

House of Tudor



A blandly styled, ho-hum home is gutted and reborn

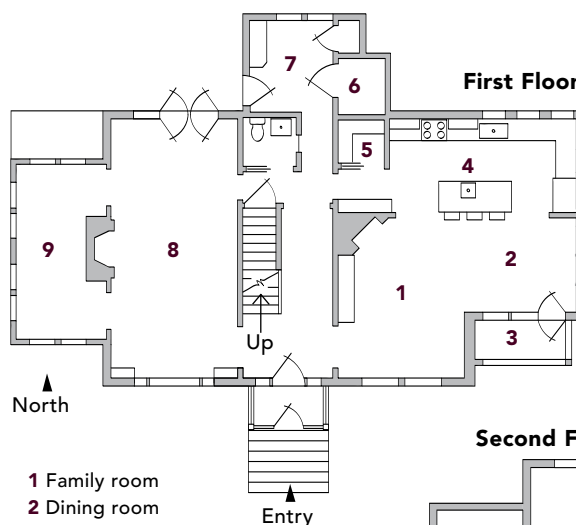
BY BRIAN PONTOLILO



A number of traditional styles would have been appropriate for the fixer-upper purchased by retired couple Bob and Susan. They settled on a Tudor revival, and brought in Frank Shirley Architects to do the design.

As it was, the house was lacking in character, but it had a few details that helped Frank achieve the Tudor look on the street-facing facade. The first-story brick veneer, for instance, was stripped of the existing white paint. The second-story overhang on the southeast corner was already in keeping with the Tudor style.

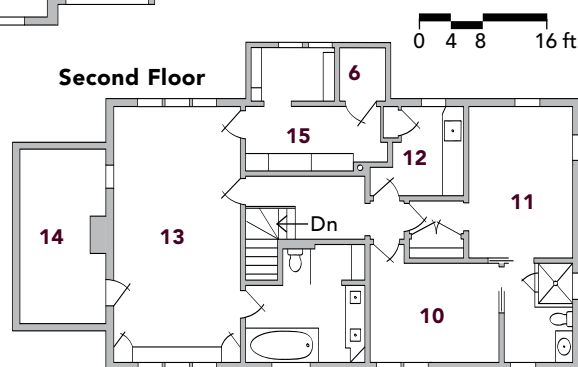
Timber framing and waddle-and-daub are no longer common building techniques, but three-coat stucco on the second-story walls and applied decorative timbers maintain the style of these types of construction. Frank's intent was to create the look of structural posts and



- 1 Family room
- 2 Dining room
- 3 Porch
- 4 Kitchen
- 5 Pantry
- 6 Elevator
- 7 Mudroom
- 8 Living room
- 9 Sunroom
- 10 Office
- 11 Bedroom
- 12 Laundry
- 13 Master bedroom
- 14 Deck
- 15 Walk-in closet

SPECS

- Bedrooms:** 2
- Bathrooms:** 2½
- Size:** 2900 sq. ft.
- Location:** Cambridge, Mass.
- Architect:** Frank Shirley Architects, frankshirleyarchitects.com
- Builder:** Kistler & Knapp Builders, kistlerandknapp.com



Nine Elements of the Tudor-Revival Style

Tudor architecture was a short-lived yet influential style during the first half of the 1500s. The Tudor-revival style emerged in the late 1800s at the same time as many other revivals. Though the designs depart in some ways, Tudor revivals are still a close representation of original Tudor homes. Here are some telltale signs to look for.

1 HALF-TIMBERING Instead of covering the timber-frame structure, the Tudors chose to leave it exposed and infilled the frame, a construction method known as half-timbering. Most modern Tudor-revival homes are stick-built and the half-timbering look is decorative.

2 CROOK FRAMING Tudor homes often had Y-shaped or curved timbers used purposefully for posts and beams, a building technique known as crook framing. This is often re-created in the decorative frames of Tudor revivals.

3 BRICK AND STUCCO Though it is not the only option, brick and stucco is the most common cladding combination used to infill the frame on Tudor-revival homes. The use of brick dates back to 16th-century England and the original Tudor movement, and stucco is a modern take on the original wattle-and-daub plaster.

4 STEEPLY PITCHED ROOFS At a time when thatched roofs were still common and in an area of the world with snow loads to consider, it made sense for Tudor roofs to be steeply pitched. Tudor-revival homes maintain this detail, though slate has become the roofing material of choice for those who can afford it.

5 CROSS GABLES AND DORMERS During the Tudor period, commoners were spending more money on their homes, and the shapes of houses were more elaborate. Many featured cross gables and dormers, which are common on Tudor-revival homes.

6 GANGED WINDOWS Often tall and narrow, Tudor and Tudor-revival homes are known for having multiple windows grouped together. Historically, glass was expensive. The more windows a house had, the wealthier the homeowners. This is less true today, but the asymmetrical and ganged window arrangement is still a significant feature.

7 CONTRASTING COLORS In medieval Europe, exposed oak timber frames were often covered with tar for longevity. This created a stark contrast between the frame and the light-colored earth plaster (among other materials) commonly used for walls. Today, designers re-create this contrast using dark-stained or painted decorative framing with white or cream-colored stucco, or red brick veneer.

8 TALL CHIMNEYS Tudor homes were among the first to have concealed fireplaces and brick chimneys. The chimneys were often decorative in appearance with fancy chimney pots at the top, and this detail is maintained in the Tudor-revival style.

9 OVERHANGING SECOND FLOORS For tax reasons, it was advantageous to minimize the area of the first floor. For that reason, many Tudor homes had cantilevered second floors. Modern architects use this detail to give Tudor-revival homes character and to cover outdoor spaces.



Exposing the structure. The oak timbers of the cathedral ceiling are pickled with a subtle gray finish for a little less contrast in the bright master bedroom.

beams with the regular spacing of the decorative timbers—particularly around the windows—and the use of diagonal timbers to brace the corners. He even used a decorative curved timber in the gable above the front entry. The boards used to create the timber-frame look are oak, as an original Tudor frame would have been. But instead of being finished with tar, they are painted a deep forest green. The dark-color frame and the creamy stucco have enough contrast to clearly reference the notable black-and-white aesthetic of original Tudor homes.

The home's asymmetry is more of a nod to the revival movement than it is to the original Tudor style. But the tall brick chimney, with clay chimney pots atop each flue, harken back to 16th-century Europe. Two more exterior details worth noting are the copper gutters and downspouts and the slate roof.

To make the Tudor connection inside, Frank used white-oak flooring throughout the house, spec'd diamond-patterned leaded glass in a few places, and designed the master bedroom to have exposed roof framing. To make this cathedral ceiling work, the roof assembly is unvented, with R-50 closed-cell spray-foam insulation between the rafters.

Frank is quick to admit that the Tudor-revival style does not lend itself to affordability. "This project was expensive and intense," he says, "not quick and easy. But this house should last for generations." □

Brian Pontolilo is a former *Fine Homebuilding* editor. Photos by Randy O'Rourke, except where noted.



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