

To her, with love

The living room at the rear of Walter and Carole Ostapchuk's home in East Orleans has vaulted ceilings. The back wall is lined with Palladian-style windows that open the space to light and views of Meetinghouse Pond.

Fiftieth-birthday gift leads to East Orleans home

By Madeleine Bickert / Photography by Steve Vierra

WHEN WALTER OSTAPCHUK DECIDED ON A GIFT FOR HIS WIFE'S FIFTIETH BIRTHDAY, HE DID NOT FORESEE THAT HIS CHOICE WOULD SET OFF A SEQUENCE OF PERMANENT, LIFE-CHANGING EVENTS FOR BOTH OF THEM.

THAT YEAR, HE PROMISED HIS WIFE, CAROLE, THEN WORKING AS A CONNECTICUT SCHOOLTEACHER, A SUMMER ON CAPE COD. BUT THE RENTAL MARKET THAT YEAR WAS TIGHT, AND THEY HAD DIFFICULTY FINDING A GOOD LISTING IN EASTHAM OR WELFLEET, THEIR TRADITIONAL CAPE DESTINATION SPOTS. THEN A REAL ESTATE AGENT TOLD THEM ABOUT AN EAST ORLEANS HOME THAT HAD JUST COME ON THE RENTAL MARKET.

They were pleasantly surprised by the property. While the core of the weathered structure exhibited the traditional Cape saltbox construction, rustic kitchen and knotty pine interior, several ad-hoc expansions over the years had made its overall floor plan surprisingly open. Moreover, the amount of incoming daylight had been enhanced by a recent storm, felling enough trees to open up the view to Meetinghouse Pond from its hilltop vantage point.

During the first few days of their stay, the Ostapchuks also discovered a lot to like about the surrounding community, including the proximity to salt-water boating and clamming, local shops and restaurants and other activities.

Three weeks later, they found themselves making an offer to buy the property, a step they had not anticipated taking. Their offer was accepted. The ensuing years saw them making frequent long-distance commutes between their primary residence in Bristol, Connecticut, and their new Cape vacation home, in which they undertook a series of modest renovations



The granite countertops in the kitchen reflect the natural light streaming in through the windows. The back wall above the kitchen sink is primarily glass instead of above-counter cabinets. Extra storage space is provided in the large kitchen island.

to upgrade the kitchen and deck.

As the 1990s drew to a close and Walter prepared to retire, the burden of maintaining two homes began to wear on the couple, and other factors caused them to reassess their seasonal resident status on Cape Cod.

Then, in 2003, construction began on the lot next door. As they watched their neighbor's new home progress from foundation to framing and then to finish details, they were impressed by both the design and the workmanship. They invited the builder, Everett Boy of REEF, Cape Cod's Home Builder, to visit their property and discuss ideas for renovation.

"We had extensive discussions about remodeling versus raze and replace," Boy recalls. The cost of remodeling often exceeds the value of trying to salvage an older structure, he explains. Moreover, starting with a clean slate affords more design freedom, with the ability to include proper headrooms and incorporate greater spaciousness. "They wanted a structure more substantial and modern in its design, with open spaces and some drama," he says.

Nothing in the house was "plumb, level or square," Walter says. So the decision to tear down quickly emerged as the obvious choice.

For many homeowners, designing a new residence from scratch can be an intimidating process. For the Ostapchuks, it proved worry-free. They reviewed REEF's various house plans and then visited other homes in the area that the builder had constructed. Identifying the floor plans and design features that suited them best, they modeled their home's design on work already completed elsewhere. Carole laughs as she recalls driving by REEF's construction sites so often that she felt like a stalker.

Throughout the process, "the builder never pressured us in any way," she says. And because the construction fees are fixed, based on the homeowners' budget, "you know before the work starts what it will cost you right down to the penny." Moreover, the builder also promised a completion date, with a credit back if the schedule wasn't met.

The L-shaped contemporary house has two floors and and is nearly 4,000 square feet.



Walter and Carole Ostapchuk wanted to make a fresh change from their Connecticut home which they felt had been too dark. So they furnished their East Orleans custom home in a contemporary style, using many windows to provide a bright interior.

Construction began in January 2004 and was completed that October, despite the blustery winter weather. "We were doing this remotely from Connecticut," Walter recalls, praising the builder's flexibility and a meticulous foreman who oversaw each detail.

Today, the stunning L-shaped contemporary Cape sits perched on a corner lot overlooking Meetinghouse Pond. Its two floors encompass just under 4,000 square feet, including four bedrooms and four-and-a-half baths.

From the builder's perspective, the home's most distinctive attributes are that it's scaled appropriately for the lot, is attractive from all angles and incorporates dramatic open spaces and glass. "It lives much bigger than it is," Boy says.

