

# Fit for Generations to Come



Homeowners John and Molly look on as daughter Caroline, 4, takes a spin around the new breakfast room, where natural light pours through banks of custom arched windows.



#### INSIDE THE BUILD

##### Rock solid

While the current homeowners loved the rocky ledge surrounding the house, to make way for the new garage, some of it had to go. To avoid blasting, TOH home builder Charlie Silva chipped away at the granite using an excavator equipped with a hydraulic hammer—not easy. “It was the hardest ledge you could possibly hit,” he says. Once enough rock was removed, the crew inserted rebar into the remaining ledge, using it to stabilize the foundation on that side of the garage.



**ABOVE:** Distinctive Shingle-style elements include the broad roof slope and the shingle siding with diamond-shaped details. Sweeping stone steps and a new front porch give the front door prominence, while a new garage entry accommodates everyday comings and goings.

**THESE PAGES**  
ROOF SHINGLES: GAF  
TRIM: AZEK  
WINDOWS: Marvin  
SIDING SHINGLES: Maibec  
SOD: Sodco

Built in 1891, the gracious Shingle-style house had welcomed more than a century of family gatherings. Revived and improved during a nine-month renovation documented by TOH TV, it stands ready for its current owners to add their own chapter to its history

By **Jill Connors** ■ Photography by **Jared Kuzia** ■ Styled by **Caroline Woodward**



INSIDE THE BUILD

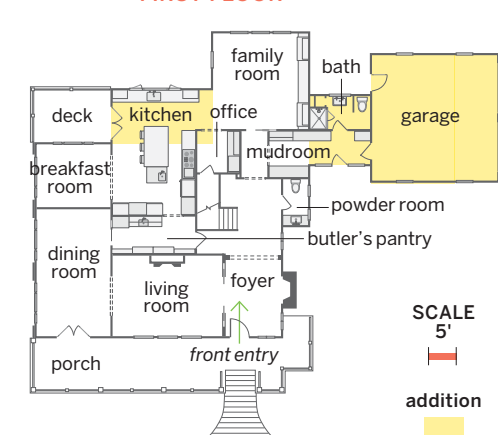
**Pushing the envelope**  
To gain space in the kitchen—formerly the dining room—and connect it to the new family room, the crew bumped out the back wall to annex a deck built over the house's granite foundation piers. This required new framing, which they tied into the newly leveled floor. To protect the water supply for the sink from freezing, Charlie insulated underneath the floor with foam and added supplemental baseboard heat and a thermostat control. “It’s one of those things a lot of people don’t even think of,” he says, “but it’s got to be done.”



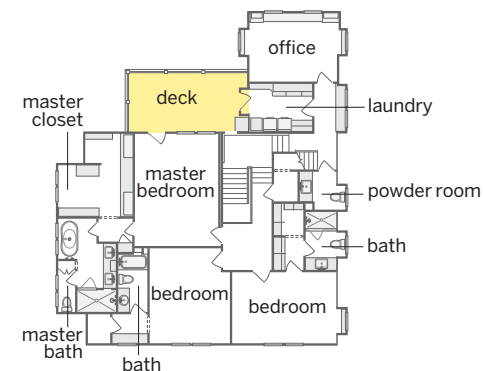
## Floor plans

An expanded kitchen, a new mudroom, and a new bath added 363 square feet of living space to the house, which now has four bedrooms, five full bathrooms, and two half baths. A new garage offers a casual entry. The former kitchen became a family room; the dining room, the kitchen; and a three-season porch, the new dining room. The second floor got more baths and closets; the third floor, a playroom and guest suite.

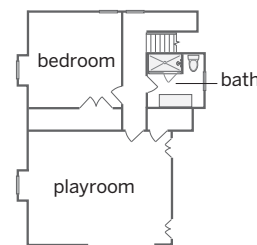
### FIRST FLOOR



### SECOND FLOOR



### THIRD FLOOR



**With party guests clustered** around the kitchen island and their young daughter twirling from room to room in a princess costume, Molly and John pause to take in the scene. “We love this house,” Molly says of the rambling, three-story Shingle-style home they bought in 2018 and brought back to life with the help of *TOH* home builder Charlie Silva, his crew, and a handful of talented local craftsmen. “As soon as we saw it, we thought, ‘This is a house that could get us to leave Boston,’” she says.

Dressed in ashen cedar shingles, the once stately house had been built as a summer home, used by generations of families escaping to the seaside town now known as Manchester-by-the Sea, just 30 miles from the couple’s apartment in the city. It was this legacy as a gathering spot that resonated with John. “We realized immediately we could have everyone here,” he says, envisioning the house’s potential as a welcoming destination for the couple’s parents, siblings, nieces, nephews, and friends.

