



Older and Wiser

A smart addition to a historic home demonstrates that big improvements don't require big spaces.

When Dan and Betsy Pfau bought their Edgartown, Massachusetts, residence, they inherited its rich past. Built in 1829 by renowned ship owner Jared Coffin, the Colonial structure had weathered everything from nor'easters to service as a boarding house. It had character. It had resilience. It also had typical old house troubles (rotten floor joists, collapsing chimneys) and a few unique quirks.

Under the guidance of architect Patrick Ahearn, the Pfau family embarked on an extensive remodel to restore and modernize the home while maintaining its historical integrity.

"The back of the house was not in great condition," Dan says. Though the eat-in kitchen had been remodeled during an earlier phase, it remained so small that diners were cramped between the table edge and the wall. Upstairs, the laundry room enjoyed a quiet backyard view while the master bedroom overlooked the noisy street.

By constructing a modestly scaled rear addition and reconfiguring existing space, Ahearn expanded the kitchen to include a breakfast and sitting area, created a new master suite, and opened up the back of the home to the

WRITTEN BY CARRIE BEBRIS PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL PARTENIO



BEFORE

OPPOSITE: A well-planned addition to Dan and Betsy Pfau's 1829 Colonial enhances the home's function and character with a minimal increase in square footage. The moderate size of the new construction enabled the couple to add a pool, hot tub, brick patio, and landscaped gardens in limited yard space. They restored the home's classic New England facade with a new wood shingle roof and clapboard siding for the whole house, seamlessly blending the addition with the original structure.

ABOVE: The kitchen sitting area, with its view of the pool and landscaped yard beyond, provides the perfect spot for lingering over the morning paper or enjoying quiet conversation.



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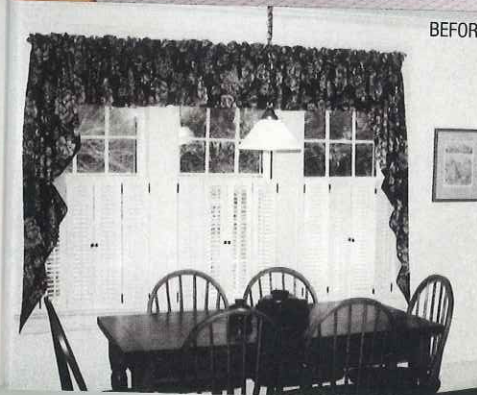
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outdoors with a two-story bay window. He also added a mudroom, relocated the laundry room, and converted a little-used deck into a four-season sunroom. Just as important as the increased space, Ahearn preserved the home's essence by reusing and replicating features from the original house.

The project added just over 800 square feet but dramatically improved the home's function. "It's changed the way we use the house a lot," Dan says. The new sitting area makes the whole kitchen "more comfortable, more inviting. Now it's a place to congregate and have casual conversation while someone's cooking," he says. He and Betsy can enjoy a quiet garden view from their master bedroom, or relax in the sunroom with their sons, David and Jeffrey.

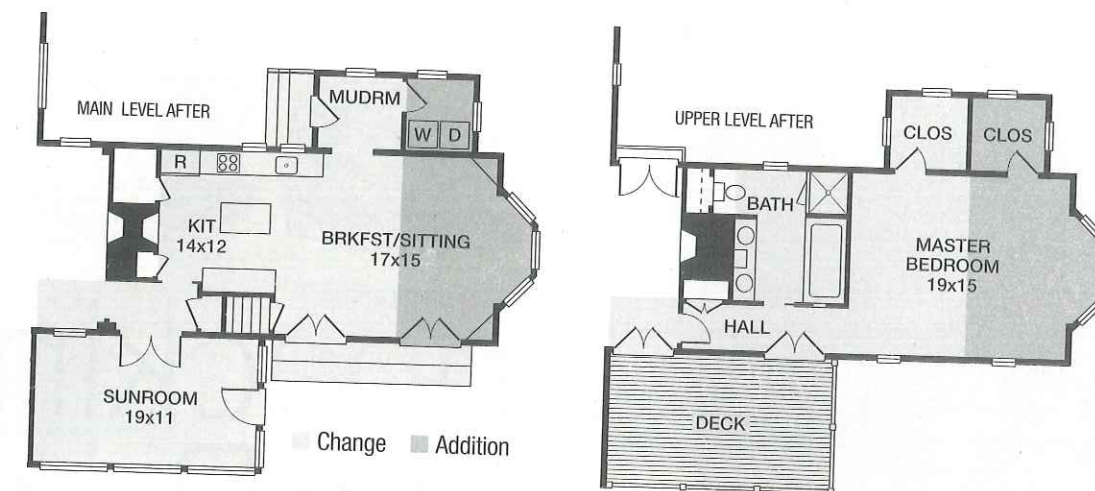
Dan says his family's experience proves that when it comes to adding onto your home, "it's not the amount of space that matters, it's how you want to use it and whether it fits together properly. Bigger isn't always better."



INSIDER'S TIP

A small but thoughtfully designed addition can function better than one twice as large—and look better as well. "The scale of [new] spaces needs to be commensurate with the scale of the rest of the rooms in the house," architect Patrick Ahearn says. The square footage savings can make higher-end materials and custom details more affordable, adding quality. Ahearn suggests that the new structure also be consistent in style with the original. "Stay true to the character, the essence of what the house is about," he says.

OPPOSITE: The new breakfast area and previously remodeled kitchen achieve implied history through pine floors and countertops, crown molding, bronze and wrought-iron hardware, and other traditional elements. ABOVE, LEFT AND RIGHT: The master bedroom, which once overlooked the street, now is tucked away at the rear of the house. A window seat makes the most of the garden view.



THE CHANGE

A small rear addition adds just 800 square feet but immeasurably improves the function of a centuries-old New England Colonial.

WHAT IT TOOK

- Building a two-story structure to add a new breakfast/sitting area, laundry room, and mudroom on the main level and a master bedroom with dual walk-in closets on the upper level.
- Reconfiguring existing space on the upper level to create a master bathroom.
- Incorporating a 3-foot-deep bay window on both levels of the addition to provide garden views and natural light.
- Converting a little-used deck into an enclosed four-season sunroom with a deck on top overlooking the swimming pool.
- Finishing the interior with beaded board, crown molding, reproduction hardware, and other timeless elements to blend new spaces with old.
- Installing new clapboard siding and a wood shingle roof for a unified exterior.

OPPOSITE: The new master bath packs dual sinks, a whirlpool tub, a separate shower, a discrete toilet corner, and considerable storage into a modestly sized area. When space limitations prevented the inclusion of an upper side cabinet for each sink, architect Patrick Ahearn designed an elegant center cabinet that helps define the two vanity halves as separate spaces.

LEFT: Plantation shutters in the master bath and throughout the home let in light while protecting privacy in a neighborhood where houses sit close to the street and each other.

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DESIGNER: PAT BANFIELD. READER RESOURCES ON PAGE 114