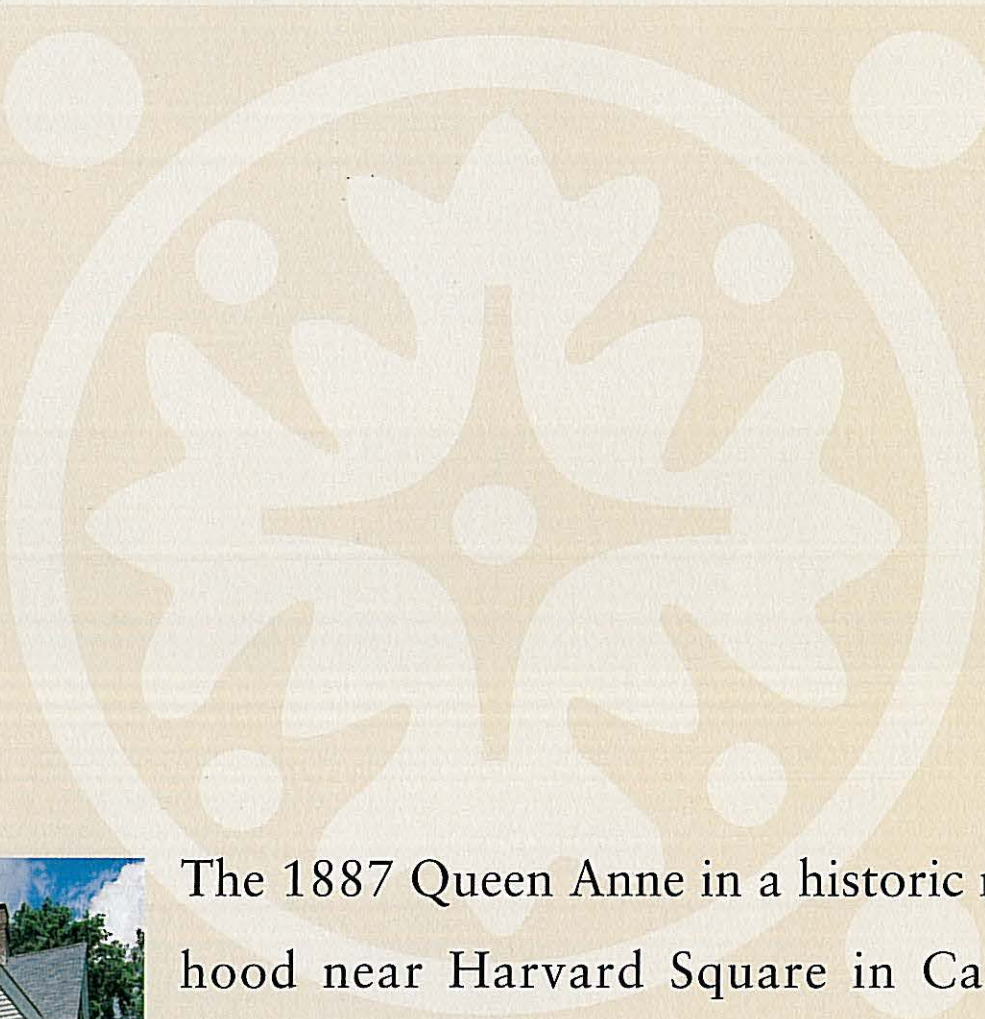


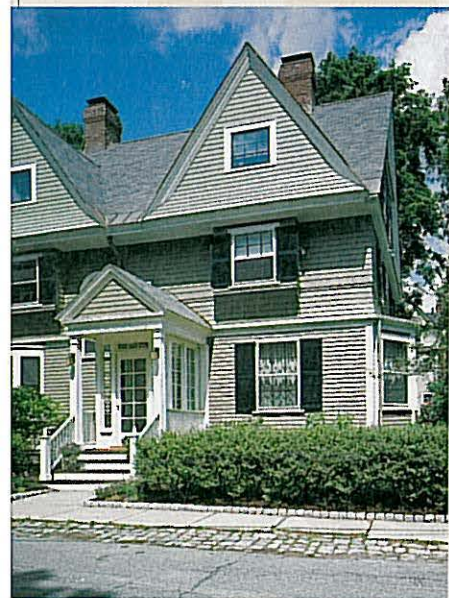
# LONG LIVE THE QUEEN

BY BARBARA FLANAGAN

A twin-gabled Queen Anne undergoes a masterful redo



The 1887 Queen Anne in a historic neighborhood near Harvard Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was an unlikely candidate for major rehabilitation: There was nothing terribly wrong with it. Nevertheless, new owners Michael Tushman, a professor at the Harvard



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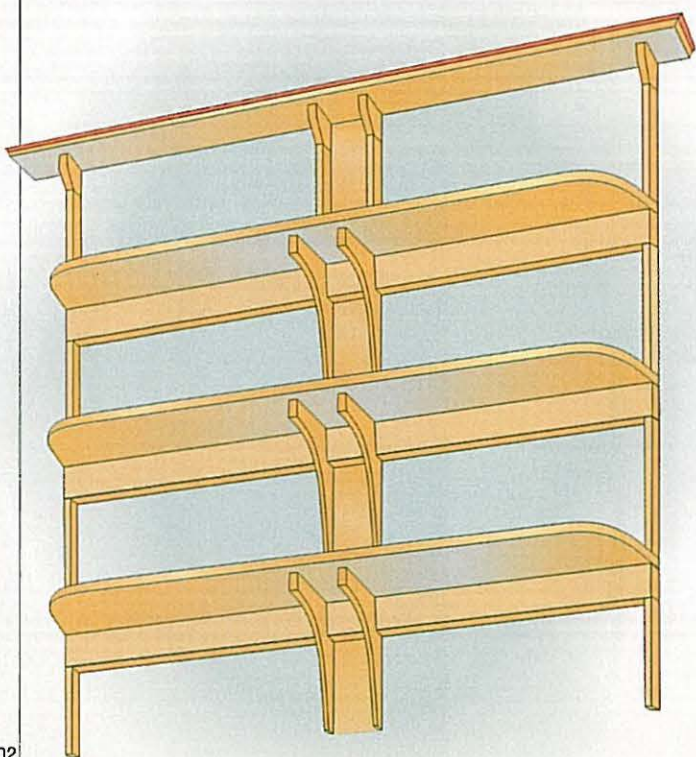


OPPOSITE: With a new glassed-in vestibule and rehabilitated front hedge, the Tushman-Williams house presents a more welcoming face to the street. THIS PAGE: The vestibule draws light into the revamped entry and front hall, where the couple's collie, Leo, takes his ease.

## ON THE SHELF

**Architect Charles Myer wanted to set off the breakfast corner in Marjorie and Michael's kitchen and create, as he says, "a visual conclusion to the room." This he did in two ways: one, by building in an L-shaped banquette (with drawers at one end for phone books and miscellany) and two, by lining the wall around it with a series of shelves supported by brackets. Millworkers at Woodward Thomsen Co. built the shelves from Myer's design. The ¾-inch-thick, 10-inch-deep shelves and the ½-inch-**

**thick brackets and ledger strips behind them are made from poplar. To accommodate a window in the corner, Myer curved the ends of the shelves—those on the long wall are convex; those that abut the window trim on the adjoining wall are concave. Shelves are installed 23½ inches apart and are grooved to support plates. Another 6-inch-deep shelf runs above both sets; it is outlined in deep burgundy paint.**



Business School (and author of *Winning Through Innovation*) and his wife, Marjorie Williams, an editor at Harvard Business School Press, decided they could make it better.

"It was a wonderful, wonderful home," Marjorie recalls. "And the previous owners had maintained it really well," Michael adds.

So why fix a keeper?

"Nobody had messed with the house for a hundred years," Michael says—and that was just the point. The couple, who work at home as well as in their respective in-town offices, quickly realized that the previous owners' hands-off policy may have left precious architectural details intact, but the mechanicals were in dire need of an update. The house felt gloomy—not conducive to working at home, much less entertaining there. And the yard needed to be regraded and replanted to make it more inviting.

