DESIGN & BUILD: Polhemus Savery DaSilva

Cranberry Cottage Charm

An antique Chatham home enters a new phase in life.

By Ann Luongo
Photography by Brian Vanden Brink

The post-and-beam, which divided the DaSilva's previous one-room classical temple, was added on to the home along with additional living space, bulking the home's footprint from 1,400 square feet to a little more than 2,000 square feet total.

THE CRANBERRY COTTAGE, one of the oldest homes in North Chatham, built in 1790, exudes an undeniable charm—the kind that is earned in part from surviving more than two centuries of unpredictable New England weather.

Dream location

It was exactly this antique charm that caught the eye of its current owner, who purchased the home in October, 1998. "I spent summers in Chatham for as long as I can remember," the homeowner says. "As a kid, I spent all my time in the Old Village area, never wandering farther than the fish pier or Stage Harbor —basically as far as my legs, or possibly my cousin's bike, could take me." He adds, "I always knew I wanted to own a home in Chatham, so when I returned from London to work in Boston, I spent my weekends looking for a home around the area behind the lighthouse. One day, I hiked down Old Harbor Road and wandered around all the little lanes and dead-end streets, and I was immediately taken with the solitude and views of the area. I called my broker and said that North Chatham was my new spot." Surprised, but not deterred, his broker immediately drove him to the Cranberry Lane cottage and he was sold.

Above and left: Polhemus Savery DaSilva retained the quaint charm of an18th-century saltbox while incorporating more living space and updated amenities for modern-day living.

The view from the kitchen into the living room highlights the hidden beams that were uncovered during the renovation.

Finding an architect-builder

Even though the home had charm in spades, the landscape was overgrown and the interiors dark. The home had gone through a number of small changes from when he had bought it as a bachelor. "Now with a wife and four children," says the homeowner, "we wanted to preserve the home for them (and their eventual kids)." That meant installing new windows, floor joists, insulation (the old insulation was scanned) and adding heat and central air-conditioning and more living space, including a finished basement, mudroom entryway, porch and new master bathroom.

The homeowners enlisted the services of Polhemus Savery DaSilva Architects Builders (PSD), an integrated architecture and construction firm on Cape Cod, which served as both the architect and general contractor for this special project. "The homeowners came to us and had seen our work elsewhere," says John DaSilva, design principal for PSD. "We're a craft-oriented firm, using highly trained craftsmen, comparable to the best restoration firms anywhere."

Basement upgrade

DaSilva, like the homeowner, could see the home's original charm. "It was in pretty good shape," DaSilva explains, but, "the homeowners had specific needs." Because one of their requirements was for more living space, the home was lifted in order to put in a new, full foundation and a finished basement, where there was once only a dirt crawlspace. The basement's nine-foot-high ceiling runs the entire length of the home's footprint, "which is a huge bonus," says the homeowner. A new mudroom with storage closets, cubbies and plenty of windows was designed to tie seamlessly into the existing style of the home and now provides access to the basement.

Left: The home's antique charm is on full display in the cozy living room with the original beams now exposed. Above: A new bath was added onto the master bedroom; the old bath was then converted into a closet.

Hidden treasure

While working on a small kitchen and dining room project here eight years earlier, it was discovered when replacing and re-plastering the ceiling in the kitchen that the home still had all the original hand-hewn ceiling beams. Polhemus Savery DaSilva exposed the beams throughout the first floor. "It added authenticity and charm and gave us more headroom," explains the homeowner. "The beams had been hidden all the years I had owned the home!"

Outer beauty

Outside, Polhemus Savery DaSilva added a covered porch. "I was pleased that the owners were interested in the porch/pavilion," DaSilva says. "It's a special little classical 'temple,' facing the beautiful and private landscape. It is a nice place to spend outdoor time—a classic and ideal Cape Cod setting. The mudroom is now adjacent to the main entrance. The driveway loads right up to it around a big, beautiful old tree. It really feels street, like a true Cape Cod cottage."

The historic home boasts close to 1,000 square feet of living space (including the covered porch) —a huge leap from its original 1,400 square feet—and the homeowners couldn't be happier. They credit the hard work, creativity and dedication of Polhemus Savery DaSilva for creating this dream home.

"Working with PSD was a pleasure," the owner says. "Their real-time website access, responsiveness and creativity to solve unforeseen problems were fantastic. What we wanted, foremost, was to retain the charm of the cottage but with modern amenities. They wrapped a 2014 shell around a 200-year-old home, replacing old with new."

Acting as the main entryway and access point to the newly finished basement, the mudroom is a multifunctional space with ample storage.

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