

# DOWN SEA

BY THE

A young family with a passion for the water recruits a savvy local architect to help transform their dated, disjointed house into a spacious dream home complete with views and light. **By Megan Fulweiler**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY NAT REA ■ STYLING BY NICOLE A. HOGARTY



The living room's gas fireplace ensures cozy blazes at a moment's notice. The diving helmet is an authentic replica. Architect Abigail Campbell-King designed the bookcases to hold the couple's growing collection of nautical and travel books. The small chest belonged to the husband's grandmother; the striking lamp with black shade is an heirloom from the wife's side. In order to make their deadline, the savvy homeowner shopped the catalogs: the furnishings are from Pottery Barn. "The upholstery is everyday suede, which means we don't worry about spills," she says. The warm rug pulling the scene together was ordered from Restoration Hardware. The glass-topped coffee table is from the Rhode Island Design Center.





**H**iggledy, piggedly the original house, erected back in the 1960s, began to grow. A room here, a garage there. Never mind the heavenly landscape. Square footage was added without thought to capturing the vistas and uncaring of how traffic would flow. As a result, when these new owners came along they had to make do with a quirky layout and rooms that felt less than comfortable.

Ten years passed. Now, with two young children, more than ever the couple yearned for a sensible floor plan incorporating open, airy spaces conducive to family living. He's an avid wine collector, she's a wonderful cook; they wanted a house that would reflect their interests. At the same time, they wanted to maximize their locale. Sure, they had a dock for their boat. But what about decks for al fresco meals and, maybe, a hot tub?

A friend suggested they enlist Jamestown architect Abigail Campbell-King, AIA, and life began to look up. It took Camp-

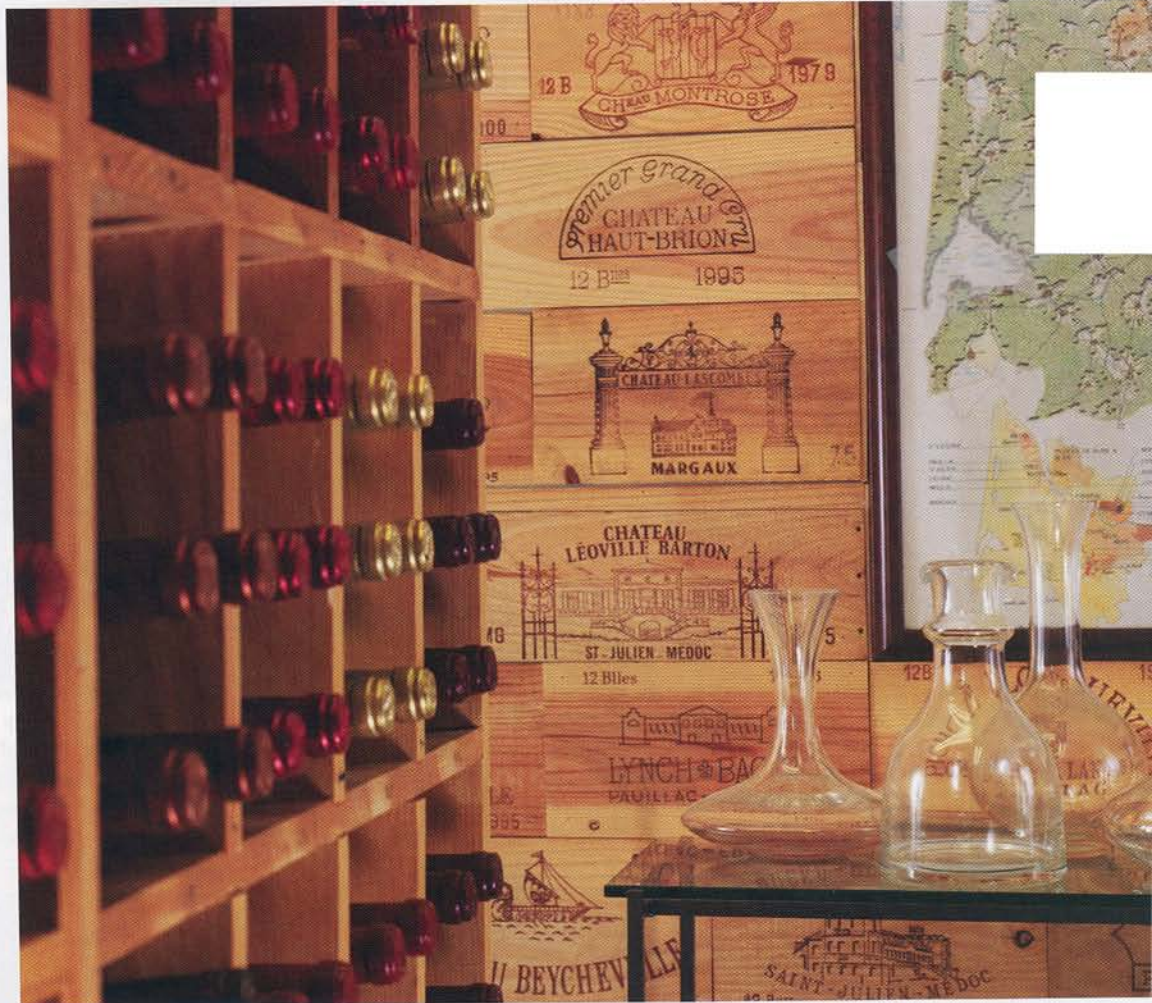
bell-King one visit to determine the house needed a total reconfiguring. "There was no entry point, no connection of the various wings. Circulation was haphazard at best," she says. The parents packed up, found temporary quarters in Newport and allotted the architect one year to complete the remodeling. "Family and friends were scheduled for summer visits," Campbell-King explains. "They had to be moved in by June 1. That was our deal."