Their mission—to build a 21st-century infrastructure into the 19th-century house, "while maintaining its character," as Michael puts it—didn't start with a manifesto but rather, with one single, simple need: "There was no bathroom on the first floor," Marjorie says. "Everything grew from there." Inspired by the renovator's motto, "As long as we're going this far, we might as well...," the list expanded to include alterations on every floor.

On the practical side, the couple had to upgrade the electrical and plumbing systems, which had not been significantly touched in 50 years; it seemed only sensible to add central air conditioning and to heat the third floor. They also wanted to enlarge the master bathroom on the second floor and add a bathroom to the third floor, which would contain guest quarters for Michael's two grown children plus Marjorie's home office.

On the aesthetic side, "we tried to maximize the natural light," Marjorie says. And, although the kitchen was workable, "it was someone's idea of a dream kitchen 30 years ago," Michael recalls. "We wanted to have a big kitchen, to inspire us to learn how to cook," Marjorie explains. "Neither of us was much of a cook before; now we cook more often—and enjoy it more."

As word got out about the scope of the couple's remodeling, tensions mounted. Neighbors wondered whether the "new people" would ruin the architectural integrity of the street. But they've been vindicated. When visitors view the finished project—a masterfully coordinated work of new architecture, restoration, interior design, and landscape architecture—their reactions are uniformly full of praise. "One gratifying thing is that most people—including an architectural historian friend—have mistaken new additions



*The '70s-era kitchen (ABOVE) was laid out in an ungainly L. Removal of a maid's stair opened up the room (RIGHT) and allowed a larger work zone. It also eased access (at far right in the photograph) to the new den. The range hood is patterned after those in European country kitchens.*

## A CUT ABOVE

BEFORE

To give the living room a more expressive focal point, architect Charlie Myer turned again to millworkers Woodward Thomsen to create a new fireplace surround. Marjorie and Michael had clipped a photo of an Italian Renaissance Revival design from a magazine. Myer sent it to the millworkers, who forwarded it—and precut pieces of mahogany—to woodcarver Valdemar Skov (see Pro File, April 2000) in Waldoboro, Maine. Because the new frieze was wider than the one in the original design, Skov reshaped motifs to fit. He used a copier at a local print shop to blow up the entire design, then transferred the individual motifs to the wood with carbon paper and began carving. Work-

ing with over 60 different tools (RIGHT), he took about six weeks to complete the job. “Every subtle difference needs the correct tool,” Skov says. “But,” he adds, “there’s a fine line between fussing too much and getting the job done.” Once the fireplace surround was installed and painted, he came down to inspect his handiwork (OPPOSITE).



for originals,” Michael says with pride.

Foresight and careful planning had everything to do with the couple’s sleight-of-hand. From the start, for instance, they knew the level of finish they desired throughout their home: All new walls would be plaster (no drywall), and all woodwork (and oak floors) would be restored—or replaced—to match the originals. In other words, old and new would seamlessly blend so the house would continue to look as if it hadn’t been touched since it was built.

To accomplish this, the couple wanted to hire professionals who would listen closely to their desires, collaborate on the design, supervise the construction—and complete the project as quickly as possible. Winnowing their choices, though, took some time. To start, they interviewed a number of architects before settling on Charles R. Myer, whose practice, happily, is based only 15 minutes away. Myer introduced them to several trusted colleagues whom he knew well and had worked with before. These included Don Knerr, who would be the project architect; general contractor Alex Slive of S&H Construction, Inc.; interior designer Andra Birkerts, and landscape designer and contractor Jean Brooks, Myer’s wife. “One of the things that made our house turn out so well was this team,” Marjorie says. “They made it happen with great creativity and sensitivity to our needs.”

