



Entry with greenhouse window and custom built-ins.

Photos by Bob Handelman, www.bobhandelman.com

A GENTLEMAN'S ESTATE



Those custom built-ins house antiques and book collections.

On a hill above the Hammonasset River, it was love at first sight

By Kira Van Deusen

AT FIRST GLANCE you might not see the full impact of what makes this single-story Killingworth home in the middle of the woods so enticing.

But the homeowner will tell you that on first

sight of the backyard alone, he submitted an offer to his Realtor. That was before he had even stepped inside; the property is just that exquisite.

Upon entering the home today, you might think the fresh interior was part of the draw, but these changes are all new and were made just after the current owner, a retired veterinarian, purchased the home in January 2012. He chose this 8-plus-acre parcel with a modest 1,900 square-foot home and fantastic views of the Hammonasset River for his retirement estate. The main home was built in 1947, with north and south wings added in 1978. The home was in much need of attention — especially the living space with six different flooring materials (a flow that did not please the new homeowner) and a yard that appeared more like a jungle, requiring thoughtful landscaping to get rid of overgrown plantings and storm debris.

Shortly after purchasing the home, the homeowner heard about Rick Brauchler Jr. & Co. via his Realtor.



Blue cabinets contrast beautifully against buttery yellow walls.

Hired to make a few cosmetic changes and a kitchen remodel, Rick's team opened things up, discovering structural damage that led to the replacement of all the siding and trim.

"We had to temporarily lift and support each section of the house working our way around the whole perimeter, replacing sill plates and sheathing, one section at a time, set-

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A new simple, yet elegant galley kitchen with all the amenities.

ting it back down and moving on to the next portion," said Brauchler. The structural repairs also led to all new windows and doors, which coincided with the homeowner's decision to make changes to the interior layout, affecting the window locations.

"We used fiber-cement clapboard siding, Energy Star-rated vinyl double-hung windows and composite trim to all but eliminate future problems and maintenance," he explains.

"Many times a project begins with one goal and grows in scope, but this one had a life of its own and evolved almost daily, which took its toll on scheduling and budgeting," Brauchler said, "but in situations like this one, it can't be avoided and in the end, we were able to get him moved in right on time, while respecting his budget as much as possible," he added.

Meetings on-site with the homeowner took place at least twice weekly to review the progress made and discuss next steps, potential complexities and the timetable. The project that started as a simple kitchen and cosmetics job with some new built-ins, led to a near whole-house renovation, including the detached barn and two-car garage with workshop.

Amazingly, Brauchler's team stayed on schedule, and from the first meeting with the homeowner until handing over the keys, it was just over a six-

month period.

Certainly more than either party had anticipated, the scale of the project grew tenfold; but in the end, the homeowner got the exact house he wanted. The foundation and part of the skeleton were preserved, but other than that, it is basically a new home from top to bottom. Here are the highlights of the home:

Two small and narrow existing bedrooms were combined to provide a beautifully spacious master suite, encompassing the northern third of the house, including a private bath, walk-in closet and laundry room. The space also takes advantage of beautiful backyard views overlooking the pond and rolling fields via a 6-foot French door.

Working with Brauchler to make the most of the renovations, Gerard Ciccarello of Covenant Kitchens & Baths was called to the task of designing a small, yet highly functional, galley kitchen and a powder room vanity.

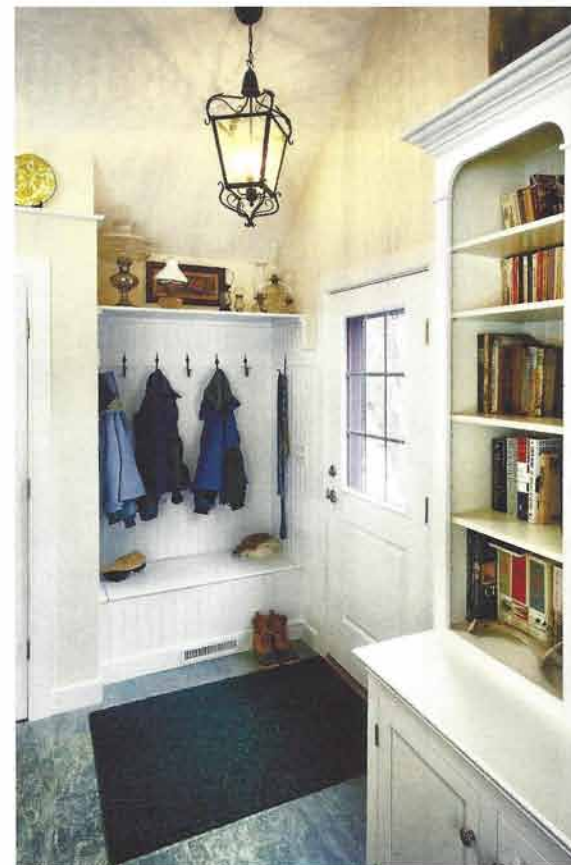
The pale San Fran Fog blue galley kitchen cabinetry has stunning details with Gold and Silver granite and is open to the dining room for ease of entertaining. This also illuminates the kitchen with natural light from the adjoining space. A combination of drawers and roll-out shelves serves the storage needs and a tall pantry with wide doors is tucked in next to the brick backing of the fireplace. A dou-



"Before" photo shows original cabinetry and tile.

ble sink with a garden window invites the outdoors in.