Before that could happen, though, there was

much work to be done. Built in 1891, the house had seen better days. Its exterior was worn and in need of repair, and its interior was stuck in the last century. There was lead paint throughout, and some heating pipes and flooring contained asbestos. An ungainly garage addition, added in front in the 1970s, upstaged the formal entry.

The first step in making the house work for Molly and John was to restructure its floor plan for contemporary living. “We tried to overlay a modern-living sequence of rooms on the existing floor plan to give Molly and John the functionality they need, while keeping the spirit of the old house,” says architect Thad Siemasko of SV Design, who, along with project architect Tobin Shulman and interior designer Shelby Littlefield, brought the project to fruition. Much of what they removed, including the garage and a spiral staircase in the old kitchen, were remnants of previous renovations.

Keeping the house’s Shingle-style spirit alive guided their work on the front of the structure. Today, stone steps with sweeping masonry sides lead

up to a new front porch that extends the length of the facade and wraps the corner. The original front door has been restored, and the remodeled entry foyer retains some 19th-century architectural elements, including a fireplace and diamond-paned windows. “It was a no-brainer to keep and preserve the leaded-glass windows in the front entry,” says Molly. “We love those details.” The house’s original stairway was painstakingly preserved and renewed, the treads faux-painted to match the new white oak floors installed to correct the uneven, damaged flooring throughout the house.

Also in need of attention was an original set of pocket doors leading from the entry to the living room. One slid flawlessly, but the other wouldn’t budge. With the plaster removed from the wall on one side, *TOH* general contractor Tom Silva was able to access the door pocket from above to find the door had come loose from the iron wheels of its glide hardware. A few replacement screws had the door sliding again in no time.

The living room, with a rebuilt fireplace centered

**ABOVE LEFT:** The new kitchen’s center island serves as a gathering spot and prep zone, with a marble-look porcelain top and a butcher-block extension. The induction cooktop and teppanyaki (a hibachi-style grill) are backed with an easy-to-clean porcelain backsplash that matches the vent hood.

**ABOVE:** The full bath off the mudroom has a wall-hung sink with plenty of elbow room, and a shower for rinsing off after yardwork or visits to the beach.

**THESE PAGES**  
KITCHEN PENDANT LIGHTS: **Visual Comfort**  
KITCHEN CABINETRY: **Premier Custom Built**  
PORCELAIN COUNTERTOP, BACKSPLASH, HOOD COVER: **Crossville**  
CABINET HARDWARE: **Armac Martin**  
KITCHEN AND BATH SINKS: **Kohler**  
BUTCHER BLOCK: **Grothouse**  
TOEKICK AND CABINET LIGHTING: **Häfele**  
INTERIOR DOORS: **Baird Brothers Fine Hardwoods**

