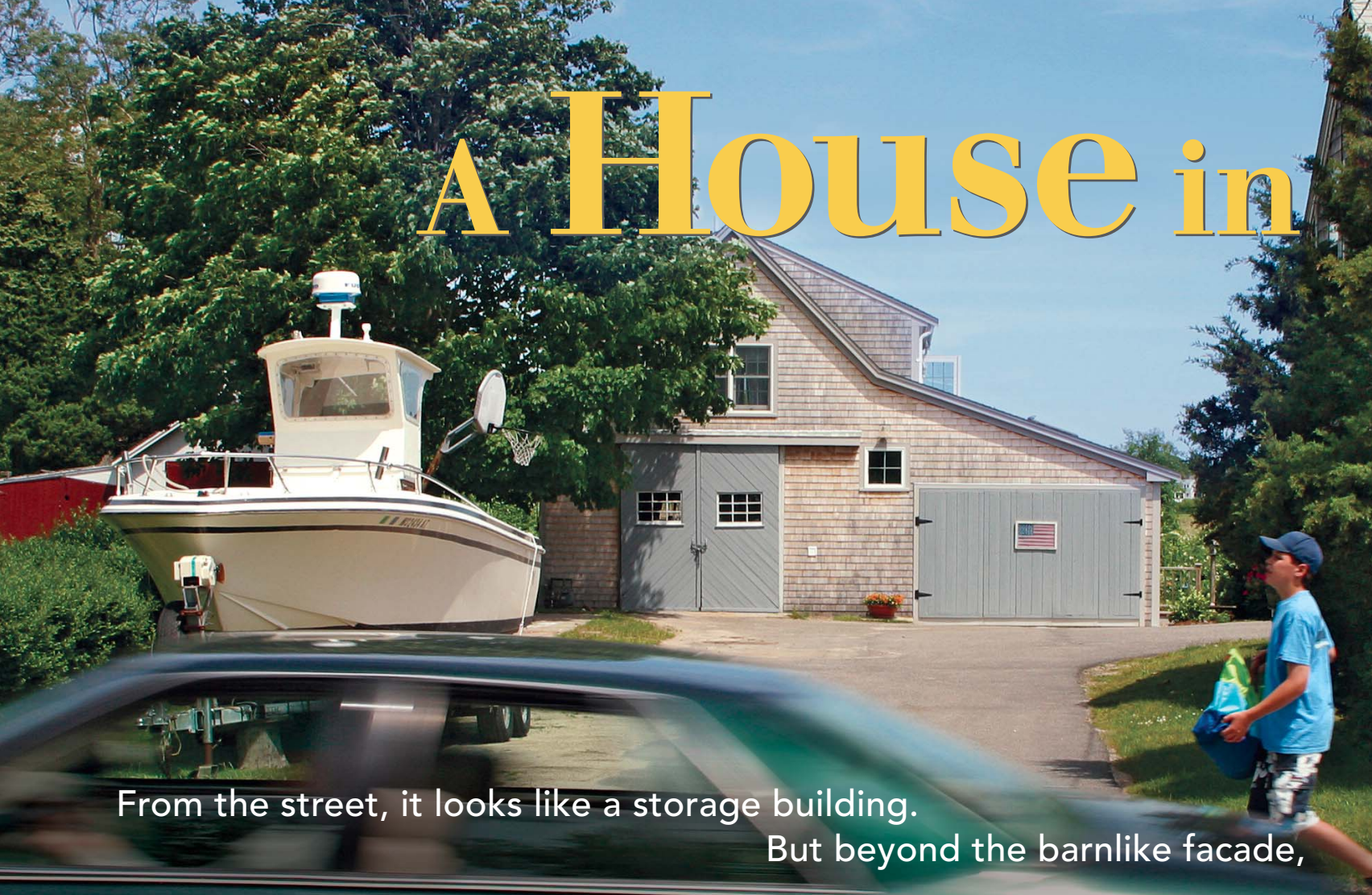


A House in



From the street, it looks like a storage building.
But beyond the barnlike facade,

BY BRIDGET CAHILL

Things are not always what they seem. And in the case of this small house on Cape Cod, that's a good thing. The house's barnlike facade faces a street that buzzes with beach traffic from April to October (photo above). Beyond the big doors, you'd never guess there's a quiet, cozy retirement cottage designed for accessibility, privacy, and beautiful views of a nearby salt marsh.