Entering the front door, a cozy office to the right affords a place to close the door and work quietly on a personal computer, with daylight streaming into the elevated windows looking out over the front yard. Directly across the entryway is the formal dining room, with

its long rectangular table and dramatic brass chandelier with coordinated wall sconces. In the front hall, a regal grandfather clock stands as sentry, flanking the door to one of two full bathrooms on the main floor.

The entry hall leads straight to the living room at the rear of the house. Vaulted ceilings and the back wall lined with Palladian-style windows, extending nearly floor to ceiling, maximize the incoming light and water views from the rear of the home.

"Even on a dark, drab January day, we don't need to turn on the lights because of the amount of natural light coming through the windows," Carole says.

The room's contemporary furnishings include a comfortable sectional sofa and plush accent chair with matching ottoman. Encircling the large fireplace, both seating units are upholstered in neutral fabrics. The large wool area rug, which anchors this tall vertical space, is trimmed in the same fabric as the accent chair.

Throughout much of the downstairs, the sheen of the red oak wood floors is interrupted by thick area rugs. The walls are painted a light cream color with white trim, further contributing to the sense of openness and light.

The inspiration for the natural color scheme came from the kitchen's gray and white granite countertops, with rust-colored flecks in the stone. Carole worked with a designer from a leading furniture chain, and together they added colorful accents through bright throw pillows and a few carefully placed accessories.

The homeowners wanted a fresh change from their former Connecticut residence which they felt had been too dark. So they furnished their East Orleans custom home with new pieces, expressing their style preferences for an updated, light and clutter-free interior. Even the window treatments they chose are unpretentious, with wood blinds in some rooms and fabric valances adorning windows in other areas.

Two pairs of stately white columns also contribute to the open feel of the main floor. One set stands in the dining-area entrance and the other bordering the kitchen.

Inside the kitchen, which opens up to the adjacent living room, the gleaming granite countertops reflect the natural light streaming in through the ample windows. The back wall above the kitchen sink is comprised primarily of glass, without the usual heavy presence of above-counter cabinets. Instead, critical storage space is provided in the large kitchen island, which features fifteen drawers, plus a built-in hutch on the opposite wall and a walk-in pantry tucked neatly around the corner.

Situated on the opposite side of the kitchen is a casual dining nook with seating for four around an informal circular table. It's an ideal place for sipping early morning coffee while watching the birds work the nearby feeders outside.

On the opposite end of the main

floor is the master bedroom. Here, too, large windows span the back wall, affording generous views of their section of Pleasant Bay. Sliding glass doors enable the couple to step out in the early morning air and take in the view from the wrap-around deck which spans the entire back of the residence, reaching the opposite side and circling the dining nook. Spacious his-and-her closets and the long, rectangular shape of the master bathroom, compartmentalized into separate bathing and dressing areas, complete this end of the home.



The open floor plan accommodates the Ostapchuk's love of entertaining. Their home frequently accommodates a group of thirty or forty, and they look forward to hosting a gathering of up to eighty friends later this year.

Another of the design features that the Ostapchuks value is the ability to close off the upstairs and live completely on one floor when their children and grandchildren aren't visiting.

There are two separate staircases to the second floor. One is located near the center of the home adjacent to the main entry, and the other is situated off to one side, behind the dining nook. The Ostapchuks reported that their five lively grandchildren, ranging in age from two to five, like to do laps in the house, accompanied by a visiting family dog.

Chasing one another up one set of stairs, they race across the upstairs loft and down the other staircase.

The upstairs loft is open on both sides, with one set of rails affording a bird's-eye view of the comings and goings immediately below in the entryway. The opposite rail offers a perspective directly down into the living room, plus a panoramic view of the pond lying at the bottom of their slope. Keeping the loft open and airy on both sides was one of the design changes that the couple specified in the builder's original plans. A blue sectional sofa situated in the heart of the loft provides a quiet space for reflection when grandchildren aren't visiting.

The home, particularly the upstairs, is built with room for their extended family. The bonus room on the second floor has been converted into what Carole affectionately calls the "dorm." Decorated in a navy blue and white nautical theme, this spacious room houses four twin beds in matching linens plus a crib. It's designed to accommodate their five grandchildren, with the parents' two sleeping rooms located just down the hall. The "dorm's" sailing theme is carried out in the window treatments, area rug, throw pillows and a mobile of sailboats hung above the crib.

The Ostapchuks' satisfaction with their home extends to the surrounding community as well. While they had previously been aware of East Orleans, they had not realized the wealth of nearby activities. For instance, Walter keeps a boat in the back yard to take advantage of the proximity to salt water and Pleasant Bay. "Living here has been one wonderful surprise after another," Carole says.

Now, fully immersed in their community, they are actively working to help other "wash-ashores" make a smooth transition. Walter serves as president of the Nauset Newcomers' Club, helping new residents establish roots, build social networks and become acquainted with all of the amenities that the Cape offers. ♦

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