



Summer Retreat

Architectural Design in Orleans creates a lake front getaway

BY LAUREL KORNHISER • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RANDALL PERRY

Because prime home sites are becoming increasingly scarce on Cape Cod, more people choose lots with homes on them, intending to renovate what's there or demolish the original structure and rebuild. Norm and Polly, whose primary home is in Pennsylvania, started with the first intention but ended up following through on the second.

Norm had known Cape Cod as a vacation spot all his life, regularly visiting the lower Cape area with his parents, who were from New Bedford. Originally from the

South, Polly came to know Cape Cod through Norm. They eventually fell in love with a pond in the area where they rented a cottage. Renting gave the couple a taste of what was possible, but they knew they wanted a more permanent relationship with the place. While Norm fished from their dinghy, the *Lou Tess*, Polly daydreamed about the properties rimming the water. Her dreams eventually focused on one side of the pond—the side that soaked up the southern sun; while scouring real estate ads one day, she spotted a fishing cottage on that sunny side.

The drawback? The cottage was a mess. "You felt if you leaned against a wall, it would cave in," Polly jokes. The place had a campy feeling, reinforced by small bedrooms, a boxed-in kitchen, and low ceilings. The bathroom ceiling in particular had a pronounced slant. "Though everything was wrong, I liked the layout," Polly explains. "The living room and dining room faced the lake. I thought we could do minor renovations."

When Norm came home that evening, discouraged from a bad day of fishing, Polly greeted him by saying, "You know I've been thinking..."

Above: Architectural Design of Orleans designed a casual cottage for Polly and Norm, (right) who retreat to Cape Cod all year long to fish, read, and get in touch with their serene surroundings.





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Left: Built on the original footprint of the former fishing cottage, the new home offers an open floor plan. The great room has dramatic floor to ceiling views out to the pond.

Above: From the sun-drenched deck, Norm and Polly drink in the water views. A sun porch off of the great room is the perfect place to read the Sunday papers over morning coffee.

She brought Norm to see the cottage, and they bought it on the spot. Although the selling price was reasonable, they consulted Architectural Design Incorporated (AD) in Orleans and discovered how expensive renovation could be. John Ingwersen of AD offered to do two schemes: one would be a renovation plan, and the other was a new home designed by AD's Peter Haig. Surprisingly, the new home plan cost only ten percent more than renovating the original. Ingwersen explains, the original house was not only poorly constructed, it didn't have the spatial qualities hoped for, and the desired improvements were only the tip of a rebuilding iceberg. Reworking a wall, he warns, can entail replacing windows, rewiring, even reshingling. While the homeowners may save some on materials by renovating, higher labor costs can offset any gain.

The couple was convinced by the architectural firm's thinking and gave the go ahead on the new home plan. Norm recalls, "We left here early one September day, and the house was gone twelve hours later—it was a hole in the ground." Over the next year the couple maintained their busy schedules outside of Philadelphia while Architectural Design kept them abreast of their new

home's construction via pictures and faxes.

While the couple's Pennsylvania home is formally decorated, Norm and Polly sought cozy simplicity for their Cape home. The new place would serve as a base for Norm's fishing and as a comfortable nook to accommodate Polly's love of reading. Ingwersen says, "They wanted it to be cottage-like. They didn't want an architectural statement; they were very clear about that. They wanted it like the rambling old house."

Norm says the objective was "to be a good neighbor and have the house look like it had been there a long time." To that end, AD based their design on the way a farmhouse develops: building one section, then adding on another to make a T shape, including a third section, and adding a second floor and raised dormers. The resulting roofscape is "more interesting," says Ingwersen. A multi-faceted chimney resurrects the English influence on the Cape's character.

For trim inspiration, Ingwersen and his partners toured the area, paying close attention to historic sea captains' and turn-of-the-century homes. They settled on a trim design that protrudes and creates shadow lines, which in turn add coziness to the facade.

