterrupted statement.

Is the client happy with the overall result? "Oh, yes, completely happy," she says. "I have a lot of trust in Jill. One of the great things about her as a designer is that she never pushes the boundaries to where I'm



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going to feel, ‘That’s too much.’ It’s more, ‘I know she’s going to like this even though she can’t quite see it yet.’”

She also credits Najnigier for handling so much of the architectural troubleshooting. “She didn’t just come in at the design phase,” the owner says. “She definitely came in at the architectural phase. ‘How’s this bathroom going to be laid out? This is where we’re going to have the built-ins.’ She ended up doing a lot of the recs on layout and how we would manage it.”

The client appreciates Najnigier’s attention to detail as well. “Initially,” she says, “the spacing between the boards on the shiplap in the mudroom and in the master bedroom was not quite right, Jill was like, ‘Yeah, this isn’t going to work. We’ve got to get this right.’

She pushes to get things where they need to be—never by being too forceful but by developing a very good rapport.”

Woodmeister also lauds what Najnigier brought to the effort. She “knocked it out of the park,” says Reynolds.

The couple is particularly thrilled that the house, with all its special touches, is a hit with their kids. “We wanted to make a space where they would want to come back with their children some day,” the wife says. “They find it a nice retreat from the real world. They love to come and stay and hang out. We’re going to be there for a long time.”

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



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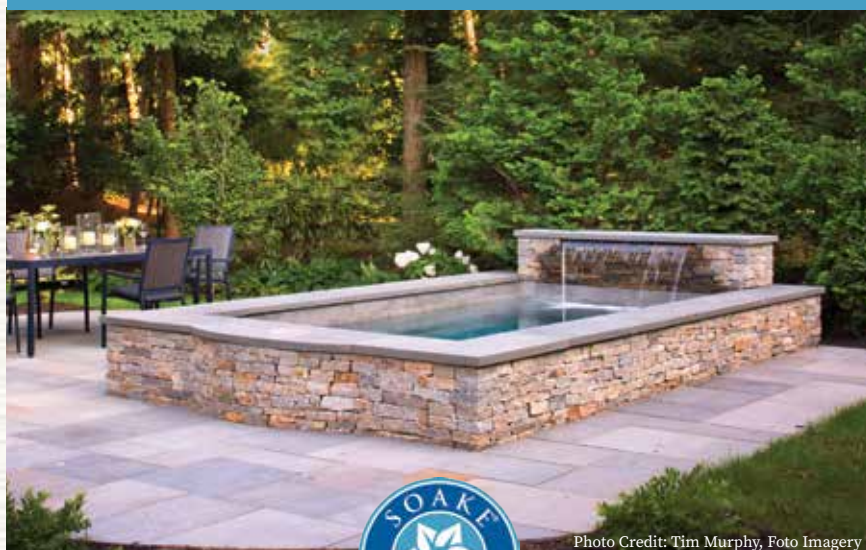
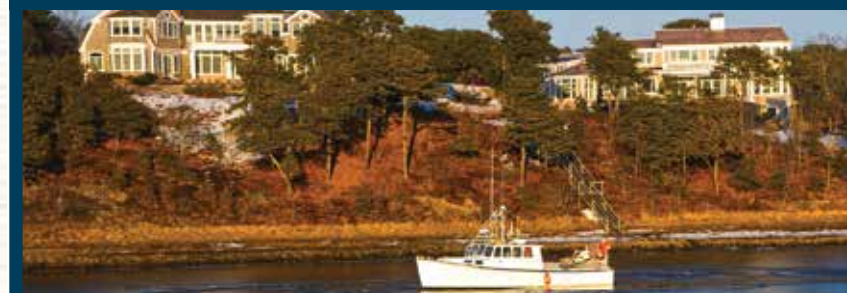


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Deft space-saving moves in the master bath allowed for a soaking tub nestled in the corner and a double vanity with plenty of room to spread out. The powder room (below right) sports a Najnigier-designed sink composed of a striking concrete tablet atop a vanity of wire-brushed oak.



The blues and greens of the office in the master bedroom suite (above) bring the outside in. To the right and left of the master bedroom fireplace (below), the owners enjoy knockout views of the bay.