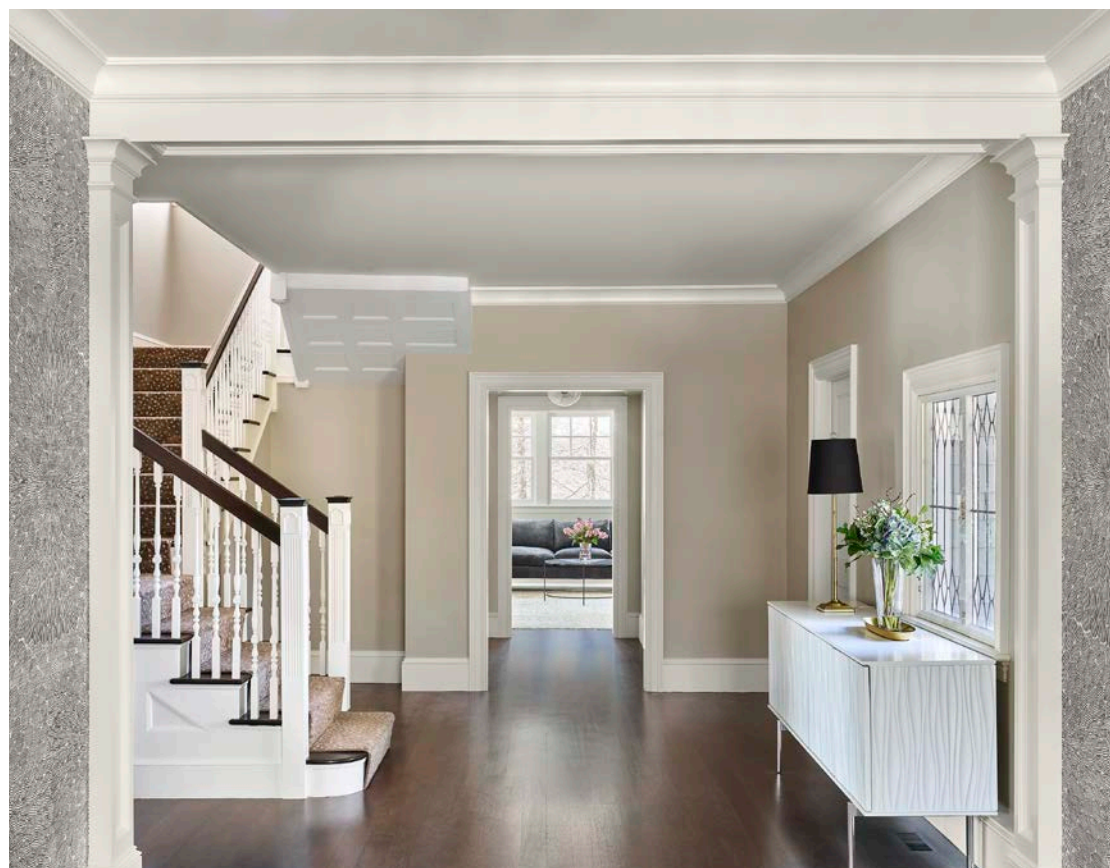
FLOOR PLANS: IAN WOPPOLE



#### INSIDE THE BUILD

#### Baluster rescue

Of the more than 100 turned balusters on the original staircase, about a dozen needed repair. Master refinisher Wayne Towle removed the broken ones, numbering the parts to keep sections matched. He stripped off the paint, then glued the broken halves together, using a jig to stabilize them. When the glue was dry, he filled the cracks with sandable epoxy putty. Then, to ensure a long-lasting repair, he added reinforcement: Using a thin-kerf backsaw, he cut through the repair to make a clean break, and using a drill press, centered a hole in each cut end equal to half the length of a piece of  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch dowel. He glued the dowel into one end, slid the two sections together, and returned the baluster to the jig to dry before reinstallation.



on its interior wall, still serves as a formal entertaining area. It leads into a new dining room in what used to be a three-season porch. Who needs a dining room in this day and age? On this, the homeowners never wavered. “We always knew we wanted a formal dining room for family gatherings and dinners with friends,” says Molly. The team decided that the central location of the old dining room was better suited to a new kitchen. Partitioning off a section of it as a butler’s pantry created a direct, storage-filled route between the new kitchen and dining room.

To turn the old sunporch into a comfortable dining room, the crew rebuilt the exterior walls and replaced the old floor framing with dead-straight engineered-wood I-joists and tongue-and-groove panels for a level, squeak-free subfloor. The new room has French doors to the front porch and arched floor-to-ceiling windows facing the side yard to the southwest, capturing the natural light that is particularly important to California-native Molly. Topping off the design is a focal-point tray ceiling finished in rich Venetian plaster that adds a shimmering effect to the room.

With the front of the house regaining its grand 19th-century presence, a new garage and mudroom addition on the side provides a convenient, on-grade entry. Mudroom cabinets and benches offer a drop zone for keys, backpacks, shoes, and coats, with an adjacent full bath, complete with a shower for rinsing off after gardening or visiting the beach. The mudroom opens into a barrel-ceilinged hallway that connects the front entry with the family room, formerly the kitchen.

The new 15-by-23-foot kitchen is now located off that family room. Bumping out the back wall by 6 feet gained space for a wide connection to the family room as well as a window wall of cabinetry and a sink with a view of the backyard. The kitchen’s features, including the cheery blue-green of the cabinets, the vintage gleam of brass hardware, and the marble-like porcelain countertops, vent hood, and backsplash, reflect Molly and John’s desire for a kitchen with timeless appeal. “Molly has an eye for traditional style elements, but she wanted color and functionality specific to her family,” says kitchen designer Michele Kelly. The 9-foot-long center island’s countertop was left uninterrupted by a cooktop or sink to enable Molly and Caroline to roll out cookie dough side by side, and to serve as a gathering spot during parties. At the far end, a beverage sink is set into a butcher-block extension, the wood protected with a mineral-oil finish. “I was

**TOP LEFT:** In the living room, deep crown molding replaced a thin existing trim, and faux beams were added to dress up the ceiling. The room’s original wood-burning fireplace was replaced with a new gas-fueled unit with a sleek limestone surround framed with wood.

