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Making Space:

The remodeling issue

Plus: Wine country

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By Denise DiFulco / Photographed by Rob Kern



WHILE IT MIGHT BE EASIER TO BUY A NEW DWELLING, MANY PEOPLE PREFER A HOME WITH HISTORY — AS LONG AS IT SUITS THEIR 21ST CENTURY NEEDS. HERE ARE THE STORIES OF SEVERAL HOME OWNERS WHO GAVE THEIR OLD HOUSES MODERN MAKEOVERS.

REMODEL



PROBLEM: Inadequate master bedroom and bath
SOLUTION: Expand to create a master suite

It was love at first sight when Bart Brown laid eyes on his 1920s English Garden Tudor in the Netherwood section of Plainfield. The cozy cottage instantly reminded him of his childhood in England, and he knew he had to have it.

The house needed more than a face-lift to make it livable, but Brown was undaunted. He upgraded the electrical system, installed central air conditioning and remodeled the kitchen. But the biggest problem was the master bedroom and bath, he says.

The master bedroom was tiny and dark with two, 2-foot-wide closets, and the hallway outside was so cramped that Brown was unable to open the bedroom door fully when an opposing door was open. The bathroom was inadequate, not only because it was shared with the rest of the house, but also because of its narrowness.

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Brown began searching for an architect, intending only to add a bay window to his bedroom and perhaps make a slight expansion to the bathroom. But Billy Toth of Alexander Bol Architects and Associates in Berkeley Heights saw even greater potential. He suggested a full master bedroom suite, complete with its own private bath, walk-in closet and fireplace.

“Bart was worried about the addition overpowering the house,” Toth says. But the extension they planned blended seamlessly into both the interior and exterior of the home.

Many careful considerations were made to maintain the home’s integrity and architecture, particularly outdoors. Because Brown was unable to locate slate that matched the texture of the original slate roof, he had his builder, Springhouse Builders of Bridgewater, blend new and old slate on the front of the addition and use all new slate on the back where it was less noticeable. The stone exterior posed a similar problem. In order to find the closest possible matches, Brown ordered

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three different types of stones from a Bridgewater quarry and had workers set aside those that were not similar enough in color and tone to the originals.

While he's thrilled with the space he gained inside, Brown says his favorite part of the project is a portico that lies beyond French doors off the master bedroom. At night he sits on the porch with a glass of wine and some candles and enjoys the view of the landscaped garden out back.

"I could not imagine there was any way to make this space any better," he says. "From the street, the addition looks like it could have been there all along."