This story begins a couple of years ago when my sister, Colleen, bought a home on Cape Cod. The property included an outbuilding that had served as a carriage house in the 1800s.

Whenever I visited, I found myself wandering in and out of the carriage house, taken by its charm and by lovely vantage points from upstairs windows. When my father's health started to decline, he and my mom began to think about finding a smaller place closer to their kids. I suggested that they move

into an updated version of the carriage house. They'd end up with a great retirement home, and I'd have the chance to transform this charming old outbuilding.

Preserving the facade and the footprint

The building we had to work with was a 1½-story structure with a lean-to addition on one side. Given the proximity to a busy street and the need to preserve some ground-floor space as a storage/workshop area, we decided that the barnlike facade could provide effective camouflage for the home behind it.

We also had to contend with the numerous state and local building regulations. Because the carriage house sat within 100 ft. of wetlands, adding on was not an option. Furthermore, the planning and permitting process included hosting a tea with a woman who had summered in the carriage house as a

young girl in the 1940s. The tea and the affidavit she signed afterward were vital for us to have the carriage house grandfathered under local zoning laws as a residence.

Tearing down before building up

Long before the renovation became a realistic option, I had a revised floor plan laid out in my mind (floor plan, p. 92). First, the existing plan for the second floor—with its living space in front and sleeping area in back—had to be reversed.

Additionally, part of the unfinished first floor, home only to paint cans, kayaks, and some out-of-work lobster pots, had to be included in the new plan if we were to have enough space for a full-time residence. The house's total living space would be only about 1200 sq. ft., but by maximizing the use of space, it would be roomy enough for a comfortable home.

Hiding



Sticking to the size and configuration of the original building helped us to retain its charm. We kept most of the first-floor workshop area, located behind the barn doors, in its original condition. To keep the view from the street the same, we left the front gable end of the original structure. The lean-to part of the building was demolished, except for the barn doors, which we rehung to give the new siding an old look (photo above right).

To support the new lean-to section of the carriage house, we poured a 3-ft.-deep concrete foundation with a French-drain system to channel away groundwater. The new foundation raised the entire first floor slightly.

To make everything fit, we raised the shed-dormer roof slightly, which had minimal impact on the view from the street. I reconfigured the interior stairway with a landing to increase second-floor living space. I also widened the stairs to accommodate a chairlift, should that option ever be needed for my dad.

A new light on old-house charm

Although we gutted the original structure, I wanted both to recapture its essence and to add to its charisma. We brought in 200-year-old hand-hewn chestnut beams to span the ceilings on both floors. These nonstructural

Street smart. To the beach traffic on this busy street, the new carriage house looks the same as the old (photo facing page taken at A on floor plan). The original doors on the lean-to section of the building became part of the siding (photo above taken at B on floor plan).

there's a comfortable cottage for two with a beautiful view.