Despite friends’ predictions that the renovation would be a horror show, “we felt like we were on *The Love Boat*,” Marjorie laughs. “We knew all the players very well,” Charlie Myer explains, “which made it easy to set the budget and schedule, draw up the preliminary estimates, and keep the channels open between ourselves and Michael

BEFORE



The entry and front hall (BELOW, LEFT) were rather gloomy. To create a sense of welcome, architect Myer blew out the wall to join these to the adjacent living room (BELOW). A partial wall embellished with a screen of balusters provides an architectural grace note, as does the bracket at the ceiling. Andra Birkerts’s interior design defers to the architecture—yet each piece of furniture counts. There is nothing extraneous in the space.



and Marjorie. Everyone on the job knew this was going to be a fast-track project—under construction before the drawings were done—so we all had to work very closely together. The team met either here or at the site every two weeks for a year.”

The first order of business was to retrofit the HVAC. In order to minimize structural changes, a subcontractor installed three high-efficiency gas furnaces that, combined with three air-conditioning condensers located outdoors, heat and

cool the home. One furnace, in the basement, feeds the first floor through floor registers; the two others, in the attic, service the top two floors through registers in the ceilings. Many of the old cast-iron registers became returns, while new, matching grills that release

heat (or cool air) were installed close to the outside walls, Knerr explains, to warm the coolest part of any room (and vice versa).

Space planning came next. The group rethought the functions of rooms on all three floors. One dra-

*The master bath is an exercise in luxurious restraint. Maple flooring is laid out in a formal herringbone pattern and slicked with moisture-repellent polyurethane. The wainscot is lower than usual so that the room appears taller. Custom-designed mirrored medicine cabinets hang over the sinks; each is lit by a period-style sconce. Two walls of the shower are marble and two are glass; its floor is covered in matching marble mosaic tiles.*



matic switch involved the dining room and den, which traded places so that the latter could be linked to a back deck through a set of French doors. The less used dining room now takes advantage of a more traditional position off the front hall.

In the den, the architects installed bookcases on three walls and ran shelves above the French doors and their sidelights. After tearing out the bookcases in the new dining room, they bumped out a bay window to streetside and fitted it with custom-made leaded glass to enhance the room's formal ambience. They also built a display cabinet into one recess flanking the fireplace and turned the one on the other side into a passageway to the kitchen.

To "ennoble" the public rooms in the house, the architects widened and deepened the paths between them and enhanced the passageways with significant architectural embellishments, such as a keystone-accented arch leading into the dining room and a carved bracket marking the opening into the living room. They also removed the wall between the entry and the living room. A narrow screen composed of balusters that echo those on the central staircase now separates the two spaces. (The original balusters accenting the central stair were rebuilt and stabilized with a newel post carved by Valdemar Skov.)

In order to create a passageway from the front hallway into the kitchen, Myer removed part of a maid's staircase that separated the two spaces. The old structure had borne a lot of the weight of the walls above, "so when we scooped it out," says Knerr, "we had to add a new beam between the ceiling and the second floor to help carry the load." They left intact the top flight of the stairs to access Marjorie's office and the guest rooms on the third floor.

Getting rid of the stairs also gave the architects extra space in the kitchen to extend the work zone; they dedicated the other end of the room to a breakfast area wrapped by a deep, L-shaped banquette. Although the materials in the room are familiar to many country-style kitchens—Shaker-style wood cabinets with simple brown button pulls, gray Kashmir granite and butcherblock countertops, quartersawn oak flooring—Myer was careful to specify

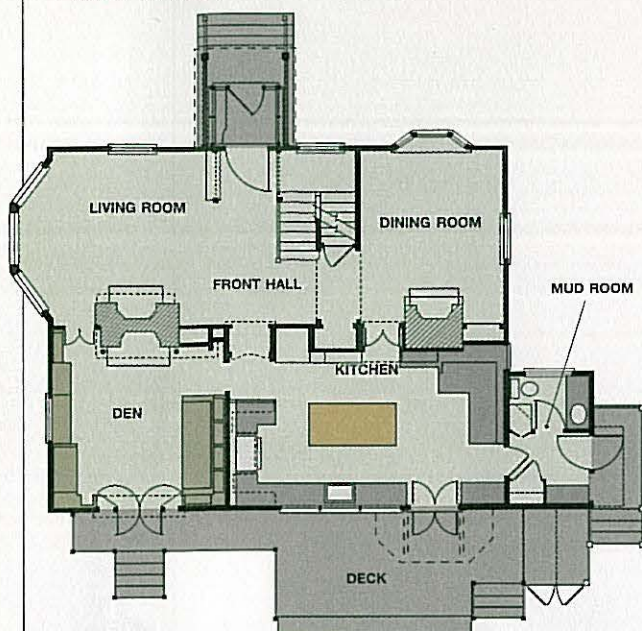
*Because the bedroom is a private, quiet place, it is carpeted throughout. The palette is muted, too: taupe, gray, and ivory are balanced by the deep-toned wood of the Raj-style bed and, not seen, an armoire.*



