

The Remodeling & Design Resource

# Home



in good

A RESPECTFUL OWNER KEEPS A CLASSIC HOME'S DETAILS WHILE OPENING

## EAST HAMPTON | NEW YORK

STYLED BY  
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### **SINK & SWIM**

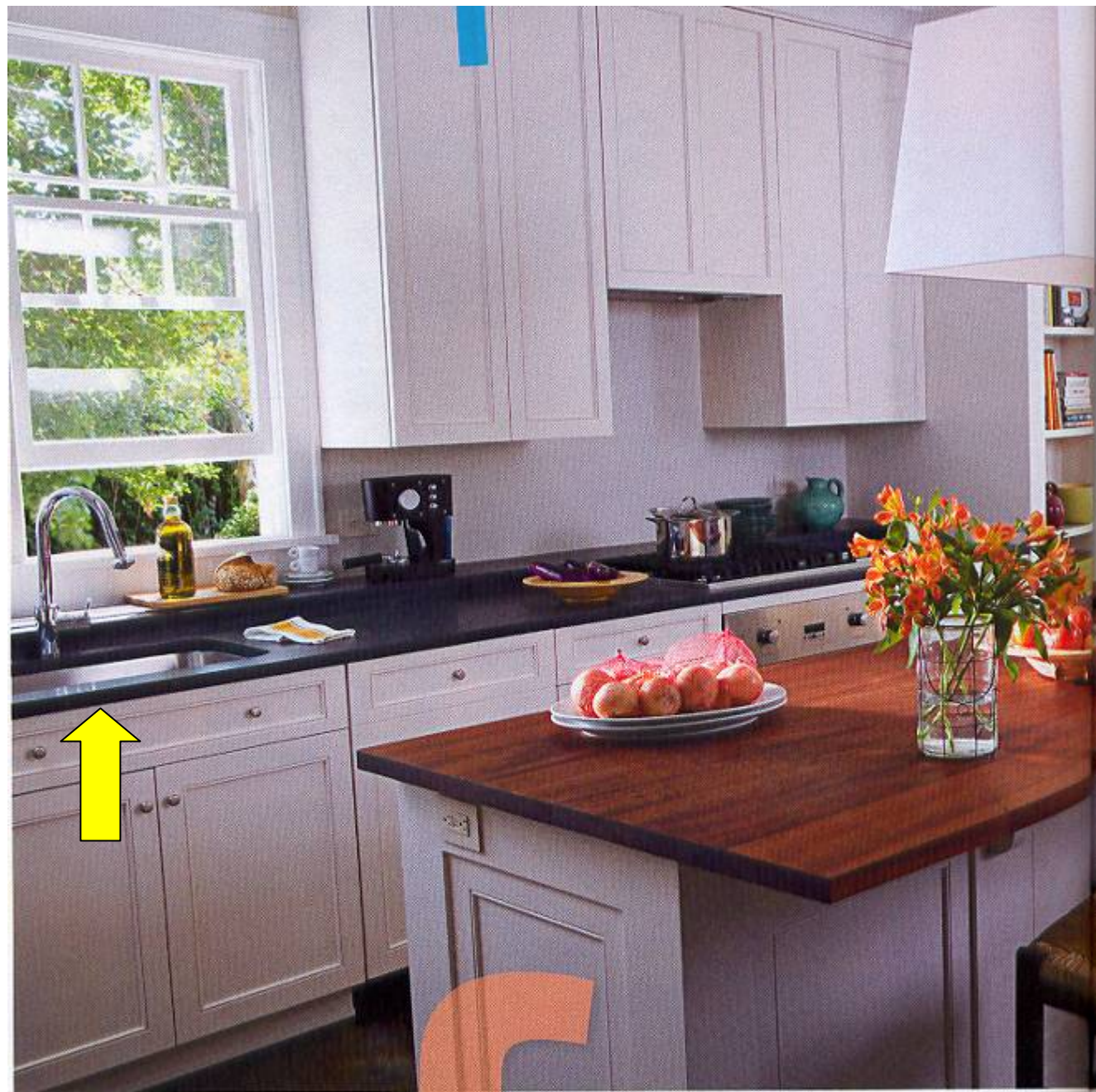
The new owner, Cory Shields, opted for a sunken great room at the home's rear, left, with tall casement windows and French doors leading out to a bluestone terrace and a new pool. Window and door trim meshes with the home's original style; the new fireplace mantel blends many existing trim elements.

The old living and dining rooms, below, at the front of the home, were separated by two half-open partition units to help define the spaces.