From the dining room side, a recessed nook above the kitchen was added to break up the tall expanse and added hidden accent lighting to complement the homeowner's display of antique lanterns. A 12-foot sliding door to the bluestone patio graces the east-facing wall. Two dogs and a cat are the current animal residents, therefore all the finishes were chosen to hold up well to the pitter-patter



Every house should have one: Coat hooks in mudroom entry keep it tidy.

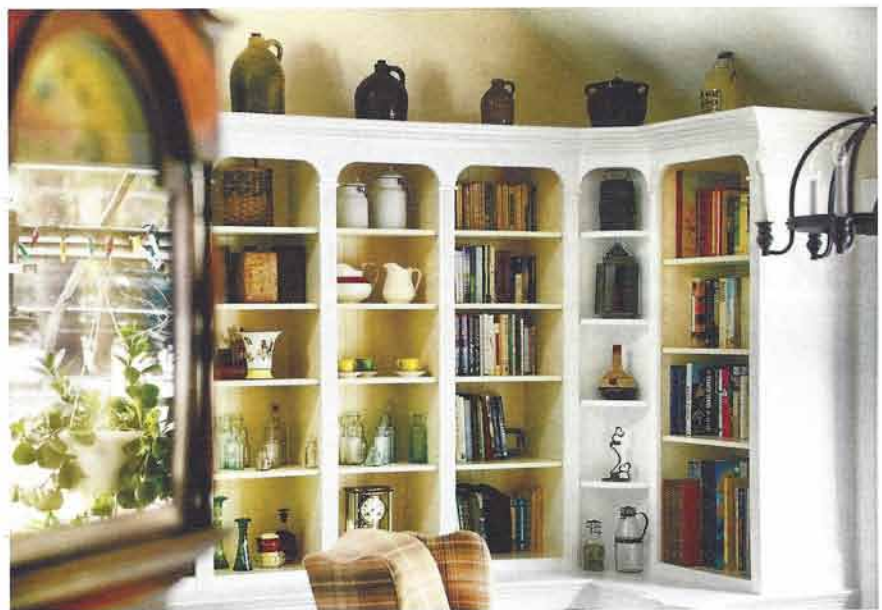


Wide, plank pine floors and fireplace wall keep the original feel of the room.

of paws. A darker carpet was chosen for the master suite area in the hopes that it would hide the shedding hair between vacuumings, and the laminate flooring in the mudroom and kitchen has an excellent wear rating and is simple to clean-up.

One challenge was to remodel the home and update all of the mechanicals and finishes, while maintaining the look and feel of a 1940s gentleman's estate. Muted paint colors, built-in cabinetry reminiscent of period design and millwork details were a perfect fit to the style. As a literature and antiques collector, the homeowner's flair lends itself to the feel and character of the home. The simple beaded baseboard, window and door trim replaced the showy and heavy Victorian trim that did not fit that simpler style. Shiny brass door hardware was removed in favor of a satin nickel finish.

Rather than sand down the existing heart pine and chestnut floors in the dining and keeping-room to bare wood, Brauchler's team worked



The antique and library collection pair well together in this custom display cabinet with beadboard back.

through a lengthy cleaning process, did some localized sanding and scraping, touched up any bare spots with a color-matched stain, then applied a clear satin finish by hand. Leaving the floor with faint brush strokes and a hand-rubbed appearance, mimicked how it would have looked originally.

The fireplace surround in the keeping-room was also carefully cleaned and hand-rubbed with a tung-oil finish. A gas fireplace was installed in the dining room, which provides all the warmth and feel of a wood fire, minus the log hauling and soot. Lighting fixtures were mostly reproductions of the



Well-designed crown molding details of the kitchen cabinetry add a finished touch.

existing ones, though again removing the shiny brass and opting for an oil-rubbed, bronze finish.

The homeowner is an avid gardener, so a greenhouse that opens up into the mudroom was very appealing to him. However, the glass and glazing was so worn that one could barely see through the panes and it leaked terribly. In an attempt to remedy this, Brauchler called several glass companies he had worked with in the past, but they each politely declined taking on the job, mainly because the curved sections of glass would be near impossible to replace if they broke during the process.

"It didn't look all that complicated



Two narrow rooms were combined to make a spacious bedroom.

to us," said Brauchler, so with the homeowner's blessing (and even his help on one of the days) Brauchler and his team disassembled all of the glass panels, cleaned up the metal framework and glass, and then re-assembled everything. They had one casualty, though luckily it was not one of the

curved pieces. "If it seems feasible and possible, we'll try anything to keep a project moving and a client happy ... sure keeps things interesting."

Kira Van Deusen is a designer at Covenant Kitchen & Baths in Westbrook who enjoys writing about home design and remodeling.

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