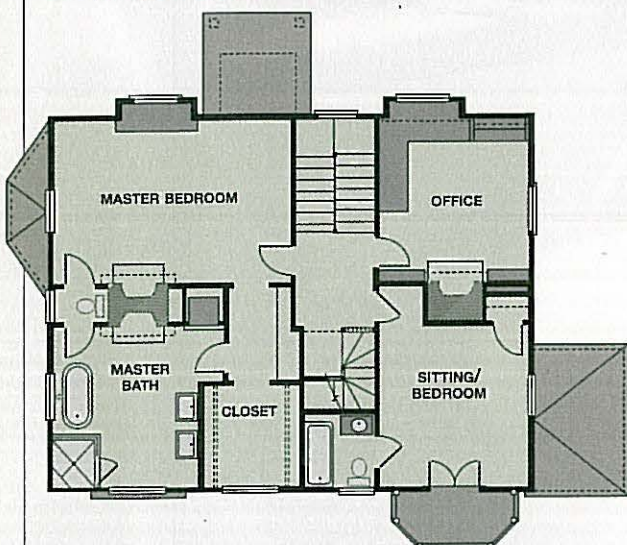
finishes that were much softer-looking and subtler than the norm. "We painted the cabinets different colors—a cream and a pale pea soup—to blur the line between cabinetry and furniture," Myer says. To mute the finish, he had the final coat of paint applied by hand on site over two spray-painted shop coats. A subcontractor acid-washed the granite countertops and treated them with a color enhancer and sealer "to take away the shine," Myer explains. The floors were also specially treated to exhibit a lower luster: one coat of sealer followed by two coats of a high-gloss, water-resistant finish (for durability) and a final coat of flat finish (for softness).

On the second floor, the team turned the old bathroom into a walk-in closet and converted the bedroom next to the master bedroom into a spacious master bath, with a maple floor laid in a formal

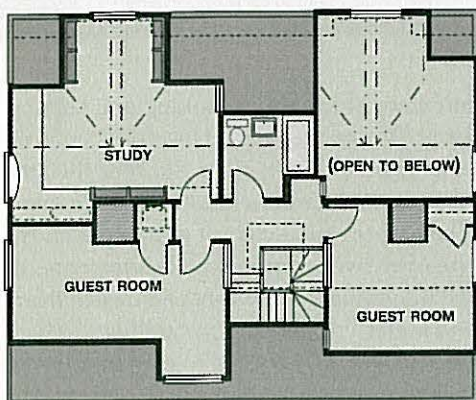
## FIRST FLOOR



## SECOND FLOOR



## THIRD FLOOR



Plans for the renovated Queen Anne illustrate how efficiently each space relates to the others on its floor. Shifting functions enabled the owners to maximize their enjoyment of each room, too, especially the den, which adjoins both the kitchen and the back deck.

herringbone pattern and a tall casement window that imitates a French door. The bath—which opens both to the bedroom and to a hallway leading into the walk-in closet, which the couple shares—is equipped with a period-style freestanding bathtub and a large glassed-in shower, as well as two grooming stations incorporating twin console sinks fitted with Belle Epoque-style faucet sets. The bath also boasts a fireplace, a holdover from the original bedroom.