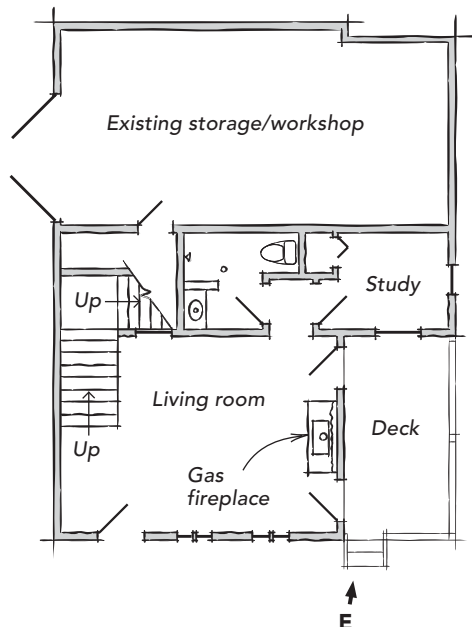


COMFORTABLE NEW SHOES IN AN OLD FOOTPRINT

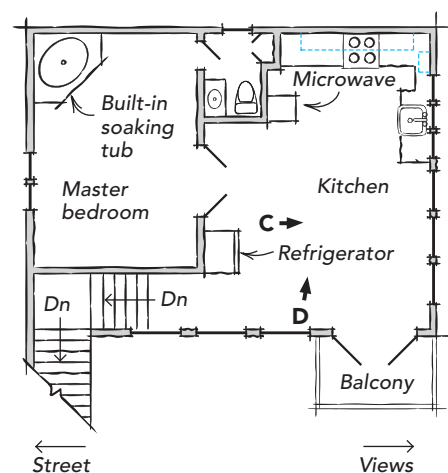
Local regulations demanded that the rebuilt carriage house occupy the same footprint as the original building. The first floor houses a living room, an accessible bath, and a small bedroom. The stairs to the second floor are wide enough for a future chairlift. The second floor is wide open to take advantage of the views. French doors open the back bedroom to salt-marsh vistas.

Outdoor connections. The best views in the house can be found in the kitchen, through ample gable-end windows and a French door that opens on a small balcony. Inside, odd pieces of furniture combine to make the kitchen look as if it has evolved over time. Photo taken at D on floor plan.

First floor



Second floor



Photos taken at lettered positions.

North 0 2 4 8 ft.

A small south-facing balcony extends from the kitchen, offering views of both sunrise and sunset.

beams were the largest cosmetic expense of the entire project, but they were well worth it. On the first floor, the beams combine with a gas fireplace that has a stone-veneer backing to create a strong feeling of warmth.

To maximize the incredible views from the second floor, I incorporated as many windows as possible into the back wall (bottom photo, facing page). The ample windows, cathedral ceilings, and skylights brighten and enliven the space, making it feel much larger than it is. To contrast and balance the high ceilings and openness, I combined various pieces of used furniture, including an oak dresser, a pine sideboard, antique desk drawers, and a glass-fronted curio cabinet. The result is a cozy country kitchen that seems born of necessity rather than of modern-day style and efficiency (top photo, facing page). Custom cabinets that house the microwave and refrigerator help to tie these elements together.

Modern convenience in minimal space

Because of my dad's deteriorating mobility, it was necessary to provide for handicap-accessibility and function in the first-floor bathroom. We tiled the entire bathroom floor with a drain in the center of the room to achieve this goal in a limited space.

We moved the second-floor master bedroom to the front of the house, giving the kitchen the best views of the marsh. To share the views with the bedroom, I separated the spaces with interior French doors. The doors not only increase the natural light and the feeling of spaciousness in the room, but they also let in refreshing sea breezes.

To maximize the use of space in the bedroom, I designed built-in closet/bureau pieces along with a headboard to surround the bed. To minimize the size of the master bath, we placed an oversize bathtub in the corner of the bedroom.

Decks move the outbuilding outdoors

The lean-to part of the carriage house is a bit smaller than the main building, making the whole footprint just shy of a full rectangle.



Decks complete the plan. The only additions to the existing footprint that were allowed are a second-floor balcony and a first-floor deck. Photo taken at E on floor plan.

Local zoning allowed us to complete the rectangle with outdoor spaces (photo above).

On the second floor, a small south-facing balcony extends from the kitchen, offering views of both sunrise and sunset. French doors swing open to help catch the cool breezes. On the first floor, a large, comfortable deck opens from the living room to pro-

vide an area for relaxing, barbecuing, and entertaining outdoors. □

When not rooting for the Boston Red Sox and being a mom to three active kids, Bridget Cahill is a designer and contractor in Brewster, Mass. Photos by Roe A. Osborn.