

This is an excerpt from the book

UPDATING CLASSIC AMERICA
CAPES

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A Cape for the Generations



ABOVE, The seating area in the hallway leading to the master bedroom is part library, part hallway. This intimate spot is a cozy getaway just down the hall from the family action in the main gathering spaces.

FACING PAGE, To make this ambitious project look modest in size, it was broken up into smaller segments. Each of the segments is similar in form to the original Half Cape.

BACK IN THE 1960s, BILL AND JO HIRED PAUL LANZA, a local builder, to construct a summer place just a short walk from the shore on Cape Cod. It was a classic Half Cape and very modest, with a living room in the front and a tiny galley kitchen, bath, and dining room in the back. In true Cape style, a narrow stairway climbed from the front entry, behind the living room's fireplace and chimney, to a single attic bedroom. The house's storybook scale and ageless detailing set the theme for the young couple's weekends at the beach. Sometime later, a breezeway was built between the house and new garage, and the second floor gained a rear shed dormer, but the place remained otherwise unchanged.

Fast-forward 30 years to find Bill and Jo back at the drawing board, this time working with Paul's son, Joe Lanza. Trained as an architect and as a master carpenter, Joe was charged with transforming the little cottage into a vacation home that would welcome four generations of the family and their assorted friends. The couple wanted four bedrooms for their clan, as well as a large gathering room. Because mealtimes were traditionally family events, the new kitchen would have a greatly expanded role. The challenge was to accomplish all this







Double skylights and windows on three sides bathe the new living room with light. The cabinet above the fireplace conceals a television. Wide-plank flooring was used throughout the house to unify its spaces, new and original.



The windows in the gable end of this house are typical Cape in their style and placement: two double-hungs below and two smaller windows above. The novelty is that they all grace a single bedroom.

doors, and trim—while sharing a gable roof of the same pitch. These similarities unify the house, so that it doesn't appear to be merely a collection of disparate parts.

Spare, crisp white trim was used to outline each component and help set it off from adjacent forms. Corner boards aren't necessary on a shingled house, but they help define this Cape. The wide **frieze board** does double-duty as both trim and the head casing above the windows; this was a matter of necessity, since the traditional low eaves didn't allow room for both.



ABOVE, The prominent location of the kitchen meant that the appliances and cabinets needed to be selected for looks as well as performance. The light-toned maple cabinets contrast with the cherry cabinets of the adjacent island.



LEFT, When does an island qualify as a continent? Two sinks on this extra-large island make it easy to share cooking and clean-up.

frieze board — A horizontal band of trim running under the soffit.



The breezeway between house and garage becomes a pleasant dining room in warm weather.

A Sensible Plan

One of the owners' peeves about the old house was that, with the living room's north-facing windows, the place could seem dreary on winter days. Because the renovated house was going to be used year round, it was important to rework the plan to admit more light to the interior.

Joe began by gutting the inside of the original house to create a large open room with a massive 4-ft. by 12-ft. island at its core. Joe built the island out of cherry and topped it with a concrete counter. The elevated end adds more storage and shields the view of dirty dishes from the new living room. This island alone offers as much counter space as an entire kitchen, and it was fitted with two sinks and two dishwashers. The former living room is now the new dining room. Its unconventional location, just inside the front door, makes sense for this gregarious family because so many of their gatherings happen to take place

How to Grow a House

BEFORE YOU JUMP feet first into a remodeling project, it helps to know the house—and yourself. If you are new to your Cape, you might want to live there a few seasons to get a better idea of the family's needs. The bay window you recently installed may be just where you'd like to add a den. A new wing of bedrooms might seem like an

albatross if the kids are approaching college age. Should the redesign anticipate your decreasing mobility over the years ahead?

It's not easy—and sometimes not even pleasant—to forecast our personal futures. And yet families tend to grow and contract in patterns, and there's certainly some predictability to a

person's physical changes. Architects have seen these scenarios unfold many times, and they can help you decide in which ways your house should grow. We all tend to think of our situations as unique, but a design professional may be able to spare you the fate of adding on rooms that will never see much use.



So much of family life takes place around the dining table. This one is prominently situated in front of the nearby fireplace.

around the dining table. The room's generous dimensions allow everyone to sit together at Thanksgiving and other seasonal celebrations. The existing fireplace adds some formality to the space.