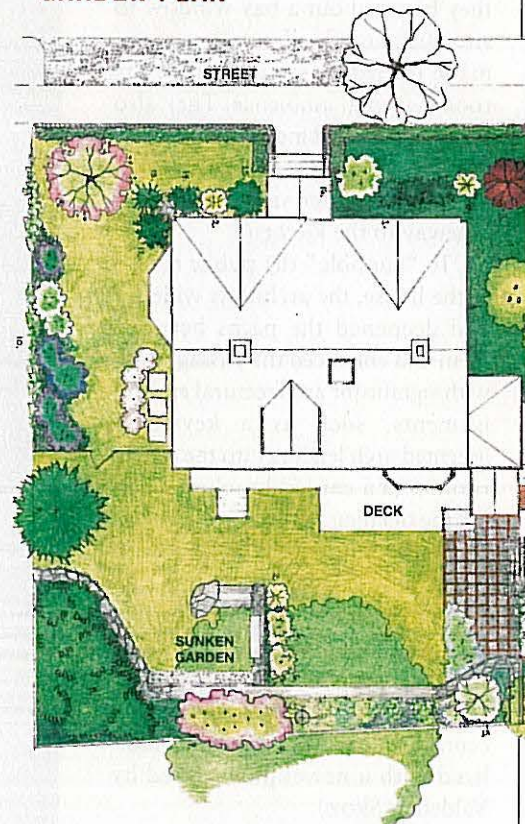
The greatest triumph and most striking example of teamwork involved the bedroom across from the master suite, which became Michael's office. When the architects discovered they couldn't bump out a new dormer to gain light (because of changes in Cambridge's dormer code), everyone pitched in with ideas. Myer (advised by a structural engineer) decided to lift the ceiling and borrow space—and light—from the bedroom above.

"Here the powers of the team coalesced," says Knerr. In order to support the new 16-foot height created by the removal of the structural members traversing the ceiling (and the floor above), Alex Slive's crew performed "a feat of structural gymnastics," says Knerr. Dave Madden, the job supervisor, built out a section of framing—later hidden by bookcases—along the two walls at the outside corner of the room, where the third floor roof overhangs the second floor. Without that reinforcement, stresses to that corner of the house could have caused the roof to collapse. Even with their well-considered plan, "a tense moment came when Alex cut out the last of the joists," Knerr admits. But the roof held. And now Michael has a light-filled, two-story-high study to read and correct student papers in.

The third floor—now equipped with heat and a bathroom—includes Marjorie's office as well as the extra bedrooms. With a comfortable chair and ottoman tucked under an eave, the office is exactly what she had wanted: "a snug and playful nest." The hallway just outside also has a "Juliet window"—an opening with a little balcony overlooking Michael's office—so "we can talk back and forth," the couple explains.

Andra Birkerts, the interior designer on the team, performed some improvements that the architecture could not. "A big challenge," she notes, "was dealing with the streetside windows, which could not be altered because

## GARDEN PLAN



Landscape architect Jean Brooks created a master plan for the entire lot; it included reviving a hedge along the street, building a deck and steps to the yard, and seeding a new lawn. A sunken area behind the den is anchored by a stone wall that runs along the back of the property. Tiny waterfalls in the wall can be turned on from a switch in the kitchen.





of restrictions mandated by the local historic preservation board." To make the windows appear taller, she employed a time-honored designer's trick: She hung draperies from the ceiling line.