Up went the low ceilings, in went all new windows. For the living room, that gesture alone was transforming. In its previous life, the compact room had had one two-by-four-foot window. The new glass exposed an ever-changing panorama of water and sky. And adios impractical galley. In its place blossomed a lofty, state-of-the-art kitchen. Open to the dining room, and beyond the scenery, the easily accessible kitchen rests at the heart of the new, efficient design. Campbell-King, with Newport-based contractor Brian Arnold on

Campbell-King lifted and visually integrated the ceilings (facing page) to create a harmonious kitchen/dining area. Table, chairs and chandelier are from Pottery Barn. Built-in cabinets house china and glassware. To accommodate the wife's passion for cooking, a superior kitchen design was top priority. The architect (along with Apex Kitchens in Middletown) made sure there was plenty of super-smart storage plus an efficient work triangle. A stunning tile backsplash frames the pro-style range. Soapstone counters live up to chores. The navy-blue island sports a marble top and furniture-like details. Eschewing fussy hardware, the owners rightly opted for understated bin pulls as a contrast to lush materials. Nearby, the new front door signals a hearty welcome. The wife commissioned a glass blower to make the bulls-eye glass that gives it character.



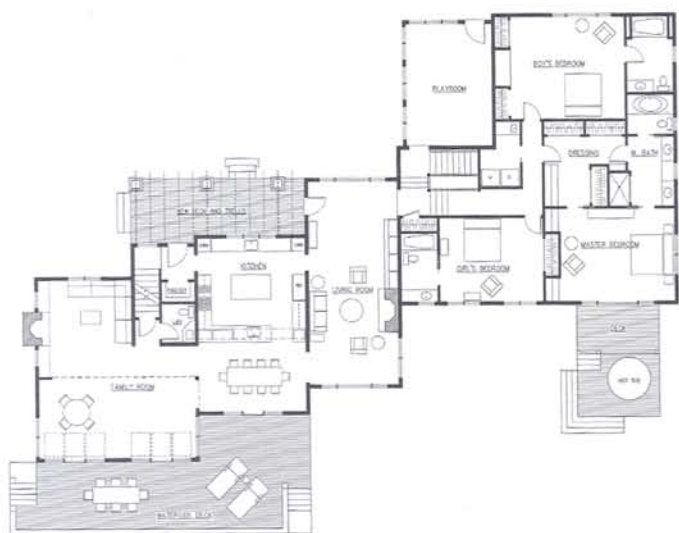




New oak floors link the rooms together and freshen today's look. A stack of decorative wooden boxes adds charm to the breakfast area in the family room (facing page) and carves a nest for toys and supplies. Here, in this sunny corner, people and plants thrive. "My clients were very clear," the architect says. "They wanted a light, airy feel and they wanted to knit themselves to the views they love." An upscale wine storage facility was another must-have. Fully equipped and organized, the cellar (this page) leaves nothing to chance. "We all joked that when the big storm comes, the safest room in the house will be the wine cellar with plenty of survival spirits," Campbell-King says.

