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Fresh Outlook

A Saunderstown Cape gets expanded in both size and charm



Cape Cod style homes are known for being as charming as they are adaptable, kind of like New Englanders. When Paul and Mary Beth Schmitt purchased their Saunderstown home in 1994, it suited the needs of their family of four, and with 1,200 square feet finished out of 1,750, it was affordable and offered possibilities. "We thought it would be great until the boys grew up and moved out and we wouldn't need to down-size," says Paul. However three years in, things were getting a bit too tight and so the couple built-out the second floor. Some years after that, things got "a bit too cozy" once again.

"We're a classic Rhode Island family and our boys and now six grandchildren all live

Renovations to the Schmitt's Saunderstown Cape included attaching the garage which created a foyer and breezeway leading to the extended kitchen area

within 10 miles of us, as does Mary Beth's mother and sister, and also my brother, and there's more extended family nearby in Connecticut and in-state..." Paul explains. The couple was faced with the choice of moving or expanding again. "We decided that we



Photo courtesy of Robert Brewster of DiStefano Brother Construction



loved our house, our neighbors, our neighborhood, and South County," Mary Beth starts. "We made the decision that we would stay in our home. Therefore, we needed to update the house for hopefully our next 25 years, and to be able to entertain family and friends especially for the holidays."

In 2016, the Schmitts started researching architects, surveyors, and builders. "We met with Peter DeStefano from DeStefano Brothers Construction (DBC) and knew they were the builders for us," says Paul. The major project began in November 2017 and it was mostly completed by May 2018.

Upon the advice of architect Frank Karpowicz, the Schmitts gave DBC the go ahead to move forward 20 x 20 feet on the main floor to make space for a new living room with a fully vaulted cathedral ceiling. The old living room became the new formal dining area, with an 8-foot ceiling featuring a coffered section for recessed lighting and a fan. The staircase was opened up for a fresh spindled look and a half wall between the living room and the kitchen

was also opened up - and completely remodeled - to create an open floor plan between the spaces. The detached garage was then attached to add a foyer/breezeway leading into an extended kitchen area. Even the deck was redone and expanded with a columned porch area added to the front.

Once the structural work was complete, it was time to refresh the interior. "We have lived in South County for much of our lives, and feel our home reflects our love of the ocean and being near the seashore. We love some of the beautiful, older historic homes of Narragansett, and wanted it to fit in with that feel, while being uniquely modern for us," says Mary Beth. The couple did some research on their own and also enlisted Marisa Navakauskas from DBC to help create a personal aesthetic. "We like it to feel clean, warm, open and inviting," says Mary Beth. Navakauskas assisted by suggesting colors and sharing photographs of ideas. Features like shiplap, a once modest insulation feature that's now a hallmark of farmhouse and coastal style, were also incorporated. Local

shopping resources include McKays, Blindz and Design, Supply New England, Arnolds Branch, and Wakefield Fireplace.

Mary Beth lists the new open feel, the hardwood floors, the kitchen island, the open staircase, and window shutters as the things in her home that make her most happy. Neutral walls and furnishings and natural textures like baskets lend an understated shoreline feel, while fixtures and windows keep rooms washed in light. Mary Beth describes her decorating as "New England seaside, with contemporary updates to traditional New England and Narragansett style, and with hints of French cottage. We live near the ocean and tried to focus on a beachy feeling for our home," she says. Mission accomplished.

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