# hands

ITS DATED LAYOUT AND LEVELING OFF ITS SLOPING YARD



Homeowner Cory Shields relaxes in the kitchen of his renovated East Hampton home.

FOR OVER 20 YEARS MY WIFE, NANCY, AND I OWNED A weekend home on a third of an acre in East Hampton, New York, a bungalow that had been kit-built during the Great Depression. We'd loved the house's vintage charm and generous spaces. When we decided to sell, we hoped the new owner would feel similarly—and fortunately he did.

"I felt the house had good bones," says that new owner, TV executive Cory Shields. "I had a great feeling about the property." Shields did have a wish list: a couple of new bathrooms and a more open layout indoors, plus a swimming pool outside. But both he and his architect, New York City-based Jack Wettling, were keen to make these changes while retaining as many of the



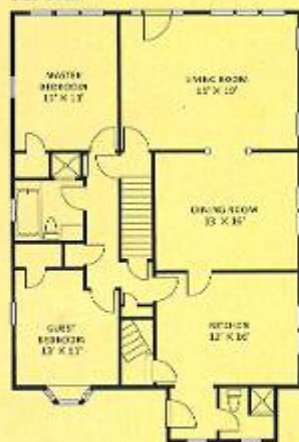
original design elements as possible—windows, woodwork, and oak floors, for example.

Adding the two upstairs baths meant absorbing attic space adjacent to two bedrooms and carving dormers, both front and rear, into the roof. "I asked the contractor to mock up possible dormers with two-by-fours, to make sure they'd be in keeping with the house's existing proportions," says Wetling. "Two of the three dormer windows in front bring light to the new master bath; the third serves the guest bath. Of the rear dormer windows, the center one is at the top of a new staircase; the two peripheral ones are in the bedrooms."

"Like so many houses of its era, this one was focused inward—you got away from the outside and had a nice cozy interior," the architect

## FLOOR PLANS

### BEFORE



The first floor was formerly a cluster of dark, walled-in rooms, including two bedrooms that shared a bath. In the '80s a second bath replaced an old mudroom. The single-flight stairs leading to two upstairs bedrooms were narrow and steep.

### AFTER



Opened up, the renovated first floor begins with a modest foyer and a living room (now used as a library). The new stairway is L-shaped, less steep, and divided by a landing. A short hall leads from the entry to the back of the house where steps lead down to the sunken great room, with views of the pool and backyard.



**OPEN & FREE** The original kitchen, left, had a built-in old-fashioned enamel sink. The old windows remain, but the newly open kitchen, above left, now boasts a Pietra Cardoza stone countertop wrapped around a stainless steel undermount sink and a cooktop set over a built-in oven. The island's work surface is mahogany treated with protective oil.

## ADDING BIG WINDOWS WITHOUT COMPROMISING THE CHARM,



BEFORE



**SLEEK & MODERN** Twin beds made of sturdy maple were arranged against one wall in an old upstairs bedroom, left. (Shields bought them from our family; they're now in a guest room.) Now the master bedroom, this space, far left, boasts south-facing dormer windows that bring sunlight into the room for much of the day.