**BOTTOM LEFT:** The view from inside the front door takes in the original stairway, and beyond it, the hallway to the family room. Pilasters were added as a nod to earlier times and as an end point for new wallpaper. The leaded-glass windows to the right and the stairway to the left are original.

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** In the dining room, Venetian plaster highlights a tray ceiling created to make room for waste lines above. Faux-finish expert Maurizio Falcone troweled on the mix of limestone, powdered marble, and pigment, then waxed and buffed it to a stone-like finish. The table was designed by SV Design and built by Sweenor Builders.

#### THESE PAGES

STORM WINDOW INSERTS:  
Indow  
FOYER WALLPAPER:  
Schumacher  
STAIR RUNNER: Stark  
LIVING ROOM FIREPLACE  
AND CEILING TRIM:  
MF Woodworking  
LIVING ROOM PAINT COLOR  
(WALLS): Benjamin Moore’s  
Revere Pewter  
FOYER PAINT COLOR  
(WALLS): Benjamin Moore’s  
Temporal Spirit  
DINING ROOM WALL  
COVERING:  
Phillip Jeffries  
DINING ROOM CHANDELIERS:  
Circa Lighting  
WINDOWS AND PATIO  
DOORS: Marvin  
VENETIAN PLASTER:  
Pietra Viva  
ROOM STYLING:  
Circle Furniture



RIGHT: The master bedroom includes a door to an outdoor deck, which connects to a second-floor laundry room that is also accessible from the hallway. All the bedrooms are carpeted for comfort.

BOTTOM LEFT: The master bathroom features a sculptural soaking tub with a surprising ceiling-mount tub filler.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Faux-leather-clad vanity cabinets, a roomy marble-tiled shower, and a separate water closet add function and a luxurious look in the master bath.

OPPOSITE: A cathedral ceiling transformed a third-floor bedroom into a spacious playroom. The antique corner bench, originally built into the entry foyer, found a new home here.



afraid to cut on it at first,” says Molly. “But now it’s my favorite thing ever.” Refrigerator, freezer, and dishwasher are all concealed with panels, and a breakfast station keeps a coffeemaker, a toaster, and a microwave hidden behind cabinet doors.

The second floor was reconfigured to create bedrooms with en suite baths, an office for John, and ample closet space, something lacking in 19th-century houses. On the third floor, the crew added a new ridge beam to form a cathedral ceiling in daughter Caroline’s bright, spacious playroom. “I can just see Caroline and her five cousins having a sleepover there,” Molly says.

Meanwhile, the first-floor kitchen bumpout provided an unexpected opportunity to add a deck off the master bedroom above, offering John a welcome-the-outdoors moment every morning. For Molly, the deck inspired a different idea: She asked that a French door be added to allow access to it from the nearby laundry room so she could dry freshly washed clothes in the sun. “That’s how my grandma always did it,” she says.

For more state-of-the-art comfort, the homeowners turned to *TOH* plumbing and heating expert Richard Trethewey, who suggested an entirely new HVAC system of radiant floor heating, with a high-efficiency condensing boiler and micro-zones allowing each room to be set at its own precise level of comfort. Improved insulation, new windows, and a new electrical system that incorporates six solar panels and an energy-use monitor all bring this grand old house solidly into the 21st century.

“There were people early on who thought we should tear down the house,” says John. “But we looked at how to make this the most efficient 1890s house possible.”

The result is a gracious home ready for another 130 years, with all-new systems and gathering spaces waiting to be enjoyed. “When we first looked into the history of the house, we loved that every generation that has lived here made it a welcoming home and a place to gather for their friends and family,” says John. “We want to fill the house in the same way.” ■



#### INSIDE THE BUILD

##### A loftier space

The secret to the ceiling vault in the third-floor playroom: a new and improved ridge beam. The 368-square-foot space had an 8-foot ceiling, which, once gutted, revealed a full height of 13 feet. Inspired, the homeowners requested a cathedral ceiling, and Charlie’s crew obliged, building supports for each rafter in order to remove horizontal collar ties and a series of trusses. Then they freed the original 2-by-10 ridge beam and slid it out of a hole cut in the gable end. The same crane that took it away hoisted up three 18-inch, 20-foot LVLs one by one. Each was slid into place, the three were screwed together and secured to the rafters with brackets, and posts were run at the gable ends down to a beam in the floor to transfer the load. “Voilà!” Charlie says. “Cathedral ceiling.”

##### WATCH AND LEARN

See how the renovation of the Cape Ann project took shape at [thisoldhouse.com/cape-ann-house](https://thisoldhouse.com/cape-ann-house)