

Globe Magazine

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YOUR HOME

RENOVATE & REFRESH

Design ideas
and inspiration
for the season of
new beginnings

BY MARNI ELYSE KATZ

CAN IT BE A SOX
SEASON WITHOUT
JOE CASTIGLIONE?

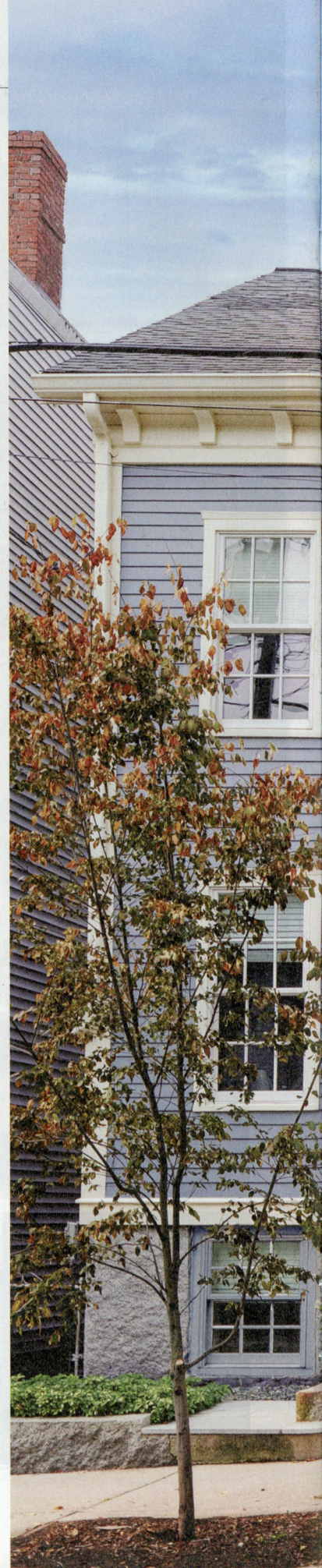
MILK STREET RECIPES
WITH SPRING HERBS

EAST IS EDEN

From left: Architect/homeowner Lyle Bradley (pictured), opened up the second-floor layout to bring in light and showcase the view. He swapped the home's exterior siding, rebuilt the porch, and bent wood for the portico's fan detail.

AN ARCHITECT WITH A TALENT FOR WOODWORKING RENOVATES HIS 1840S HOME IN EAST BOSTON.

BY MARNI ELYSE KATZ
PHOTOGRAPHS BY GREG PREMURU





In 2005, Lyle Bradley, then a single, newly-minted architect working at Albert, Righter & Tittmann Architects, purchased an 800-square-foot fixer-upper in East Boston's Jeffries Point neighborhood. Fast-forward 10 years, Bradley, now a partner at the Boston-based firm, was scratching his head over how to expand it for his four-person/two-pet family. "The home was bursting at the seams," he says. It wasn't going to work.

Then, a neighbor inquired about his doing design work on her circa-1840 twin homes she owned on a nearby street. He fell in love with the place, and she ended up selling one-half to Bradley and his wife. "There were other interested potential buyers, but she knew an architect would respect the symmetry of the facade," Bradley says. "Sprucing up the exterior was a part of the deal."

Bradley and his wife, joined by neighbors, friends, and the Brothers MG Contractor team, worked their way through the house, taking it from dingy, dark, and dated to delightfully bright. Rebuilding the front porch let Bradley show off his wood-working skills—he created a vaulted portico with fan motifs similar to others in the neighborhood. "I went to furniture-making school in Maine, before architecture school, where I learned to use old hand tools—hand planes, chisels, spokeshaves," Bradley says. "My favorite thing to do with wood is to bend it."

Past the blue front door, the interior stairs offered another wood-bending opportunity. Bradley, employing a combination of laminating and steam bending, handcrafted curved trim

for the underside of the stairs. His son helped him refinish the original handrail and newel post. "The stair and entry were the biggest labors of love carpentry-wise," Bradley says.

On the rest of the first floor, Bradley modified door openings for a better flow, pulled out the back stairs, and built a deck with a spiral staircase that connects it to the new, second-floor deck. (The spectacular views of Boston Harbor and the city made it worth the effort.) "It was the only house on the block without a deck, in part because the house is on a slope that makes access [for construction] challenging," Bradley says.

The family spends most of their time on the sunny second floor. "Before, you entered into a dark hallway," the architect says. "Getting light and views were the goal." The team took down the interior walls, opening up the entire space. Still, there is order. "The three new posts and the beam above them that replaced the existing bearing walls became the organizing elements for the big, open rectangle of the living and dining rooms," he says.

In the living room, three windows overlook the street. "The panels below the windows—remade based on the originals—make them feel very tall, and the jambs are flared to let in more light and make them look wider," Bradley says. The room's focal point is a refashioned fireplace with a simple black granite surround and white oak mantel with a rounded edge, another example of the homeowner's handiwork.

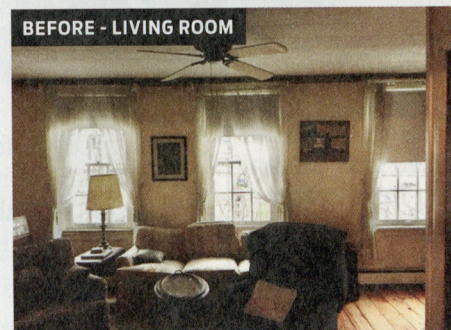
In the dining room, a glossy blue buffet with legs that Bradley sculpted by hand separates the table from the path-

"GETTING LIGHT AND VIEWS WERE THE GOAL."





From left: Bradley created a new handrail for the stairs, where the family cat heads to the third floor. Trim between two windows aligns with structural posts beyond it, acting as an architectural feature that defines the seating area. **Above:** In the kitchen, a corner window supplanted a shower.



Left: Bradley made the shelf, desk, and stool for his son's bedroom, in part using a wooden door found in a dumpster.

Resources

ARCHITECT:
Albert, Righter &
Tittmann Architects,
artarchitects.com

CONTRACTOR:
Brothers MG
Contractor, @
[BrothersMGcontractor,](http://BrothersMGcontractor.com)
857-919-8821

CABINETS:
Divine Design Center,
divinedesigncenter.com

way to the kitchen. Three tall glass panels—one a door to the deck—let in natural light and reveal the Boston skyline beyond, showcasing its full glory.

The transformative moment in the renovation came from clearing the old kitchen and bath out of the bump-out. Now, the entire length is taken up by a sleek galley kitchen that terminates with a breakfast bar beneath windows that come down to the countertop. “We tried several window arrangements, but none captured the best view in the back right corner,” Bradley says. The solution: a corner window from Marvin that let them do without the framing typically required in the corner of a building.

Behind the sink, casement windows act as a pass-through for food and drink to the deck. Opposite, upper cabinetry hangs 27 inches—rather than the usual 18 inches—above the countertop and a range with a retractable hood, keeping that back left corner from feeling confined. The refrigerator, pantry, and a stacked washer/dryer are hidden behind a floor-to-ceiling expanse of frameless, matte-white Leicht cabinetry, all of which Bradley installed himself.

Stairs with a ribbon-like handrail—Bradley reimagined a previous incarnation as a continuous oak handrail with mahogany accents—swoop up to the third floor. By expanding a single window dormer in the back of the building and pushing the primary bedroom toward the view, Bradley squeezed in room for a second bathroom on that floor.

After investing in eight years' worth of renovations, the family has no plan to leave anytime soon. “Given my work and kids' schools in the city, we plan to be here for the foreseeable future,” Bradley says. ■

Send comments to magazine@globe.com.