board, created an eight-by-fifteen-foot entry ingeniously connecting the previously disjointed wings. It also gave the owners a sensible route to the bedrooms as well as to the public areas: the kitchen, dining and family room. The last has become, in fact, a versatile gathering spot. Hardly anyone remembers what it used to be: a rickety screen porch with a leaky French door. Today the generous family room provides a niche for casual dining as well as entertainment. This is the read-or-watch-television-together room. New, view-grabbing, glass doors keep the bay ever close; new skylights and wrap-around windows help brighten every corner.

If a meal calls for wine, the homeowner need only make a quick trip to the fully insulated and temperature-controlled wine cellar, formerly the mundane basement. Bottles are meticulously arranged according to region, so it's easy to find just what he wants. Wine crate ends, each emblazoned with the name of a vineyard, cover the walls giving the space a unique old-world touch that paint or even paneling could never have mustered. For years the owner had been stockpiling the wooden treasures. This was a perfect opportunity to show them off. Scores of decanters, another collection, warrant room, too. Framed maps aid neophytes hungry to learn from a pro.



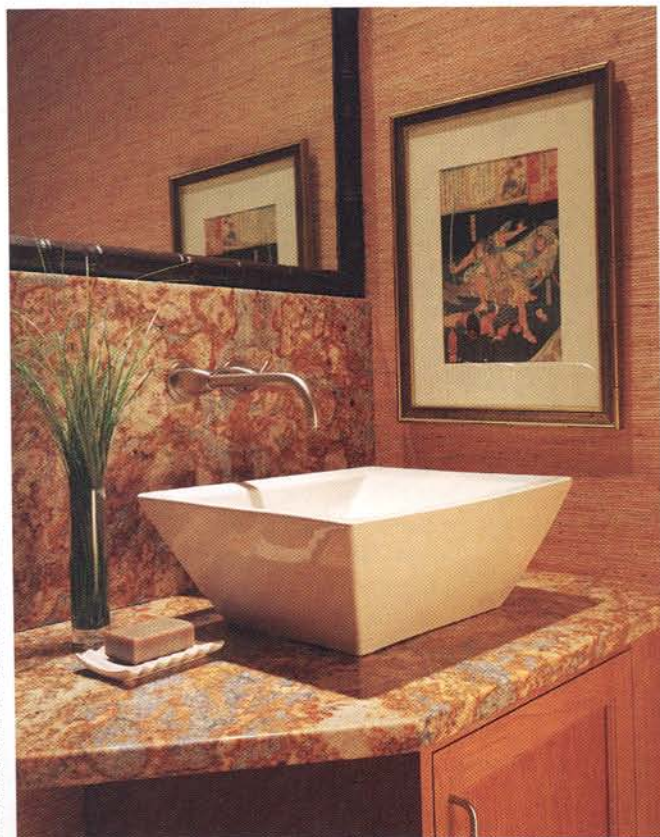
A chic powder room is a crowd pleaser. The marble atop the vanity? Jupurana Fantasy, the same material on the kitchen island. The sink is Kohler. A grass wall covering speaks to the stone and Japanese print. Small but life-changing, the entry plugged into the front gave the plan the necessary connections. The door leads to the kitchen; another door (not shown) beyond the window opens to the living room. New decks (facing page) enhance the water-facing side, extending living space.

