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Back of house BEFORE



Design restraint
and clever use of space
turn an outdated
waterfront home into a
neighborhood gem

MADE TO FIT

By Janice
Randall Rohlf

For anyone considering a substantial home renovation, a look at the before and after photos of John and Donna Keaney's Wings Neck house is illuminating. You can see at a glance how the original exterior lines of the 1,870-square-foot house remain — both in the front and back. In fact, so much of the original look was retained that it's hard to believe the late-'70s-era Cape-style house was razed to the first-floor line and rebuilt.

A "complete gut rehab" is what builder Brad Broderick of Falmouth calls the job he was asked to undertake by architect John Dvorsack, also of Falmouth, and the

Architecture | John Dvorsack, JD Architect Builder | Brad Broderick, Broderick Building & Remodeling

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homeowners. The roof was removed, dormers were lowered and a porch screened in. The only modifications to the main house's original footprint were three minor additions, including a 4-foot-by-14-foot bump-out in the back, on the water side, above which a deck was built off the master bedroom.

"[My wife] Donna and I were really attuned to not overpowering the neighborhood of Cape-style houses," homeowner John Keaney says. "We didn't want to overpower the landscape either." They had lived in the house, last renovated in 1986, for

Working within the original footprint, Dvorsack more than doubled the number of bathrooms and increased the sleeping area exponentially when he raised the ridge of the attic roof above the garage.

two summers before deciding to remodel. Originally, they just wanted to add "a few front dormers," says John, but architect Dvorsack, who shared their concerns, had other ideas.

"He listened a lot and had enthusiasm for what the place could look like," says John Keaney of Dvorsack, whose portfolio is strong on waterfront, shingle-style homes. For the Keaney's, says the architect, he "completely reworked the roofline to give the house more space and in the process made it more in keeping with the Wings Neck neighborhood."

A 400-acre peninsula that extends into Buzzards Bay at the western entrance to the Cape Cod Canal, this hundred-year-old community — an easy commute from the Keaney's home in Hingham — has a

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A Nantucket dormer — two gable dormers connected by a shed dormer — transforms the front of the house and adds space upstairs.

private beach, tennis courts and an association dock. The Keaney's, who had been looking for a vacation property for about five years, were smitten by it.

Serendipity, they say, brought them to this out of the way pocket of Pocasset, a village of Bourne. Having rented in Wellfleet and Cotuit, where “mooring lists haven’t taken a name for 20 years,” says John Keaney, an avid boater, “they started to look closer to Buzzards Bay. What they found was an estate-sale house that had been on the market for two years. With its paneled walls, carpeting and old-style windows, it wasn’t their dream house, but the location was ideal. They snapped it up.

“A current trend is people living with a lot smaller homes, but they want them updated, upgraded,” says contractor Broderick, who often teams up with Dvorsack. “They say, ‘Let’s just fix this place up



The house’s original breezeway now leads to an expanded deck and a brand-new firepit.

because we know we love the location.”

Donna Keaney wanted the house to be very manageable to clean, both inside and out, and she and her husband agreed that they preferred a cottage look to “10-foot ceilings and big molding.”

Working within the original footprint, Dvorsack more than doubled the number of bathrooms (from 2 to 4.5) and increased the sleeping area exponentially when he raised the ridge of the attic roof above the garage to create a nearly 500-square-foot bunk room. With a bathroom, two beds and a pull-out couch, this is a perfect guest suite and gives the Keaney’s college-age son privacy when he’s home. Another son has a bedroom and a bathroom in the main house.

“In terms of space, this was a very disorganized house,” explains Dvorsack. For example, the single upstairs bathroom could be accessed only by walking through

the master bedroom, and the traffic pattern downstairs was all wrong. The key to making a small house work, points out Dvorsack, is to “minimize the amount of circulation space.” To this end he eliminated the central hallway and moved the traffic pattern against the water side of the house. This provides the circulation required and allows the kitchen to feel more spacious. “The space vacated by the original hallway enabled us to increase the size of the first-floor guest room and add a private bath,” says the architect.

But Dvorsack says that first-floor ceilings that had to remain 7 feet 4 inches high presented his biggest design challenge. By lining the wall facing the water with windows, one has “the illusion of space,” says Dvorsack. “[The glass] expands the field of vision.” Plus, the visual interest on that side of the house — the undulation of the wall — also makes a small space feel larger.

“I try to look at houses the way I’d like to live in them,” says Dvorsack. “Details are important.” ■



Master bedroom



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Kitchen

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