



summer camp REVIVAL

text and photos by roe a. osborn



The new kitchen has wonderful marble countertops, a farmhouse sink, and traditional cabinetry, giving this room an old-fashioned feel.



A unique remodel transforms a former galley and mess hall into a classy kitchen, dining room, and great room.



Cregg Sweeney added a large fieldstone fireplace to the great room to anchor the space.



“Bug juice, beans, and BLTs!” Dan says of the déjà vu he sometimes gets when sitting in his new great room. This room was the mess hall for the summer camp that he attended as a boy growing up on the Cape. When the camp was split up and sold in the mid ’90s, Dan and his wife, Barb, bought a 2-acre parcel—not for the nostalgia, but to create a home for their family.

Shortly after buying the place, the couple updated the kitchen and created a great room out of the mess hall. But the renovated kitchen was a traffic nightmare. Getting to the great room meant cutting through the middle of the kitchen. And while better than the old mess hall, the great room was OK, but not great. After more than a decade, it was time for another upgrade, so they called on their friend and master craftsman, Cregg Sweeney of Cregg Sweeney, Artisan Builders to do the renovation.

THE FOCAL POINT

The renovated great room was open and roomy, but it lacked a focal point. Without that focus, the room was unfriendly and out of scale with the rest of the house. It was decided that a large fieldstone fireplace on the gable wall would provide that focus. The kitchen also needed a major redesign. Besides the traffic issues, a wall separated it from the dining room, making the kitchen feel small and cramped. Sweeney brought in designer Pav Wilkinson, of Wilkinson Design, to help rethink the kitchen and dining spaces. The first decision was to remove the wall between the dining room and kitchen. The wish list included a large island, but the existing kitchen was too narrow for an island and cabinets. The solution was to annex space from the great room to widen the kitchen and create a recessed alcove for the range.

KITCHEN CHALLENGE

Sweeney wanted to raise the whole kitchen ceiling to make it feel less long and narrow visually. Raising the ceiling would also increase the scale of the kitchen to let it better compete with the nearby great room. But when the framing was exposed over the kitchen, he discovered that it had never been updated from the early 1900s. The rafters were woefully undersized and many inches out of level. And there was no actual framing in the exterior wall to support the roof. Sweeney didn’t miss a beat. He reinforced the rafters from below and added a new exterior wall frame for support. After making the structure sound, the rooms were ready for the craftsman’s magic.



A “GREAT” ROOM

The original great room had a triplet of transom windows on the gable wall. The center window came out, and in its place, Harwich mason Chris Pace built a magnificent stone fireplace with a raised hearth that complemented the gable wall both inside and out. Sweeney and his crew built window seats on either side of the fireplace with the woodwork meticulously scribed to the fireplace stone.

The roof windows in the great room were kept, along with the flat peak of the cathedral ceiling. The crew wrapped the original rough collar ties in finish lumber and added an expressed framework that made the room feel less cavernous and gave the ceiling a visual rhythm. One small open area in the corner of the great room just didn't seem to fit in. The space was defined by adding knee walls with square columns that flank a gently arched opening. A coffered ceiling and flat-panel wainscot in the space add perfect notes of decorum to create a formal dining room. To add light, an arched opening in the wall connects the dining room with the everyday eating area off the kitchen. The arch echoes the shape of the great room doorways. And in a respectful nod to the house's history, the clients kept an exterior window in the dining room that was part of the original mess hall.



FIT AND FUNCTIONAL

Sweeney's crew dialed the craftsmanship to an even higher level in the kitchen. Every cabinet was custom made. As you walk from the mud room through the kitchen and into the great room, you pass a built-in hutch with glazed cabinet doors and a walnut countertop. The cooking kiosk creates a center for kitchen activities as well as the visual center of attention in the kitchen. On either side of the range, the cabinets are topped with marble to withstand the heat of pots or dishes from the stove.

When Sweeney designed and built the cabinets on the sink wall, he deliberately changed the depth to break up the straight-line effect, giving the cabi-

Opposite top: A dining alcove sits just off the great room. Opposite below: Sweeney incorporated an original window between the kitchen and the dining room. Below: The patio is accessible from the great room.



nets the appearance of assembled furniture. The articulated feet of the cabinet bases enhance the furniture look. Beveled-edged subway tile backsplashes on every wall unite the kitchen areas visually.

The island's rich walnut countertop expands the food preparation area and perfectly links the main kitchen sink and the stove. At one end of the island, the cabinetry steps down to a bread-making station with a marble countertop.

Dan and Barb insisted on being frugal with storage space in the kitchen. When the redesign created a small closet-like space near the mud room, they had the crew turn it into a pantry. To maximize storage, Sweeney recessed shelving into the stud bays for shallow storage of cans or jars.

SALVAGING THE OLD

Although their kitchen was rebuilt from scratch, the couple preserved a lot of materials from the old kitchen. The original knotty pine floors were refinished for the remodel. The chandelier from the original dining room transplanted seamlessly into the new. They even opted to reuse their old faucet for the utility sink in the island. Dan and Barb also salvaged the old kitchen cabinets, which they plan to use someday in their barn. In the meantime, they'll enjoy the warm sound of their own children's voices echoing off renewed walls that once knew the voices of hundreds of cheery kids enjoying summer camp at the Cape. [h](#)

Roe A. Osborn is a freelance writer and photographer living in Harwich.

Cregg Sweeney, Artisan Builders
www.creggsweeney.com
508-221-6875
cregg@creggsweeney.com