When this project began, the house had a deck of sorts. A twelve-by-fifteen-foot landing pad was moored off the dining room. Such a fabulous waterside location, though, demands something more extraordinary. So Campbell-King designed a deck to mirror the dining and family room. Made of Trex, a material concocted from recycled materials, the new deck withstands nature's rigors. The natural cedar railings seem a continuation of the dock and cleverly draw the eye out across the bay.

Still as the months rolled by, getting closer and closer to June, it wasn't all smooth sailing. The narrow lot, for instance, and CMRC regulations limited what could be done where. And when codes for the four-bedroom house mandated a new septic system, the only suitable site turned out to be the front yard. Fortunately, Campbell-King had a solution. She designed a Japanese-type garden complete with azaleas and scented with lavender as a disguise. Granite basins catch rain for the birds and stone paths lead the way. Passersby would never guess the new grove of cherry trees are a ploy to fool the eye. A large existing cherry tree sheds its petals in all the right spots, adding weight to the picture. And staged just beyond the new entry with its cedar pergola, the garden has turned out to be a plus, an oasis where a parent slips away for a few quiet moments.

Of course, there's a story behind that pergola as well. Not only is the structure choreographed in such a fashion as to make way for the tree, it also helps subtly tie the roof lines together. Imagine, if you can, the past: a plain house sheathed in siding. Now, dressed with shingles and green trim, it's a real New England-flavored home. Add a few stately columns to mark the entrance, and this is a house people take notice of.

ALL FLOWERS BY BLOOMING BLOSSOMS; PORCH CHAIRS FROM MCKAY'S FURNITURE



## To Get the Look

- Mimic the cool Chinese stool beside the sofa in the living room. Buy a similar seat at the Mill Store, East Greenwich, for about \$32 and prime and paint it yourself. Refinish or paint an old toy or tool chest to park beside a comfy chair.
- Craft a one-of-kind lamp using a vase or tin. Damon's Hardware, Wakefield, can wire it for you for less than \$20 (depending on the degree of difficulty). Rather than a neutral shade, go for a contemporary mocha or black shade.
- Swap old cabinet hardware for a more contemporary version. If you're not sure what would look best—polished chrome, cast metal, bronze or colored crystal—Adler's Hardware in Providence offers a three-day hardware rental: you buy the hardware and try it out. If it's not the style for you, bring it back for a full refund.
- Give bedrooms a soothing tone with pastel fabrics. Shop sales and bargain bins: the Fabric Connection keeps penny-saving treasures in the back room; Fabric Place, Warwick, maintains a marked down section; the Fabric Gallery, North Kingstown, has annual sales cutting costs as much as 75 percent.



theme and channeling light. "Water and sky change so much. Vibrant colors would detract from what's going on outside," Campbell-King explains.

And, more luxury, the master suite opens to a private deck. The owners can meet here for morning coffee or a moonlit cocktail. One level down, a second deck holds their hot tub.

The wife has a knack for choosing the perfect fabrics. The little girl's room is as sweet as a cupcake, but with a décor that will grow along with her. Checks and polka-dots paired in complimentary colors balance the look. The four-poster is festooned with billowy sheers, injecting a dash of princess-like glamour.

Study how the design pays homage to the super site and how far the level of comfort has been raised, and this is a dream home. No wonder friends line up to visit. Yet more than just a pretty picture, thanks to Campbell-King, the reinvented house functions as beautifully as it looks and, for these owners, that's the telling difference. ■

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In the master suite (facing page), northern light streams in behind the bed. The husband purchased the nightstands, with matching armoire, before the couple were married. The wife discovered the lean lamp with its paper shade years ago, too. Pristine white Wood Mode cabinets (top right) add a clean note to the master bath. All tile in the house, including the bath's marble floor, is from Weatherly Tile and Stone, Portsmouth. In the little girl's room (right), polka dots, Robert Allen's Dodge Ball pattern, are a link to the snuggly quilt and the Monet print. Fabrics and custom sewing were all through the Fabric Connection, Middletown.

