

a welcoming Home

Improving the flow of a 1720s Colonial



LEFT: *The curves and columns of the new portico, which shelters the house's much-trafficked side entrance, were inspired by details in the formal front entry.*

OPPOSITE: *Just steps inside the door is a new mudroom with a bank of built-in drawers of various sizes and new windows above, which let light stream into the family room.*

BY ELIZABETH GEHRMAN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KELLER & KELLER

STYLING BY EILEEN EISELE

With its quaint village green and stately old homes, Longmeadow, Massachusetts, is the kind of New England town that can seem frozen in time. That steeped-in-history quality is one of the things that Mark Bean and his wife, Kate Freeman, value about the place—and about the rambling 1720 Colonial they bought there six years ago. The soon-to-be-married couple admired the house's period details, like the arched center portico with sunburst transom (added in the 1830s). And they figured the house's 4,800 square feet could comfortably accommodate their blended family, which would include four kids.

After living there for a few years, however, the couple realized that just because a lovely old house is big doesn't mean it will work for contemporary living. They found the layout chopped up into too many small, often poorly connected spaces. For instance, an undersized side entrance opened right into the cramped kitchen. And the family room was virtually inaccessible from the high-traffic areas of the





house. On the second floor, there was a maze of tiny bedrooms but no master suite. Mark, a physician, also wanted a home office. And storage was a big problem throughout. “We basically didn’t have any,” says Mark.

To help them reorganize room arrangements and improve traffic flow, while staying true to the house’s 280-year-old character, the couple enlisted Connecticut architect Duo Dickinson. “We wanted to update the house without betraying its historical context,” says Kate.

ADDING A MUDROOM

The first step in improving the house’s flow was creating a convenient and inviting entrance. Although the residence features a formal front entry and hall, the family most often used a small side door, which led from the driveway to the kitchen. Unfortunately, the door opened right into the breakfast nook, cutting into table space and inviting wintry drafts. To solve this problem, Dickinson added a 200-square-foot bump-out off the kitchen to serve as a mudroom, and built a new side entrance off of it.

To tie this addition to the house’s existing architecture, Dickinson added a columned portico to the exterior, with curves that echo those of the main entrance and hallway. (He created a matching portico on an existing entry on the other side of the house, as well.) The curved beadboard ceiling of the portico extends inside to the mud-

ABOVE LEFT: *The kitchen’s limestone-topped island doubles the counter space, provides additional seating, and leaves plenty of clearance for traffic.*

ABOVE RIGHT: *The drafty former side entrance into the room was sealed off and made cozy with a breakfast table and built-in benches.*

room. There a bank of built-in drawers provides a place to throw keys, sunglasses, and gloves; larger items like backpacks and sporting equipment reside in a hinged window seat and a ventilated coat closet. The mudroom also provides

access to the relocated basement stairs, which previously occupied valuable real estate in the center of the kitchen.

CREATING A FUNCTIONAL KITCHEN

Despite the space freed up by the relocation of the basement stairs and side entry, the kitchen was still too small. So Dickinson stole some space from the house’s underutilized family room. By removing a partition wall that separated it from the kitchen, he was able to create a large L-shaped space where the family can cook, eat, entertain, or just hang out.

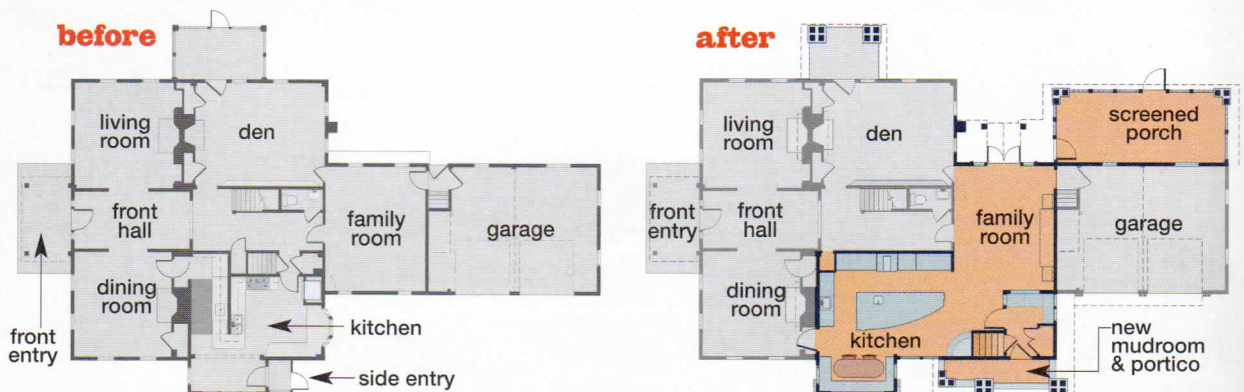
Dickinson designed a large, curved kitchen island to help establish a comfortable traffic pattern, and fitted out the now-cozy breakfast nook with built-in seating. “The old kitchen was really unworkable,” says Kate. “We never invited anyone in there.” Now the couple entertains almost every weekend. “We just had 40 people over,” says Mark, “and we weren’t stepping on each other’s toes.”

