



A bunk built out of space under the eave ends up giving the room a fun and funky nautical vibe.

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Making Room(s)

Space economy and 1920s charm
commingle at Casino Beach

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Watch any serious hiker organize her pack and prepare yourself for a master class in space saving. You'll see tennis shoes stuffed with batteries and ear buds, sweatshirts rolled tighter than cigars, sleeping bags squeezed into compression sacks, and every last roll of TP squashed flat with its cardboard yanked out. If a few square inches can be freed, decisions abound. Another pair of socks? A paperback? How does empty space best translate into enjoyment on the trail?

Designing the renovation for Tracy and Mark Chase's Cape Elizabeth cottage required similar calculus on the part of project architect Leah Lippmann. "We pretty much begged, borrowed, and stole for the space in the existing structure," she says.

The home is a cute example of classic 1920s bungalow style, but "old cottages are not particularly known for their extra space or storage," says Lippmann. "Things were smaller back then in general. Furniture was smaller. *People*, frankly, were smaller." The Chases planned to use the cottage as a getaway from their primary residence in Lexington, Massachusetts, a place to escape with their children and enjoy the easy to-and-from the water. "We envisioned a seaside home we would enjoy for many years to come," says Tracy. Accommodating a modern family in a vintage structure meant seeking out and reconfiguring every concealed pocket of unused space.

Case in point: The Chases have two teenage daughters, and the ability to host sleepover friends was a must. Lippmann hunted out space for a third bed in the bunk room, initially looking to build out an existing closet but finding the measure just short of twin length. "What there *was*," she says, "was empty space under an eave. So we opened that up and found it gave just enough space to fit a mattress."

The design became a hunt for inches.

With Casino Beach at strolling distance and sandy feet inevitable, the Chases also hoped to fit a shower in what was once a downstairs powder room. Space-wise, it meant moving the sink into the laundry, a former butler's pantry that Lippmann had also opened and repurposed for storage. The decision allowed for a versatile trough sink that never would have fit elsewhere,

as well as the desired shower, tucked snugly in its newly created space. (Showers seemed to demand ongoing spatial consideration. Upstairs, another lacked room for a door, so Fishbone Metal Works in South Portland designed and fabricated a custom shower-curtain rod with a near 60-degree kink.)

The backyard required some creativity with space as well. Around the Chases' home, laws prohibit impervious material from covering more than a certain percentage of a plot's square footage. That is, only part of the land can be built on. (It has to do with rainwater being able to absorb and become groundwater rather than surface runoff.) Rather than finding space, the job became deciding which area/areas to sacrifice in service of a backyard terrace. The Chases are prolific grillers, and with Mark's parents based in nearby Scarborough,



opposite page Though the home has a wealth of style, it also holds tremendous warmth and never loses its lived-in feel.

below The Chases designed a seaside home they hope to enjoy for many years.





left Arches were added to the kitchen during renovation, bringing its aesthetic more into alignment with that of the original structure.

below, left The home is not without a certain eccentricity, but that is precisely what the Chases love about it.

below, right The arched fireplace is new, but Mark and Tracy found the salvaged mantel at Old House Parts Co. in Kennebunk.

opposite page Tracy: “We chose tile throughout that suited the period [of the home’s initial construction].”



charge—in addition to space snatching—was to bring the two disparate interiors together in a way that “made more sense,” restoring an understated class and using materials that, although modern, look back on the period. “That era and style was the home’s life,” says Lippmann. “It had gone through so many changes, but we tried to give it back its spirit as much as possible.”

Tiling played an important role, and kudos is due to Old Port Specialty Tile, which handled most of the work. Classic penny-round subway tiles appear on many of the ground floor’s backsplashes—“They never go out of style,” says Leah—and the front entry features an elegant encaustic pattern—typical of the era—done in a treated concrete.

“We tried to build on the elements that were already in place,” says Lippmann. The original staircase, for instance, needed only “refreshing”—paint, stain, done.

Lastly, *and perhaps most unifying*, oak veneer flooring runs throughout the main level. *This contemporary touch makes for a gentle give-and-take* between the eighties addition and the main structure’s inherited sophistication.

there are frequent family barbecues. “In order to build the terrace, we ended up taking down the garage,” Lippmann says. “That gave us back some of the footprint we needed.” Another good trade. The patio sofa alone would have anyone quickly hanging a Do Not Disturb sign in the vicinity.

The Portland-and-Boothbay-based Knickerbocker Group, where Lippmann practices, is a design-build firm that prides itself on being an in-house organization, able to guide its clients from initial drawings, on through design and construction, and even into property management if needed. “Soup to nuts,” as Lippmann puts it. Serving also as lead interior designer on the Chase property, Lippmann hoped to restore some of the home’s original, turn-of-the-20th-century style, much of which had been muddled by an addition in the 1980s. “There was some butchery involved,” she says, and a significant part of her

Arched walk-throughs in the original hallway were also uncovered and refurbished. Lippmann’s design replicates the arches in the eighties addition—most notably over the kitchen range—for added continuity.

Lastly, and perhaps most unifying, oak veneer flooring runs throughout the main level. This contemporary touch makes for a gentle give-and-take between the eighties addition and the main structure’s inherited sophistication. Engineered wood has the added advantage of warping less, especially so close to the shore. “It’s using materials in a more modern way,” Lippmann says, stressing that the aim was never to flush out one aesthetic for the other, but to achieve equilibrium. This free blending and borrowing of both materials and aesthetic principles from multiple traditions is what makes a home unique. “It’s all about adding character,” she says, “layers and layers of character.” ■





left Frequent entertainers, the Chases needed a large kitchen for guests to gather in and relax while food is cooking. “We love the two island idea that Leah came up with,” Tracy says.

below A sliding barn door conceals a butler’s pantry turned laundry room.

below, right A trough sink with wall fixture for quick post-beach rinsing.



left The Chases loved Lippmann’s vision for the interior—“She has great style,” says Tracy—and eagerly incorporated their own touches. The pulleys over the kitchen islands come from a trip they took to San Francisco.



below Without room for a shower door to open fully, it was time to get creative.

opposite page Incredible tile work by Old Port Specialty Tile runs throughout the home.



below "We love the beach, of course," says Tracy, "but also lots of grilling and big family gatherings."



All this talk with the Chases and Ms. Lippmann about beaches and barbecues had me primed for spring. The coats went back in the closet. And then it snowed. In April. May flowers, where are you?

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