

Remodeling Solves Multiple Problems



Antique fireplace brings balance and style to living room



Exterior after major relandscaping effort



Basement rec room updated in style

It was a hectic time for the new Pelham residents who had just moved into their 1938 center hall colonial on Wolfe Lane in December of 2004. They were awaiting the birth of their first child. But the mother to be had a clear vision of what needed to be done. "When we moved in we knew the house had good bones and had been well cared for, but it needed updating. Bathrooms needed to be done, new windows installed, central air, etc." This 4-bedroom house with a slate roof on a large lot was the style of house they wanted—and the right remodeling would make it work for them.

They were fortunate in finding general contractor Frank DePonte, a Pelham Manor resident and president of K. O. Construction, to lead the effort. Together with architect Michael Watson from Manhattan, they came up with many novel solutions to their space constraints. Naturally, their plans included updating the rooms with 21st century conveniences.

The first step was to refinish the guest bedroom and bath up a private stairway just off the kitchen. This room would eventually be a nanny suite, but while renovations were under way, it would serve as living quarters.

The focus that first year was to finish the guest quarters and remodel the entire master suite. Older homes often contain small closets, which can prove to be dead space. Plans were developed for using existing closet space to expand the bath. In the master bedroom, new closets were created with built-in cabinetry. By giving up just two feet of wall space, new floor-to-ceiling built-in closets added elegance as well as spatial dimension to the room.

In remodeling the master bedroom, they encountered a small problem resulting from a previous owner's remodeling attempt to combine two rooms into one. By removing the supporting wall, the ceiling

had begun to sag and had to be raised and supported from the attic before any work could commence.

Finding space for a tub in the master bath was another challenge for the architect, who suggested several small changes—a large walk-in linen closet was the key. The result is a comfortably large bathroom with a full tub and shower.

All windows were in a poor state of repair, so one of the early priorities was to install new energy-efficient Marvin windows throughout the house, keeping the traditional colonial style intact by using 6 over 6 divided light muntins.

Central air conditioning was important, of course, so they installed a two-zone system. That came the first year and involved tearing into old plaster walls. Running AC ducts into the den presented a problem since it was built on a concrete slab and not accessible from the basement. A decision by K.O. Construction Corp. to bump out an upper wall in the master bedroom allowed a passageway for ductwork that permitted air conditioning to reach the den.

The original house had a finished basement with a comfortable rec room, but it needed updating. This was done by installing a new ceiling, new lighting and upgrading the plumbing at the bar. The separate laundry area also serves as a mini-gym.

Quite a bit of their remodeling effort focused on smaller but important details such as moldings around the doors and windows and plinth blocks on the doorways. There was also an old fireplace in the living room that was just too big and seemed out of place. It was rebuilt more in scale to the room, and an antique carved mantel (circa 1810) imported from England, was installed in its place.

The entryway has been dressed up with new marble floor tiles and the semi-circular stairway that leads from the foyer to the second floor has been upgraded from wood to iron, but they kept the original

mahogany handrail. A nearby powder room was also remodeled and a window was removed and classic white marble installed along with upholstered walls.

In the large dining room, a new floor-to-ceiling bay window that overlooks the back yard floods the room with daylight.

The family room, off the living room, was originally an outdoor porch built on a slab foundation. The jalousie crank windows offered little insulation, so it was cold in the winter and hot in the summer. In order to make the room feel more spacious, K.O. Construction Corp. suggested a raised (tented) ceiling, leaving room for an antique chandelier. Radiant heat under the floors, along with insulated walls and new windows solved problems of uneven temperatures.

Since the kitchen was adequate, they simply painted the cabinets and replaced an appliance or two. In the near future, there are plans to build an extension off the kitchen that will include a complete remodeling of the kitchen and eat-in area.

After taking on so many interior projects, the owners turned their attention in 2008 to the exterior where the overgrown landscaping overwhelmed the house. It was beyond the ability to prune so every tree and bush was removed, mainly to open up the garden and utilize all the lost space.

After all the improvements made to the house, the owners feel more than satisfied that they were able to maintain the integrity of the original colonial style, and perhaps even enhance some of its period details. Credit goes to the design ideas of Michael Watson and the skilled craftsmen of K. O. Construction, whom the owners highly recommend for their ability to complete construction within a specified time period.