

Best Face Forward

Relocating the garage and adding a new front porch helps restore an 1891 home's signature Shingle style

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ABOVE: A computer rendering shows the changes planned for the 1891 Shingle-style house, including a new front porch with sweeping stone entry steps. With the existing garage removed, a new one will be built farther back, on the side of the house.

BEFORE: A 1970s garage addition obstructed the home's facade, and the garage interior was moldy and damp.

PHOTO: JOHN TOMLIN



THERE WAS A LOT TO LOVE about the first—and only—house that the couple looked at in Manchester-by-the-Sea, a 17th-century fishing village-turned-summer community on Cape Ann, MA. John was captivated mostly by the 1891 Shingle-style home's elegance. "We walked through the front door and were taken back in time by the leaded glass, intricately carved balusters on the staircase, and dark hardwood floors," he says. It was the coziness of the well-laid-out rooms, on the other hand, that attracted his wife, Molly. "The way the house is positioned, warm light just pours in," she says.

But there was one glaring problem with the house, the latest project being documented as part of *TOH*'s 41st television season. The garage, a 1970s addition, jutted out at an angle from the front of the house, obscuring the home's gracious architectural character. "That double-wide garage door just overwhelmed the whole house," says John.

Not to mention its impracticality. "I kept thinking about carrying in groceries," says Molly. "To get to the kitchen from the garage, you had to go outside, up thirteen steps, then down the long front hall. That wasn't going to work for us, especially with our three-year-old, Caroline."

But while walking the property with a Realtor, John discovered a curb cut along the road and an old driveway that ran to the back of the house. "We



TOP: Four arched windows, including this one facing the back of the property, will fill the breakfast room with light. Here, Charlie Silva (left), Tom Silva (center), and Kevin O'Connor join forces to lift the large unit into place.

ABOVE: Tom and Charlie apply a self-sealing waterproof membrane to form a weathertight pan before installing the breakfast room window.

Project Overview

THE HOMEOWNERS

John and Molly and their daughter, Caroline, 3.

THE HOUSE

An 1891, 4,628-square-foot Shingle style in Manchester-by-the-Sea, MA, on a 1½-acre lot.

WHY THEY CHOSE IT

The couple were charmed by the home and the town, which is close enough for both to commute to their jobs in Boston.

THE RENO PLAN

Create a formal drive-up entry by adding a new front porch and stone steps; build a new garage with direct access to a side mudroom; move the kitchen to a more central location and modernize it; reconfigure four second-floor bedrooms into three, each with a dedicated bath and walk-in closet; alter roof framing for more third-floor head space; add a modern HVAC system with heat pumps for heating and cooling, radiant floor heat, and a high-efficiency boiler.

TIMELINE

Purchased May 2018; work begun July 2019; move-in expected June 2020.

SCOPE OF WORK

Strip off old shingles and install new with decorative diamond accents; demo existing front-facing garage and porch and build new; refresh gravel on front driveway and create a new one on the side of the house; level floors; reconfigure and rebuild interior walls; perform lead and asbestos abatement on second floor; install new baths and remodel existing.

quickly envisioned it as the new driveway, leading to a new garage,” he says.

Relocating the garage would be the most visible part of a renovation that would include a new, more centrally located kitchen and a rearranged second floor with more bathrooms, as well as new HVAC systems and improved insulation, siding, doors, and windows.

Demolishing the old garage and relocating the new one to the side of the property not only unmasked the home’s Shingle-style facade, but changed the traffic flow into the house. “For a modern New England family, coming into the center of a house through a garage has huge advantages, especially in the winter,” says project architect Tobin Shulman. The new garage will connect to the house via a tile-floored mudroom with benches and cubbies. Meanwhile, the house’s formal front entry will be dressed up with a grand bluestone-and-granite stair leading from a new circular drive to the rebuilt front porch.

