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DESIGN

NEW ENGLAND

OUTDOOR HAVENS

City, country, and seaside open-air retreats



THE RENOVATED HOUSE retains its American Foursquare style but features new shingle siding and rebuilt third-floor dormers. The porch now wraps around three sides, starting from the harbor-facing facade (BELOW) and continuing to the north side of the house (FACING PAGE), where there also is a harbor view.



A turn
**FOR THE
BETTER**



**AN INNOVATIVE RENOVATION GIVES AN 1890 SUMMER COTTAGE
IN JAMESTOWN, RHODE ISLAND, A BRAND-NEW OUTLOOK**

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This is a renovation story with a twist:

a 75-degree turn, to be precise. That's how much an entire house was lifted and rotated before being placed back down on a new foundation.

This house-moving flick of the wrist all started when Vince and Lisa Kirby discovered that the rubble stone foundation of their much-loved 1890 house in Jamestown, Rhode Island, was crumbling. The old house was worth saving, and its failing foundation proved to be a proverbial blessing in disguise.

The American Foursquare-style summer cottage originally had a porch off the living and dining rooms that faced due south toward Jamestown's picturesque harbor, but over the years, newer buildings had obstructed the view. "There they were, within walking distance to the harbor, and they had barely any water views," says architect Leonard J. Baum of Cranston, Rhode Island, who devised the ingenious lift-and-rotate solution so that the porch now faces southeast and an improved view. "We realized that if we had to rebuild the foundation anyway," says Vince, a maritime pilot, "why not turn the house so we could have harbor views?"

"We roughed out all the potential ways that the neighbors might add to their own properties based on

THE LIVING/DINING area takes in the harbor view through a wall of windows and French doors. An interior wall was removed to create the open floor plan and columns were installed to provide structural support. New door and window trim and baseboard mouldings mimic the 19th-century originals. The entry door (FACING PAGE) was moved to the west side, where the driveway is located. Now when guests enter, they are greeted with a view straight through the house to the harbor.





zoning and setbacks, and created a site plan with a ‘what-if ... view corridor,’” says Baum, whose firm, Leonard J. Baum Architect, is known for saving historic properties by dismantling, moving, and rebuilding them. They tested the new orientation by staking out the floor plan. “We eyeballed what the view would be like if we were standing in the living room, for example,” says Baum.

“We loved the bones of the house and the proportions of the rooms, and we knew it needed work,” says Vince, but the extra effort of reorienting the house had not been on their original to-do list, which consisted of gradually upgrading the kitchen and baths, and the electrical and mechanical systems. That changed drastically when Vince discovered a “wonky foundation wall” when he started to remove a coal chute in the basement. After consulting with contractor Dan Vieira of Vieira Construction (who by coincidence had grown up on the same street), the Kirbys realized that the entire foundation should be replaced. Knowing they would need to jack up the house at some point to accommodate the foundation work, the idea to not only lift the house but

also reorient it became downright sensible. “Turning the house was the key — it enabled us to save the old house, and also have every room face the water,” says Lisa. With their two sons, Christian, now 17, and Evan, now 15, in tow, the Kirbys moved out of the house for more than a year while the renovation took shape.

When the new poured-in-place concrete foundation was in position, Vince, working with the house-moving subcontractor, helped with the delicate task of setting an old out-of-square house on a new perfectly square base. “That was interesting,” he quips.

The Kirbys also installed a geothermal heating and cooling system, which entailed retrofitting all the ductwork in the house. New insulation and electrical and plumbing systems complete the infrastructure core.

The strategy for the interior spaces was to maintain the house’s vintage character while opening up the first-floor living areas for a more modern layout. “We removed as many interior walls on the first floor as we could to open the spaces to the view,

INTERIOR DETAILS SUCH AS THE ORIGINAL MANTEL IN THE LIVING ROOM (ABOVE) ADD PERIOD STYLE TO THE HOUSE. TEDDY, THE RESIDENT HAVANESE, HEADS TOWARD THE BUTLER’S PANTRY (FACING PAGE, TOP), WHICH ORIGINALLY WAS AN ENCLOSED SPACE. NOW OPEN TO THE DINING AREA AND KITCHEN, IT HAS REBUILT WALNUT CABINETRY AND A FRENCH DOOR TO THE PORCH. THE ENTRY FOYER (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM) INCLUDES AN ORIGINAL NEWEL POST AND MANTEL. THERE ARE NO WOOD-BURNING FIREPLACES IN THE HOUSE — CONTRACTOR DAN VIEIRA REMOVED THE CHIMNEYS PRIOR TO ITS BEING LIFTED AND MOVED. THE ENTRY FIREPLACE HAS A CAST-IRON PERIOD STYLE INSERT THAT IS JUST FOR SHOW, WHILE IN THE LIVING ROOM THERE IS A GAS-BURNING DIRECT-VENT MODEL.



