



# A FAMILY NEST

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*Once an out-of-place stucco building that ignored its views of Sippican Harbor, this Marion home has transformed into an elegant retreat that embraces its inhabitants as well as its location.*







t There was something missing when Tom and Denise bought their new waterfront home: a view of the water. The glorious Sippican Harbor and Buzzards Bay beyond seemed like the obvious influence on the posh Marion home. But limited windows and obscuring stairways blocked the celebrated view from inside this 1907 former gardener's cottage.





Tom and Denise changed that. With architect Anthi Frangiadis, builder Dave Crovello of Pimental Contractors, and John Engwer of Eastern Design and Landscaping, the former stucco-faced and awkwardly-placed abode transformed into a fresh and modern nesting place for the entire family.

“It was a really ugly-looking structure, no matter where you looked. But it had elements that could make a beautiful home, like high ceilings and strong dimensions of rooms,” explains Tom. “So, we figured that with an imaginative architect and builder, they could turn something really ugly into something that was beautiful.”

“We sat on the dock, and looked at the cottage, and back at the view,” added Denise, “and realized this was where we wanted to be.”

Originally built as a supplement to the former primary property next door, this five-bedroom, four-bathroom, 3,825-square-foot home needed its own identity, says Frangiadis, principal of the eponymous design firm and the Drawing Room retail shop in New Bedford. It also needed to accommodate six people, since the couple’s three grown children and

one of their parents were living under one roof. So, without changing the footprint, Frangiadis made a few tweaks that completely transformed the entire structure into a pandemic quarantine gathering place that took advantage of great views.

“From the bedrooms and the front door, you couldn’t see the water,” Frangiadis says. “So, we added a dormer and windows, reconfigured the stairs and the enlarged kitchen. Now, rather than looking at the fridge and sink, you look at the water, and it feels more open.”

In working with Denise and Tom, interior designer Clara Potash of CP Design says the goal was always clear. They wanted a home where they could relax with family and friends and share their love of good food, conversation, and music. “In each room we wanted comfortable seating, interesting color and texture, and a welcoming vibe. We worked to keep the colors consistent throughout the house, coastal in feel, but with enough warmth and sophistication to make it welcoming year-round,” she says.

Rearranging the problematic staircase seemed to be the solution to the restrictive house’s problems. Blocking the view from the front to the back of the house, it was



cramped, dark, and too small for the family's tall sons. Frangiadis actually widened the treads, removed a beam to accommodate more head room, and replaced a side wall with a banister, while adding a second-floor landing and dormer, to facilitate transparency, light and views. These seemingly slight changes opened up the entire building.

Similar adjustments in the great room turned it from a cold space to a warm and inviting family room, where the kids play keyboards, and everyone gathers on the fireside couches for a post-dinner board game. Additional windows and a commanding fieldstone fireplace allow the water view to decorate the room, though a few pieces of local art color the walls. Even the mantel was salvaged during demolition, when they surprisingly found an original 10'x10' wood beam buried in the wall.











“No matter where you are, you’re looking at water,” Tom says.

With six people in residence, considering space for storage and energy efficiency were critical too. The master suite received a closet refresh, with added office space for Tom, while the four bedrooms upstairs welcome tall closets in the spacious eaves. They added low-voltage accent lighting, energy efficient appliances inside and for the outdoor kitchen, and natural lighting reduces lighting demands, while solar panels on the metal and asphalt shingle roof reduce the carbon footprint.

New storage in the kitchen allowed a metamorphosis into a bright and accommodating mecca for food, so Denise, a nutritionist, could spread her culinary wings. She and Tom sit at the center island counter each morning for breakfast, and she spends countless hours here experimenting with recipes and cooking for family. All-white custom cabinetry complements a framed chalkboard painted on the wall, which is a central spot for shopping lists, reminders, and even the occasional love note.

“We added this floor-to-ceiling chalkboard with a walnut frame to match the stove hood. This was something I wanted because when we took a trip to France, we saw it in a little lunch place, and loved it,” Denise says.

“I feel as though we gave the house its own character, so it doesn’t feel like a leftover property from the main house,” says Frangiadis. “I like to accommodate multi-generations of families to make sure there are spots for people to squirrel away, as well as spaces for everyone to be together.”

The delights continue outside, too. Adjacent to the kitchen, board and batten siding on an expanded back porch





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add visual diversity to the cosmopolitan bright cedar shingles that now envelop the house. A new pool with a Sandy Point granite patio doesn't burn underfoot in the summer, and an outdoor kitchen built of fieldstone, to match the fireplace inside, continues the playful family vibe in the al fresco environment.

"I feel like I'm in California when I'm out here," says Denise. "Bluestone caps on the fireplaces match the gas firepit and front steps, and chrome Kohler fixtures are modern and usable. Everything was here so we could use it and enjoy it, and it won't be delicate. It was so nice to have this space during the pandemic."

The property is in the flood zone and water surrounds them on almost all sides, so the team had to earn approval from the Marion Conservation Commission to do excavation for landscaping. It became a huge challenge, Denise says, because they wanted to resolve the flooded backyard but were limited with options for drainage. As a result, their reimagined landscape design considers water above all else. The team from Eastern Design and Landscaping in Wrentham regraded the entire site, encouraging water to drain away from the house, instead of toward it. They eliminated some of the expansive lawn, planting

only drought-tolerant native species, like blue stem, switch grass, and other pollinator plants, around the pool and side yards. Now, they won't need to continually water and fertilize in the hot summer months, which will lower costs for the long term.

More than 1,000 yards of topsoil provide support from underneath, while a new 10,000 square-foot recharge pond collects all of the property's excess rain water and filters it through compost before draining to the harbor. The new cobblestone driveway also acts like a natural percolator, draining water to the pond.

"We're taking grass away and putting native plants in to cut down on water and fertilizer use," says Engwer. "Within two years, they'll get their money back. So, it's not just good for the environment, it's good for their budget."

Inspired by the family's lifetime of traveling to Vermont, Maine, and abroad, this whole house now radiates New England and European charm.

"The reason for getting this place is to have a gathering place for the kids," explains Tom. "We expect to see them a lot with their families as they get married and have kids. And that's what we wanted: a place where they could come and hang out, and share their lives with us." 🌿