The other major change to the first floor will be to relocate the kitchen, which had been sequestered in a back corner—a vestige of an earlier time when a hired cook toiled behind the scenes—to a more central location. “The idea is to get the kitchen involved in the heart of the home,” Shulman says. The plan positions the new kitchen between the family room on one side and a breakfast room on the other.

The second floor will also get an update. “The house was built with four large bedrooms, small closets, and a minimum number of bathrooms,” says Shulman. The new plan reduces the number of second-floor bedrooms by one but gives each of the remaining three its own bath and a large closet. The master suite includes a walk-in closet with built-in storage. There’s also an office for John and a laundry room.

After almost 130 years, the house’s wood floors have sagged in some areas, and the walls are uneven and not as true as they once had been. That’s part of an old house’s charm, of course, but the imperfect surfaces are less than ideal for hanging doors and setting cabinets.

To correct them, *TOH* home builder Charlie Silva takes a tried-and-true approach. “If the floors are all over the place, you have to pick a reference point—a place to begin—and work from there.” The front-door threshold is usually a good starting point, he says. “It’s a given that can’t be easily changed.”

Charlie and crew are adding posts in the basement and sistering joists to strengthen and even out the floors as well as make them less bouncy. Perfectly level is not always possible, so perfectly flat is the goal, which is of more concern in some areas than others.



ABOVE: *TOH* host Kevin O’Connor, master electrician Heath Eastman (on the right), and George Lane of Eaton & Eastman Electric pull cable from spools for the house’s electrical service. The cables will be buried in a trench from the house to the street hookup.



LEFT: *TOH* mason Mark McCullough works with his crew on the front entry stairs. Granite risers and treads will complement the more rustic stone around it.

“Ideally, the kitchen floor has to be level,” Charlie says. “It’s important for setting base cabinets and counters and installing appliances.”

Some of the house’s exterior walls will need to be reframed with new studs, headers, and jacks fastened alongside the existing lumber. “Furring out an original 2×4 wall with new 2×6s allows for an extra two inches of insulation,” says *TOH* general contractor Tom Silva. “Plus, the new wider framing makes a wall that is flatter, straighter, and stronger.”

THESE PAGES
WINDOWS: Marvin
ROOFING: GAF
TRIM: AZEK
ELECTRICAL PANEL: Schneider Electric



Once the walls and ceilings are covered with blueboard and plaster, none of the new reinforced framing will be visible, which sometimes makes the extra expense a hard sell to clients.

“I always tell people to pay attention to and spend more on what they don’t see—framing, insulation, heating, etc.,” says Tom. “That way, what they do see—the finished surfaces—will last longer and perform better.” It means floors that don’t creak, nails that don’t pop, and doors that swing freely and don’t bind in their jambs or scrape the floor in a couple of years. “Pay now or pay later,” is how Tom puts it.

Also hidden from sight are the smart practices being put to work in the home’s up-to-date plumbing and heating systems. These include the use of sound-deadening cast-iron waste lines, instead of PVC pipe, to lessen the noise from flushing toilets and draining tubs, as well as the addition of radiant tubes to the mudroom ceiling to ensure adequate heat despite the large number of windows. The entire HVAC system—including heat pumps and air handlers to cool the home, and a gas-fired condensing boiler to make hot water for the radiant heat—is highly efficient, says *TOH* plumbing and heating expert Richard Trethewey. Each room will have its own zone that adjusts based on the number of windows, solar gain, insulation levels, and even the type of flooring. What this means is that the house will be consistently comfortable, while saving a lot of energy. “There’s a best way to do things,” Richard says, “and that’s what we’re giving John and Molly.” ■

The *TOH* team—host Kevin O’Connor, landscape contractor Jenn Nawada, master carpenter Norm Abram, general contractor Tom Silva, and plumbing and heating expert Richard Trethewey—bring their expertise to the project.

PHOTO: JOHN TOMLIN

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Kevin O’Connor

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