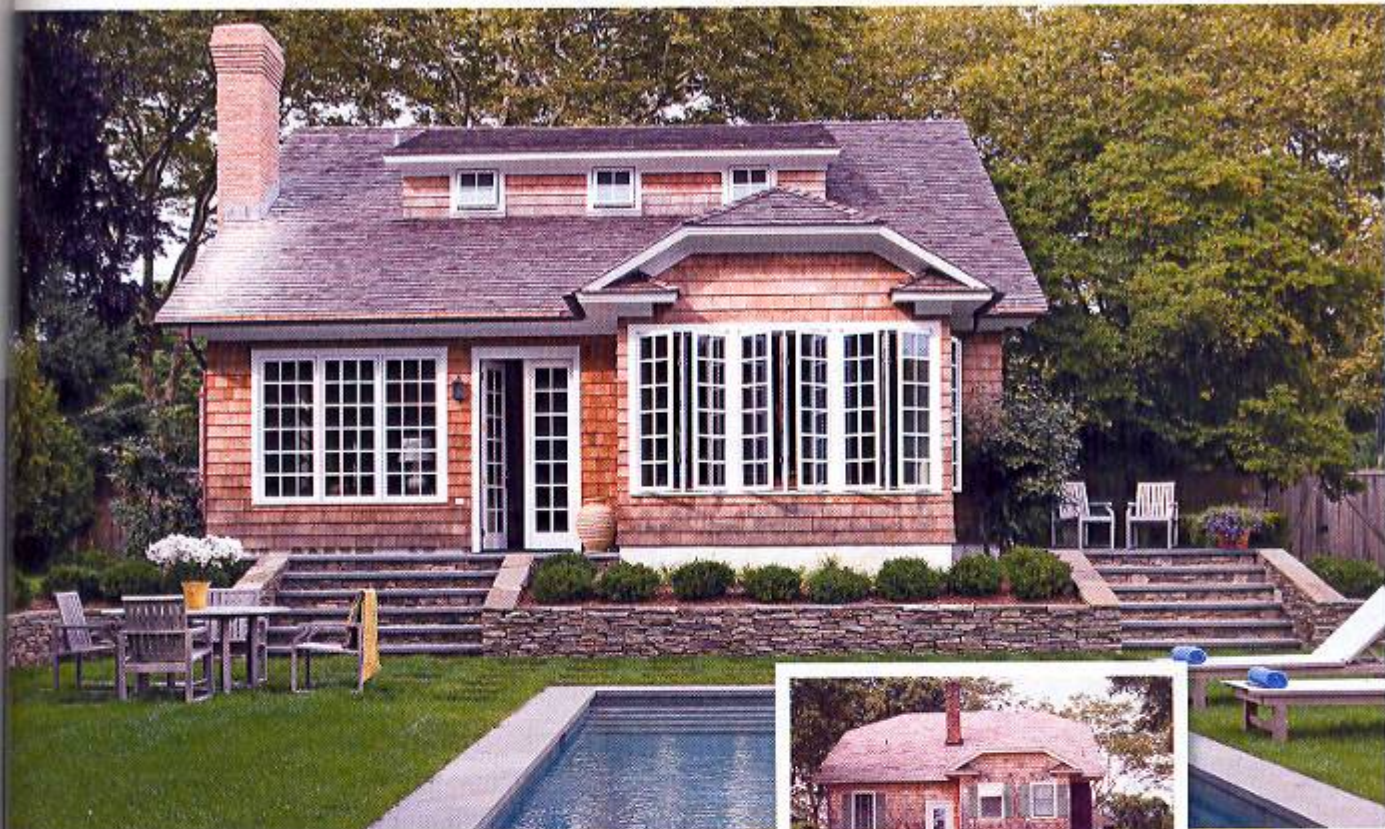
**CALMER & COOLER** Vanity, toilet, and tub were squeezed against one wall of the original bathroom, which was clad in peach-colored tile during a modest '90s remodel. Centerpiece of the updated bath, far right, is a Carrara marble-topped custom cabinet with both open and closed storage. The doorway at the vanity's right separates the bath from a shielded outdoor shower.



BEFORE



## SCALE, AND DETAILS OF THE HOUSE WAS ONE MAJOR CHALLENGE



**WETTER, NOT WILDER** The back wall of the old house, above, had three windows and a door. A brick chimney vented an ancient furnace. A 15-degree grade was leveled to make way for a 14x36-foot pool, top. "It lines up with the center of the breakfast room table," says Shields. Two terraces top the bluestone steps: one at left off the great room, one at right off the kitchen. A new chimney serves the great room fireplace.

### design SOLUTIONS

*"Everything here looks original, even the dormers. Other than new shingles, you'd never know what was done."*

—Homeowner Cory Shields

*Architect Jack Wetling adds, "Dropping one area of flooring a bit creates a dramatic ceiling height—plus a bit of surprise. Yet the effect is still in harmony with the house as I found it."*

explains. Says Shields, "I knew, moving in, that I wanted a connection to the yard that just wasn't there originally." So he agreed to merge the once separate dining room, kitchen, and guest bedroom (which my family had used as a den) into one flowing space, ending at what is virtually a wall of glass. To make the space feel more dramatic, Wetling lowered the floor. "I also thought," he says, "that if we could get down another two feet, we'd be getting closer to the backyard and that there would be less grade separation between it and the pool Cory wanted."

A pool? Years ago, Nancy and I had done some landscaping, which Shields retained. But we'd never considered a swimming pool because the property was so sloped. Shields simply had the backyard leveled off. "We found the lowest grade," he recalls, "then just scooped it out from that point up to the house." Wetling then designed two bluestone terraces right above the pool, also urging the owner to remove the driveway and replace it with more lawn. "This really made the yard feel bigger," says Shields.

"I was always nervous about making changes, about doing anything that would take away too much of the character of the house," he adds. "After all, I was attracted to the place because of its charm. In the end, nothing was added on; the footprint remained the same. Jack was able to capture the charm of the house and actually combine new and old in a really cool way." ■

# Home

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