

Bath Math



Adding a dormer and subtracting a double closet yields a compact but luxurious master bath

BY HOWARD PRUDEN

It all started innocently enough. The roof shingles were at the end of their life expectancy. But as often happens, this job of necessity developed into a more ambitious project. My wife, Janice, and I had long dreamed of installing a pair of gable dormers, and this seemed like a good time to do it. After all, we'd have the shingles off already, right?

We needed a second-floor bathroom, but our dream of two dormers wouldn't fit the floor plan. The solution was to build a single large dormer, consolidate the space taken up by a pair of back-to-back closets, and create a new bathroom with the room that we gained. As for the lost closet space, we could replace it with built-ins under the eaves in the bedrooms (floor plans, pp. 88-89).

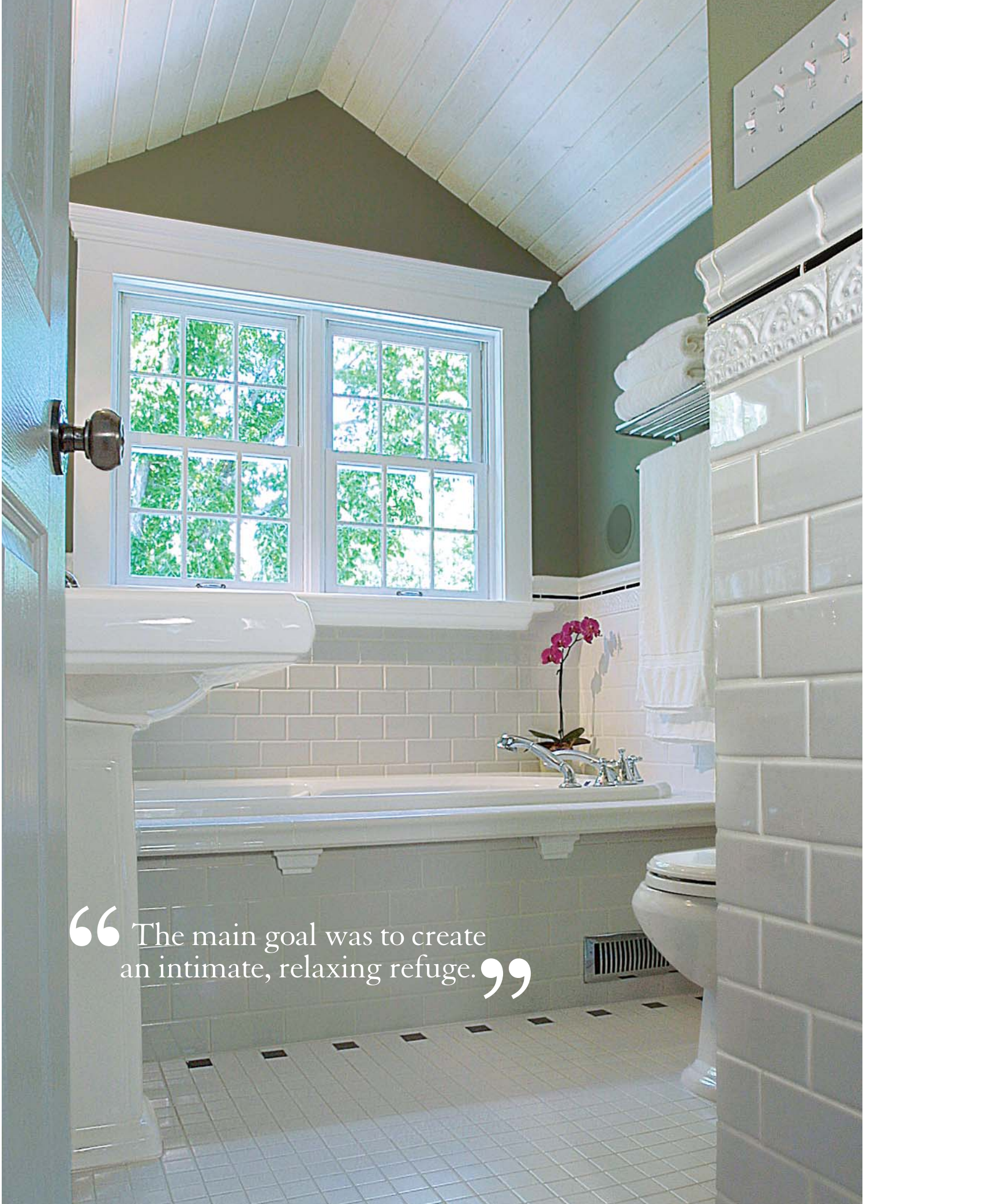
False walls give a dormer good proportion

To help me establish architecturally pleasing proportions, I built a scale model of our existing house from foam-core sheet material. This model enabled me to try out variously sized dormers and achieve the pleasing proportional scale that many remodeled houses lack. As a starting point, we drove around and took pictures of interesting dormers on old houses in Edmonton.

The common thread that our favorite dormers had was the 1:3 proportion with the house: The dormer's width is equal to one-third the width of the house. On our house, the problem with this proportion was that the sidewalls would cut into the existing bedrooms, and the bedrooms were already small enough. To get the right width without



Task lighting is efficient. Sconces flank the medicine cabinet to provide good light for shaving or applying makeup. A spotlight on the wall above the tub makes for shadowless tub-time reading. Photo taken at A on floor plan.