THE KITCHEN'S SOFT industrial look is established by subway tile and stainless steel open shelves (RIGHT TOP). Traditional elements include polished marble countertops on the perimeter and honed Calcutta gold atop the island. Teddy (RIGHT BOTTOM) perches on a cabinet in the new mudroom.

and made structural provisions with posts," says Baum. The living room, dining room, and butler's pantry retained their original place and proportions but were incorporated into one open space.

With Patti Watson of Taste, a Jamestown interior design firm, the Kirbys optimized the kitchen layout, picking up square footage by removing a secondary staircase that led from the second floor directly to the kitchen. "We didn't want to overbuild the kitchen, but we wanted as much counter space and storage as possible," says Watson. White subway tile on the window wall runs up to the crown moulding, giving the space a soft industrial look. "We added stainless steel open shelves," says Watson, "and for warmth chose a cumin color for the island's base cabinets."

The mudroom off the kitchen was transformed and expanded so that the old summer cottage would better function as a year-round house, where household members are coming in not only from the beach but also from shoveling snow or playing tennis, or laden with school backpacks. "We incorporated so much function in the mudroom by adding a TV room and office," says Watson. "We also gave the house something it never had: a first-floor powder room."

The historic character of the house was preserved with original details such as the fireplace mantels in the entry and living room, the front door, stairway newel post, and millwork based on original rosette casings and crown moulding. The layout of the three bedrooms on the second floor remained intact, but the master bedroom became

more of a master suite by adding a large closet off the master bath in the space above the new mudroom. On the third floor, Vieira rebuilt all the dormers, expanding them to allow

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enough headroom to turn the onetime attic into a fourth bedroom.

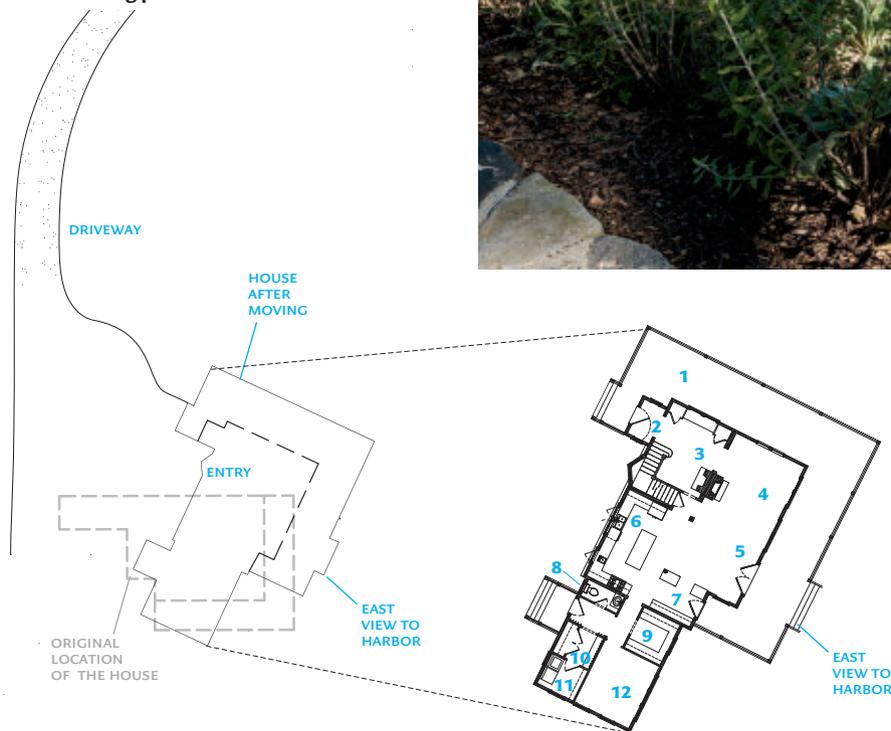
Also preserved and enhanced was one of the defining elements of the original cottage — a gracious porch, which now wraps around three sides of the house. "In summer, the porch introduces you to the house," says Baum, "and we were able to tweak the site plan so that we had the room to make the porch even deeper," expanding it from 8 feet to 10, so that it functions as a true outdoor room. For the Kirbys, every inch of the porch is a haven, and best of all, whether from the porch swing or the rockers or the wicker sofa, there is a view of the water. ■





PRIOR TO REPOSITIONING the house, all porches, decks, and chimneys were removed. The original dining room/living room facade (TOP) is recognizable by the French doors. The original front facade (ABOVE) is identified by the entry door, which was moved during the renovation to the adjacent wall where it now faces the driveway.

A BLUESTONE TERRACE (RIGHT), one of the new outdoor spaces added by landscape architect Katherine Field of Katherine Field and Associates of Newport, Rhode Island, is just steps away from the harbor-facing porch.



FIRST FLOOR

- 1 PORCH
- 2 ENTRY
- 3 FOYER
- 4 LIVING AREA
- 5 DINING AREA
- 6 KITCHEN
- 7 BUTLER'S PANTRY
- 8 POWDER ROOM
- 9 HOME OFFICE
- 10 MUDROOM
- 11 LAUNDRY ROOM
- 12 FAMILY ROOM

BUILDER VIEIRA CONSTRUCTION