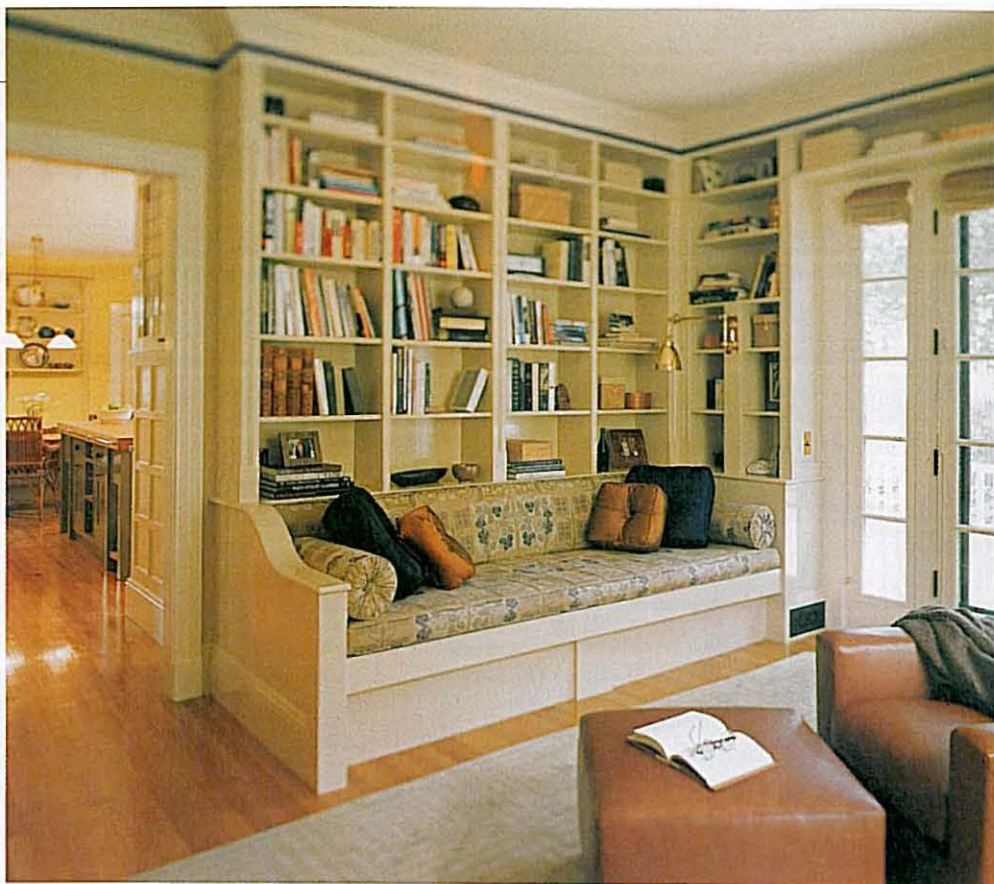
Birkerts also used color to manipulate the sense of space, making sure individual schemes "worked together to lead you through the house." The wall paint falls within a narrow range of pigmentations in neutral tones such as gray-blue, celadon, and butter, while crown moldings are subtly delineated in shades of warm gray. The subtleties implicit in Birkerts's use of color was not limited to paint: She coordinated upholstery and drapery patterns and textures with the paint palette in each room.

In the overall plan for the house, the front and back yards assumed as much importance as any indoor room. Jean Brooks, the landscape designer, joined the team early on. "It was a tiny, flat urban site," she says, "with standard foundation planting, everything overgrown and crowded. The idea was to create different 'rooms' within the landscape and improve transitions between the house and the garden." French doors lead from the kitchen and the den to a back deck as wide as the house; it, in turn, steps down to a newly graded and planted backyard.

When the house was nearing completion, Brooks began to restore and replace the plantings around the house. To define the boundaries of the lot, she constructed a stone wall against a privacy fence abutting the property behind the house and also designed and built a wood fence—and gate (both painted white)—alongside a driveway shared with another neighbor. Now borders, a sunken garden, and a refreshed lawn create an oasis between the stone wall and the house.

Brooks says she is particularly proud of the fact that she could rescue the front hedge, which looked bare and forlorn once an old fence came down. Local landscapers pronounced it hopeless, but Brooks persisted until an arborist gave her the advice she wanted: Just feed and prune. The hedge began to flourish.

The lesson of the hedge turned out to be the lesson of the house. Listen to advice. Then do what you think is best—with people you trust. ■



TOP: In its new position next to the kitchen, the den has access to the deck and backyard. A built-in bench doubles as a guest bed. ABOVE: The back of the house is much more useful now that it has a wide deck and steps leading to the yard. A bike shed and off-street parking (to the right of the photograph, off the kitchen and mudroom), are two luxuries in this neighborhood.