The couple also had a number of requirements for the home's interior. A critical element was a great room for entertaining. A gourmet cook, Polly wanted to be able to prepare meals for visiting family and guests while enjoying their company at the same time. She also wanted a view while she cooked.

In designing the great room within the footprint of the original fishing cottage, difficult decisions had to be made. "You can't stretch the whole house along the view," Ingwersen says. "You have to decide which spaces are most important to the view, and in this case, it was the living room and master bedroom. The kitchen and dining room have secondary views."

The house is built on a slope, which eases away from a fairly busy road down to the pond. While Polly wanted to see the water, she was adamant about not seeing the road from the kitchen. To occlude that view, the architects designed narrow slit windows between the upper cabinets and the counters providing natural light without losing cabinet space. Looking out of the kitchen windows, Polly sees gardens on the ascending slope rather than the tar at the top of the hill. Skylights also brighten this north-facing space.

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Above: The kitchen allows ample work space for Polly, a gourmet cook. From the garden tub in the master bath, one can spy on the freshwater pond.

Right: Architectural Design maximized on the home's space. This upstairs hallway was outfitted with window benches and a bookshelf to offer a spot to curl up and read.

With its wall of windows facing the lake, the living room takes the full brunt of the day's sun. Netted shades mellow the effect in summer, while a stone fireplace adds warmth on those January days the couple spends at their retreat. The room's cathedral ceiling is rendered less imposing by exposed structural beams, which add interest and contrast. Above the fireplace hangs a John Whorf painting of Provincetown; the couple also own two paintings by Whorf's daughter, Carol Whorf Westcott.

Polly wanted their vacation home to embody Shaker values: simplicity and functionality. To add a bit of understated sophistication, she chose creamy white walls and natural-stained woods. However, given the couple's energy and humor, it is no surprise they wanted color in their new home. To rectify the situation, Norm purchased a striking red bookshelf he and Polly found at a Brewster antiques shop; its vibrant color is echoed in a quilt hanging from a nearby balcony.

The balcony borders a reading nook on the second floor. Bathed in natural light, the area offers a built-in bench seat—one example of builder Bruce Hirschberg's attention to detail.

Among the couple's other design requirements were large guest bedrooms on the second floor. Norm explains, "The place is designed as a grandchild magnet." The two rooms share a bathroom, though for convenience each has its own vanity.

This active retired couple wanted to insure their privacy. To that end, the master bedroom is its own first-floor wing, tucked away but facing the lake with windows on three sides. Even the glass shower stall and whirlpool tub take advantage of the scenery. The master bedroom further asserts its independence with a private deck and cathedral ceiling; with no rooms above them, Polly and Norm don't have to worry about being disturbed by the early morning pitter patter of small feet.

The house was designed not only to be child friendly, but dog friendly. Bill, a rambunctious five-year-old retriever reigns supreme. In fact, when designing the entryway Polly joked to interior designer Susan Tuttle, "I need tile to work with dog hair." The resulting entryway tile not only conceals shades of blonde, but also resists wear from sand brought up from the private beach below. The berber carpeting on the stairs resists sand and drips from bathing suits.

Like the interior, the home's exterior offers separate spaces for viewing the lake and relaxing. A farmer's porch faces front gardens and blue stone walkways. For those needing to clean up before entering the house, an outdoor cedar-lined shower nestled between the home and garage serves nicely. It affords views out to the pond and privacy thanks to louvers and discreet positioning in relation to the home's upper windows.

The courtyard outside the master bedroom, as well as the screened-in porch and deck off the great room, extend the living areas to the outside. As these last two spaces catch the prevailing breeze, the couple often enjoy lunch on the deck and dinner on the porch. Here they can not only take in their southern view of the lake, but the sights and scents of roses, Clematis, azalea, rhododendrons, barberberry, and forsythia. The old apple tree stood watch as the old fishing cottage gave way to a new year-round retreat. 🌿

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GUESTS

