



HERITAGE RESTORED

A DEFT RENOVATION OF A 1670 HOUSE HIGHLIGHTS ITS HISTORY
AND EXTENDS ITS LEGACY AS A GATHERING PLACE FOR GENERATIONS

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THE COLONIAL FARMHOUSE'S property boasts a large stable with tack room and a paddock for horses. The front porch (RIGHT), added by builder Bob Weatherall, creates a welcoming entrance for guests and a comfortable spot for one of the family's Welsh Corgis to admire the sprawling marshland.

INTERIOR DESIGN WILSON KELSEY DESIGN
DESIGN/BUILD WEATHERALL DESIGN



ON CHRISTMAS EVE, the owners of a 343-year-old farmhouse — tucked away by salt marshes along the North Shore of Massachusetts — will gather with their large family for an annual holiday dinner. Appropriate, considering members of the family have occupied the house since an ancestor built it in 1670.

This year, however, much will be different. Thanks to a recent renovation, the home's once awkward layout has been altered to create a house ideal for casual living and entertaining, where one room flows easily into the next. The clan will come together around an heirloom table in the dining room, where the original timber framing, long hidden behind plaster walls and ceiling, is now exposed in a celebration of the home's history. The rich olive and terra-cotta palette, chosen specifically with family Christmas feasts in mind, will set a warm, welcoming tone as a Colonial-era portrait of a predecessor casts an approving eye over the occasion.

The house, located on 135 acres of marsh and farmland, wasn't always conducive to hosting guests and large family gatherings — which the homeowners, a husband and wife with two grown sons, large respective families, and a variety of pets, wanted to remedy. They reached out to Bob Weatherall of Weatherall Design in Ipswich, Massachusetts, a close friend and godfather to one of their sons, who has known the family since he was 15. Weatherall fondly remembers the time he spent visiting the house.



"It was sort of locked in time in the sense that it was obviously in need of serious attention in some areas, but the family made it welcoming," he says. "Its charm is really in the way that the family lived and how welcoming they were of friends."

The original structure — at its core a simple Colonial hall-and-parlor configuration — was expanded to include a second story in the early 18th century, plus a family room and new kitchen in the early 20th century. But the layout was choppy and the traffic flow did not favor social interaction. "Seventeenth-century houses get added onto and lived in in such a way that the kitchen is an accessory structure — out of the way," Weatherall says. "Their kitchen was distant from the living room. When people came into the house socially, they were spread

A RUSTIC HEIRLOOM TABLE is the centerpiece of the dining room (ABOVE). Mortise cavities in the timber framing (FACING PAGE, TOP LEFT) and the original front door (FACING PAGE, TOP RIGHT) with outer "storm" door, speak to the house's 1670's roots. A new hallway (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM) makes for easy access to the living room from the family and dining rooms.

out." The homeowners requested a new design that would revitalize the space and, explains Weatherall, "breathe some new life into it," while also bringing back some of its old character and, of course, making entertaining family and friends a priority.

"It's a family house," says the wife, a Boston-area attorney, "a farmhouse with a lot of visitors and pets coming in and out. It needed to be more comfortable, livable, and durable for traffic." With the help of interior designer Sally Wilson of Wilson Kelsey Design in Boston and Salem, Massachusetts, and Weatherall, they got to work.

Homeowners and designers agreed that the original timber framing, which had been covered up in a previous renovation, should be showcased. Weatherall especially admired where the old timbers "leaned and twisted." Where repairs had to be made, he did so with carefully selected matching species of wood. Now the exposed beams stand as beacons from the past, a tribute to the house's history and its solid construction.

The new design also boasts a large porch and entryway across the



- 1 GARAGE
- 2 BACK ENTRY
- 3 LAUNDRY
- 4 KITCHEN
- 5 FAMILY ROOM
- 6 DINING ROOM
- 7 FRONT HALL
- 8 LIVING ROOM
- 9 POWDER ROOM
- 10 NEW HALL
- 11 NEW ENTRY
- 12 NEW PORCH



yard from the barn and horse paddock. It opens to a new mudroom where built-in cabinetry provides ample storage for rain gear and riding boots. An awkwardly placed bathroom that cut the kitchen and dining area off from the living room was replaced with a whimsical English country-style half bath and a new hallway that allows guests to move freely about the house.

With the task of giving the renovated spaces a fresh look, Wilson respected the home's history, scouring the family's existing collection of furniture and decor to see what could be refurbished and updated for this century. For the parlor, she salvaged an antique sofa with a solid wood frame and claw feet, added a camel back, and reupholstered it all in Cowtan & Tout's Palmilla. Wilson placed several comfortable arm chairs around a new wood stove, which serves as a focal point in the space, and hung simple curtain panels on iron rods at the windows and doors. At her suggestion, French doors were added to the back wall, where they open to a view of the rolling acres of meadows and marsh and welcome light and air to the low-ceilinged room.

While Wilson took great care to pay homage to the Colonial architecture in her design, she wanted to introduce more modern aspects to the home, as well. "You don't want to take a museum approach," Wilson says. "You want to feel free to live in the house while still honoring its past."

The old farmhouse is now much more livable and functional, but its evocative history is still ever present. "This is the oldest house I've ever worked on — and one of the oldest in the country," says Wilson. Adds Weatherall: "I loved exploring the structure and feeling the history. It's unique to the area. I haven't seen anything like it before." ■



ANTIQUE COPPER CEREMONIAL fox hunting horns are displayed by the wood stove in the living room, which was redesigned with French doors (FACING PAGE, TOP) that bring fresh air and light into the room. A mix of old furniture and new seating creates a cozy space for conversation. The new entry (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM) is a place to kick off riding boots or stow an umbrella before entering the family room off the kitchen.