The new living room extends to the south. With its vaulted ceiling, two skylights, and windows on three sides, this room now lets in an abundance of daylight in all seasons. There is no air-conditioning, but paddle fans and good cross-ventilation make the house comfortable even on the warmest summer days. The frame-and-panel treatment above the fireplace conceals a cabinet for the television set and matches the wall detail seen above the dining room's fireplace. The wide-plank pine

floors are new, but hearken back to the traditional flooring that would be found in an old Cape.

A hallway leads off the west side of the house, extending to the master bedroom. Along the way, it widens out to create a small sitting area that doubles as a library, with built-in bookcases and a comfy seat. In this location, the bench can serve as a retreat without the user feeling shut off from the rest of the house. Above the seat and bookcases is what appears to be a high window. In fact, this is an attic access door disguised as a window, with mirrored glazing (see the photo on p. 138).

Jo points out that a connecting door between the master bedroom and adjoining guest bedroom allows

With books behind and a view beyond, this sheltered spot is a natural place for quiet reading or a nap.



The massive kitchen island features cherry cabinets and a concrete countertop.



using the smaller room as either a nursery for a visiting grandchild or as a study. The master bedroom occupies its own little Cape at the end of the run and features a traditional window pattern on the gable wall. Collar ties above permit the ceiling to follow the underside of the rafters and to support light fixtures.

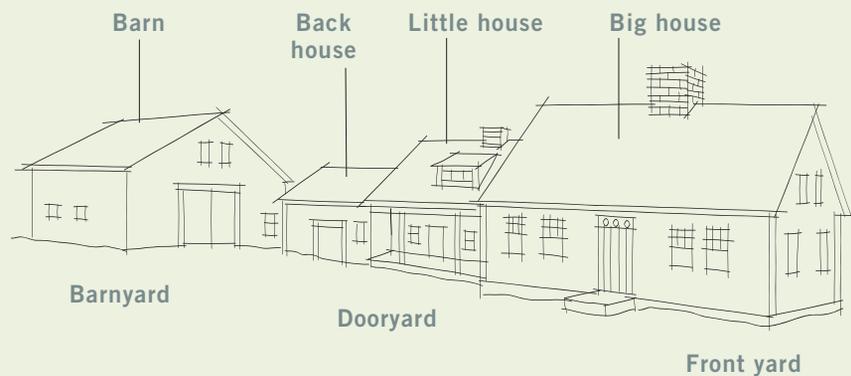
Chimneys of Legend

Chimneys are integral to our notion of what a traditional house should look like. And the bigger the house, the more chimneys we tend to think it should have. In line with that reasoning, this home is now crowned by four. There's one for the new fireplace in the living room,

The Run-On House

INSTEAD OF DESIGNING a single large addition that runs the risk of overwhelming or obliterating your Cape, it can help to visualize your home as an assemblage of distinct linking spaces. A good example is the interconnected farm buildings peculiar to colonial New England.

“Big house, little house, back house, barn,” goes a traditional phrase that describes these distinctive structures. Each of the farm’s four main sections had its purpose, its own degree of formality and a particular orientation to the property. Leaving the barn, you first went through the back house, where you



could wash up before entering the kitchen in the little house. From the other direction, visitors could approach the main farmhouse (the big house) without walking through the barnyard.

The result is a house with a dynamic form—a complex of

shapes that are visually more interesting than one large structure or several identical parts in a straight line. You can plan your house to have this appearance from the start, with an addition that looks as though it served the main house.

another for the original fireplace, and a third serving the furnace flue. The fourth chimney, above the master bedroom roof, is pure romance—Joe added it to help this section of the addition mirror the original Half Cape.

The visible tops of the chimneys look traditional but are in fact plywood boxes surrounding metal flues. Textured fiberglass was layered onto the plywood to mimic stucco and then painted white with a distinctive black “Tory stripe” that centuries ago marked the houses of New England loyalists.

Bill and Jo are happy with the transformation of their little beach getaway into a full-time house. For Joe, as well, the project clearly was something special. After the construction was completed, Joe was married in the house that he and his father had built.