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Oversized windows and moldings along with nine and a half foot ceilings create a feeling of spaciousness in this Osterville home.



BIG IDEAS

for a SMALL SPACE

A resourceful architect builds his own home on a challenging Osterville lot by thinking outside the box and making the most of nature's whims.

Strategically positioned on a small lot in the village of Osterville, this classic shingle-style gambrel offers lovely views of a picturesque meadow below, while welcoming in cool southwest breezes from nearby North Bay. The home is the creation of architect Ivan Bereznicki of Cambridge and Osterville's Bereznicki Architects, who used equal parts imaginative sleight of hand and architectural ingenuity to design this beautiful home on a challenging lot.

Despite its five-star location—just one block from the center of tony Osterville—the lot on Bay Street stood empty for 30 years. With a property six feet below street level and bordering wetlands, siting

and building a home that would offer inviting views seemed almost impossible. Bereznicki, however, has a talent for seeing the possibilities of any site and for finding unique solutions to even the most complex problems.

To combat the issue of the low-lying site, the architect had 16 to 18 truckloads of fill brought in to build up the lot an additional eight feet. This new height not only accommodated a home built above street level, it allowed for the house to capture the southwest breezes that come in off Nantucket Sound. Bereznicki was careful to consider all of the angles when orientating the house.

By Mary Stanley • Photography by Dan Cutrona



"I wanted a band of rooms that would be westward looking, but I also wanted to be able to take advantage of the southern sun in the winter," he says. Rather than positioning the home so that the front door faces the street, the architect "turned the house sideways" so that the short side of the house faces the street, allowing the back of the house to take full advantage of the meadow and woodland views.

One of the biggest construction challenges on the property surfaced just after the site had been cleared—and a heavy rain had fallen. "I was standing on the lot and when I looked down, I could see my feet sinking into the ground," Bereznicki recalls. After testing the soil and finding quicksand and peat, he tried to excavate further to bring up good soil. But after re-testing and finding that it was still not quite good enough, he consulted with a geotechnical engineer who suggested building the house on pilings—a clever solution to a pretty daunting situation.

The home is well designed inside and out. Bereznicki made some creative architectural choices that give the illusion of a larger home. On the exterior, he intentionally





ran the 42-foot gambrel roof in the wrong direction—at the front of the house as opposed to the side of the home—thus enhancing the scale of a rather narrow house. Inside the home, Bereznicki super-sized just about everything—from the ceiling height, to the size of the windows, to the size of the moldings—creating a feeling of spaciousness in a rather modest living area. “It’s a small size on a grand scale,” he says.

Other interior design choices made with his wife, Marianna, who is an interior decorator, make the most of limited spaces, with many of the architectural and design elements doing double, and even triple, duty. A small inglenook just to the left of the front door with built-in sofas that flank either side of the fireplace is an effective example of form meeting function. The extra long, twin-size

“We worked hard to ensure that the house is an open space that can comfortably accommodate a large gathering of people and at the same time offer plenty of privacy.”



From the exterior, this octagonal window bay mimics the shape of a lighthouse, while on the inside the architectural feature creates additional living space.





cushions with coastal-hued custom-made coverings and pillows make for comfortable seating by day and provide additional sleeping quarters at night. The base of each of the sofas serves as storage, giving even more function to a sophisticated, yet functional design.

The large French doors at the back of the home directly across from the front entryway not only create a spacious feeling in the home, but also allow for cross breezes to blow through, offering cool relief on even the warmest July day. "When designing the house, I thought about how I wanted to experience things," Bereznicki says.

The exterior of the octagonal bay window with the cupola at the top gives the appearance of a lighthouse, offering a charming nautical element, while the interior of the window brings a feeling of spaciousness to the room. The second level of the bay window in the master bedroom, along with the vaulted ceilings in the cupola, slightly mimics a ship's prow.

Another design element that is as functional as it is beautiful is the stone chimney. Built by Lew French, who Bereznicki refers to as "the mason to the stars," the stone structure is an impressive





An inglenook with built-in sofas (above) provides additional seating during the day and additional sleeping quarters at night.

A spacious deck with oversized columns allows guests and visitors to take advantage of summer breezes during the day. Automatic screens drawn at night keep summer insects from intruding on dinner plans.



exterior piece of sculpture, which also happens to serve as the home's chimney.

Bereznicki and his wife were careful to build some flexibility into the home, creating spaces that can easily be transformed for other uses. A room on the second floor, with an expansive balcony overlooking the property, is a beautiful guest bedroom, or quiet study—depending on the need. Picture moldings were used in the study as well as the second floor hallway—in case the couple wants to host an art gallery event, in the future. “We worked hard to ensure that the house is an open space that can comfortably accommodate a large gathering of people and at the same time offer plenty of privacy,” Bereznicki says.



On the main level of the home, the deck just off of the living area offers ample outdoor seating during the day. To take advantage of night dining without having to fend off mosquitos and other annoying summer insects, large screens that automatically roll up and down from the columns surrounding the deck create the perfect screened-in porch.

Though on a smaller scale, this Osterville home with its 19th century style is very much in keeping with other homes in the area. And though the topography of the lot proved challenging in many ways, the home is testament to what can be achieved when an architect comes up with creative solutions and is willing to turn things around and upside down to get the very best out of a special location.



For more information, visit bereznicki.com and ebnorris.com.

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*Mary Stanley is sales and marketing
 coordinator for Cape Cod Life Publications.*