

WHOLE HOUSE REMODEL

HISTORY *Channeled*

THOUGHTFUL RENOVATIONS TO A GREEK REVIVAL
TREASURE MAKE IT FIT FOR THE MODERN AGE.

By Lenore Cullen Barnes
Photography by Dan Cutrona

ARCHITECT: Peter G. Brown
CONSTRUCTION: Cape Associates

Formerly the kitchen, this sunny south-facing room is now a cozy spot where the homeowners dine, read and relax.



There's a lifetime of history tucked into Nancy and Joseph Waldstein's Greek Revival home in West Dennis. The house was already almost 100 years old when Nancy's grandfather bought it in 1930. Like their mother before them, Nancy and her sister grew up spending summers there with her mother and grandmother. The working fathers visited mainly on weekends.



The Greek Revival home was raised out of the flood plain and received a new foundation with brick veneer and a screened-in porch.

Nancy remembers cows grazing in the empty lot next door and her grandfather hitting golf balls from their yard into nearby Swan River.

With a literal lifetime of memories embedded in this sandy soil, it's understandable that Nancy proceeded with caution when she and Joseph decided to build an addition and renovate the existing structure.

A historic home adjusted for modern life

The overall goal was to make the house more livable and comfortable as the couple prepared to make it their full-time residence. Nancy had specific plans in mind and enlisted architect Peter Brown primarily to "make sure I didn't make any major mistakes," says Waldstein. His input and expertise exceeded her expectations.

"Nancy wrote me a letter when the project was finished, saying she thought architects sat at a table and drew plans," Brown says. "One of my goals is to act as an advocate in issues either unfamiliar or too time-consuming for the client. I take the project from cradle to grave."

First things first

Brown began the project by investigating legislative issues and learned the property sits in a flood plain. Thanks to the expertise of Bob Haden—a third-generation house mover and "genius in his own right," according to Brown—the house was raised out of the flood plain and then outfitted with a new foundation.



The kitchen combines contemporary functionality and finishes with antique details such as vintage-style pendant lighting and glass-fronted cabinets outfitted with the original glass from the exterior windows.

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“We built a concrete foundation faced with brick veneer so it mirrors the original foundation, which was one width of brick for 160 years,” says Brown. “We also installed all new mechanical and electrical systems.”

Moving parts

The Waldsteins hired Cape Associates to complete the construction. Nancy’s vision included a new kitchen and screened porch. An attached shed that once housed the built-on bathroom and stove is now an efficient laundry area with a full bath adjacent to the kitchen. Brown convinced Nancy to convert the only closet on the second floor into a full bath, eliminating the need to travel downstairs to shower. A former root cellar became part of the existing pantry. They retained the steep front and rear staircases characteristic of a Greek Revival. Two dormer windows were added upstairs to meet fire code.

“This was a really interesting project,” says Andrew Murphy, a foreman at Cape Associates. “It was a pleasure to work with Peter Brown; his ideas and work ethic made it a memorable project.” Cape Associates brought the entire house up to date, even removing clapboards and applying spray insulation in rooms that weren’t refinished. Keeping the original trim in place,

Through use of scale and materials, architect Peter Brown designed the porch to reflect the era the home was built.



Cape Associates also fabricated additional pieces to match. “It was nice to see an older home updated in a way that made the improvements look natural and part of the original structure,” says Murphy, who also explains that during the renovation, the crew kept finding old artifacts stuck in the walls and under the floors. “As we were getting to the upstairs, we found an old room that was hiding a burned-down candle, a table and chairs and an old pair of Pilgrim pants.”



Adding On

Now, that history lives compatibly alongside a 21st-century kitchen and spacious screened porch that serves as the living room and gathering spot when extended family and friends visit.

“The porch was an opportunity to provide some spatial character,” says Brown. His approach to the new spaces was “contextual” – to use materials and scale that reflect the place and time in which the house was built. Without copying details of the original, we wanted the additions to be compatible with the style and character of the old Greek Revival.”



The kitchen combines contemporary functionality and finishes, like the granite countertops from Progressive Marble Fabrication in Randolph and porcelain tile floors, with the vintage feel of pendant lights and glass-fronted cabinets featuring panes from the original exterior windows. The backsplash subway tiles, flooring and tiling in both baths come from the Maline Tile Company in Rockland. Nancy notes that she would have opted for a wooden table in the center of the kitchen, but now appreciates the storage drawers, open shelving and second sink the granite-topped island provides.

The extra room upstairs serves as the grandchildren’s quarters when they come to visit.

Left: Built in place of a closet, this upstairs bath gives new meaning to the phrase water closet.

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New use for an old space

The Waldsteins love to dine, read and relax in the sunny south-facing former kitchen, which houses the Magee Grand cast-iron stove from 1896 that Nancy had restored at the outset of the project.

“I knew if I didn’t do it first, I’d never spend the money at the end,” she said. “I was watching ‘Antiques Roadshow’ years ago and they interviewed Doug Pacheco, owner of Barnstable Stove Shop in West Barnstable. I tracked him down and he was fabulous.”

Nancy says, looking back on the project, “I think we’ve successfully combined the feel of the old and the enjoyment of the new.” After all, you have to be comfortable, she asserts. “There’s no point in running out to the back shed to cook.” 🏠

in the details



The Magee Grand cast-iron stove was restored by the Barnstable Stove Shop in West Barnstable.



Granite countertops were sourced from Progressive Marble Fabrication in Randolph.



Floor tile in the upstairs bath is from the “In Tinta” collection by Ceramica Cir from the Maline Tile Company.