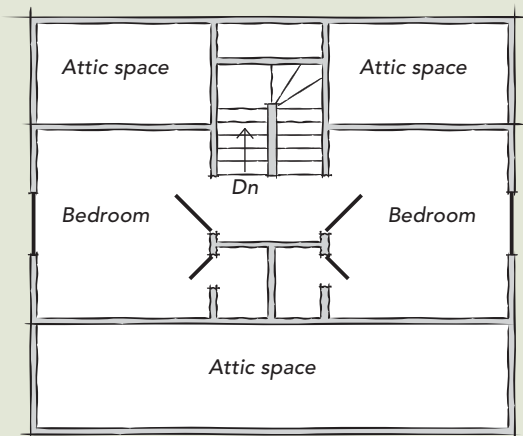


“ The main goal was to create an intimate, relaxing refuge. ”

The dormer is smaller than it looks



BEFORE



As shown on the floor plans, two small closets were sacrificed to make space for the new bathroom. But a dormer was needed to provide headroom. Unfortunately, a dormer sized to match the bathroom would have looked spindly and awkward on the outside of the house. The solution was to build false walls on top of the roof (over the bedrooms) and real walls inside. The photo on the facing page shows interior walls framed. A shed dormer along the back of the house created space in the bedrooms to replace the closets that were annexed by the new master bathroom.

cutting into the bedrooms, I built false walls atop the roof. As explained in the sidebar above, the false outer walls give the illusion of a larger dormer from the street without stealing interior floor space.

Living with an unfinished space improved the final design

The bathroom sat framed and insulated for a year as we ran low on funds. But the hours spent sitting and lying in that framed room helped us to visualize the best location for bathroom fixtures, lighting, storage, and other features.

Because the room is small and the ceiling height short (7½ ft.), we sloped the dormer ceiling to avoid a claustrophobic room. To get enough R-value in the roof, I installed rigid insulation between the 2x8 rafters with an airspace above the insulation.

I even built a plywood version of a mission-style vanity I had seen in *Fine Woodworking* (#132, pp. 45-49). Thanks to this mock-up, I realized that the vanity would be far too big for the room. Instead, we chose a pedestal sink, which gives the airy, open feeling we were after.

Built-in cabinetry complements a smart-looking tile motif

I loved the medicine-cabinet design as soon as I saw it in a magazine, but I wouldn't have been able to look at myself in its mirror had I paid the asking price. So I built one. To the left of the chimney was a perfect space for a built-in linen closet. Adjustable shelves and drawers with full-extension slides house bathroom supplies and cleaning products. The leaf-embossed glass in the door softens the view of our linens.

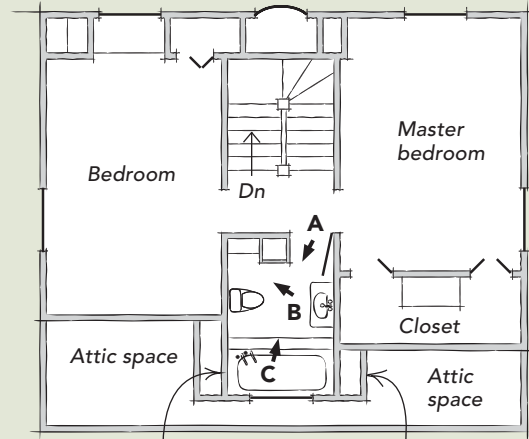
We used white subway tile with an embossed border on the walls and 2-in. mosaic tiles on the floor. The black pencil tile on the walls breaks up the monotony of all the white and complements the black-tile border that gives the floor a definite outline.

Tub, music, and lighting made to order

The main goal with this bathroom was to create an intimate, relaxing refuge. The air-jet tub is everything we imagined. The tub's deck



A built-in cabinet fools the eye. The bottom drawer front mimics multiple smaller drawers and, combined with etched-glass doors, reduces visual weight. Etched glass also masks the cabinet's contents. Photo taken at B on floor plan.



AFTER

Photos taken at lettered positions.

0 2 4 8 ft.

◀ North

Inside walls fit the floor plan. Outside walls give the dormer good proportion.

accommodates candles, flowers, and other spa indulgences while encasing the air-jet motor and a heating duct that is positioned to warm our feet.

The lighting also is an important element; it creates the mood that can make the difference between taking a bath and being transported to a place of total relaxation. Rope lighting behind the crown moldings creates a soft glow that accentuates the texture of the pine ceiling. The effect makes a perfect atmosphere for a relaxing soak.

A halogen spotlight in the wall above the back of the bathtub provides reading light without glare or harsh shadows. And two wall

sconces, while decorative, provide nice lighting for shaving or applying makeup. In-wall speakers round out the spa experience, and there's even a volume-control switch that's reachable from the tub.

We have three different bathing modes: The rope lights are great when the tub's air jets are on. We use the spotlight to soak and read. Last but not least is soaking by candlelight to the sound of Miles Davis. □

Howard Pruden, a fire inspector in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, isn't planning any more roof repairs for a while. Photos by the author, except where noted.



Smart-looking tile design can balance a small space. Without a sloped ceiling, this space would have felt cramped and confining. But the slope creates a strong vertical feel. Horizontal subway tiles in a high wainscot balance the tall proportions of the room. Accent tiles provide contrast and definition. Photo taken at C on floor plan.