To help maintain the house’s integrity, Dickinson reused existing materials whenever possible when making changes. The kitchen’s exposed ceiling beams, left intact, hint at the house’s

The Plans

First Floor

The remodel reconfigured the house’s high-traffic areas—the side entrance, kitchen, and family room—and added an enclosed porch for warm-weather living. The formal entry, living room, dining room, and den were left untouched.



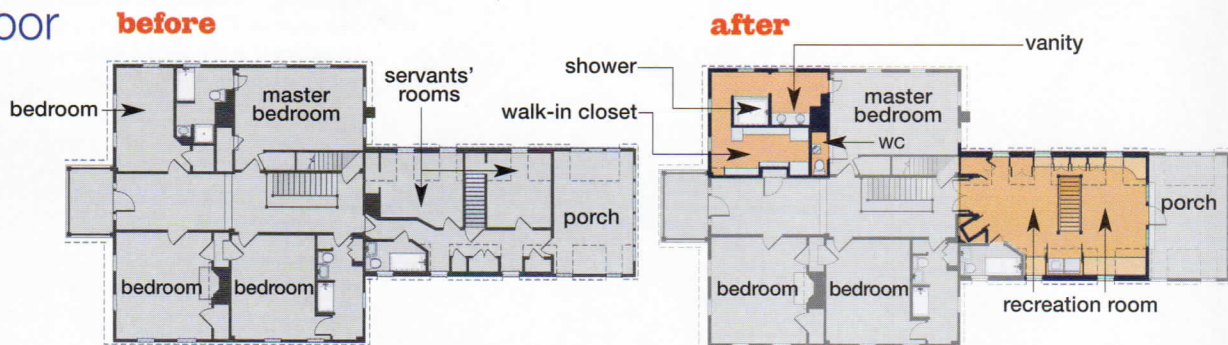
The enlarged kitchen is accessed by a door leading from the new mudroom and side entry, and is now open to the adjoining family room. A centuries-old ceiling beam contrasts with the polished curves of several new built-ins, including a red-paneled home-office cabinet and the family room's mirrored, arch-topped entertainment center.



The Plans

Second Floor

An underutilized corner bedroom was converted into the master suite's bath and dressing area. The servant's quarters in the adjoining ell were merged to create a large open rec room.



history: One has a notch cut in the side and another sports a coat of whitewash. And the old wood floors pulled up from the kitchen and family room were used to line the walls of Mark's new attic study. When a door or hardware was removed from one spot, it was placed in another.

One of the kitchen's most dramatic features, however, is new: a bow-front built-in that serves as Kate's mini home office. Not only does the paneled unit cleverly hide the headroom from the relocated basement stairs, but more important, says Kate, it conceals the clutter that would have otherwise accumulated on the kitchen counter. "I always had that pile of pens and paper next to the phone that looked horrendous," she says. "Now I don't have to look at it." Pockets on one of the doors hold the family's mail, while cork boards on the other hold event calendars and theater tickets; there are even file drawers that slide out at floor level.

OPENING UP THE SECOND FLOOR

One half of the upstairs was a warren of former servants' quarters. "We walked back there maybe three times in our first four years in the house," says Kate. To make the space more usable, Dickinson removed the interior walls to create a large recreation room that can grow with the needs of the family. Architectural elements like the trio of arched windows are set off by the simplicity of the beadboard-faced built-in storage units that line the walls and open up to reveal everything from books and an entertainment center to a full bathroom. At the top of the stairs (leading up from the garage), there's even a laundry center. After spending the day gardening, says Mark, "I can just come up here and throw everything in the wash."

Elsewhere on the second floor, an expanded master suite was made possible by annexing an adjoining small bedroom. It is accessed through a stone-tiled vanity area and backs up to a large walk-in closet. The master bedroom's existing closet was converted into a water closet rimmed with mahogany paneling.

Now the family enjoys both the gracious feel of the 18th-century structure and plenty of modern amenities. Says Dickinson, "We were able to bring in some concepts that didn't exist a few decades ago—the kitchen as a place to socialize, a luxurious master suite, the home office—without sticking our tongues out at the old house." ■

LEFT: *The second-floor recreation room has built-in storage on three walls for toys, games, and even a washer and dryer. The fourth wall holds a bank of windows salvaged from a church in Maine; the center one is a door that leads to an enclosed porch just beyond.*

For an archive of articles on adding on and remodeling Go to www.thisoldhouse.com or **America Online Keyword: This Old House** and visit the Homeowner Know-how section.

