



a house for **all seasons**

**A thoughtful renovation transforms
a rough-and-tumble weekend
cottage into a year-round residence**

BY BARBARA FLANAGAN

“i

t was just a beach house,” says Lauren Payne. “A getaway.”

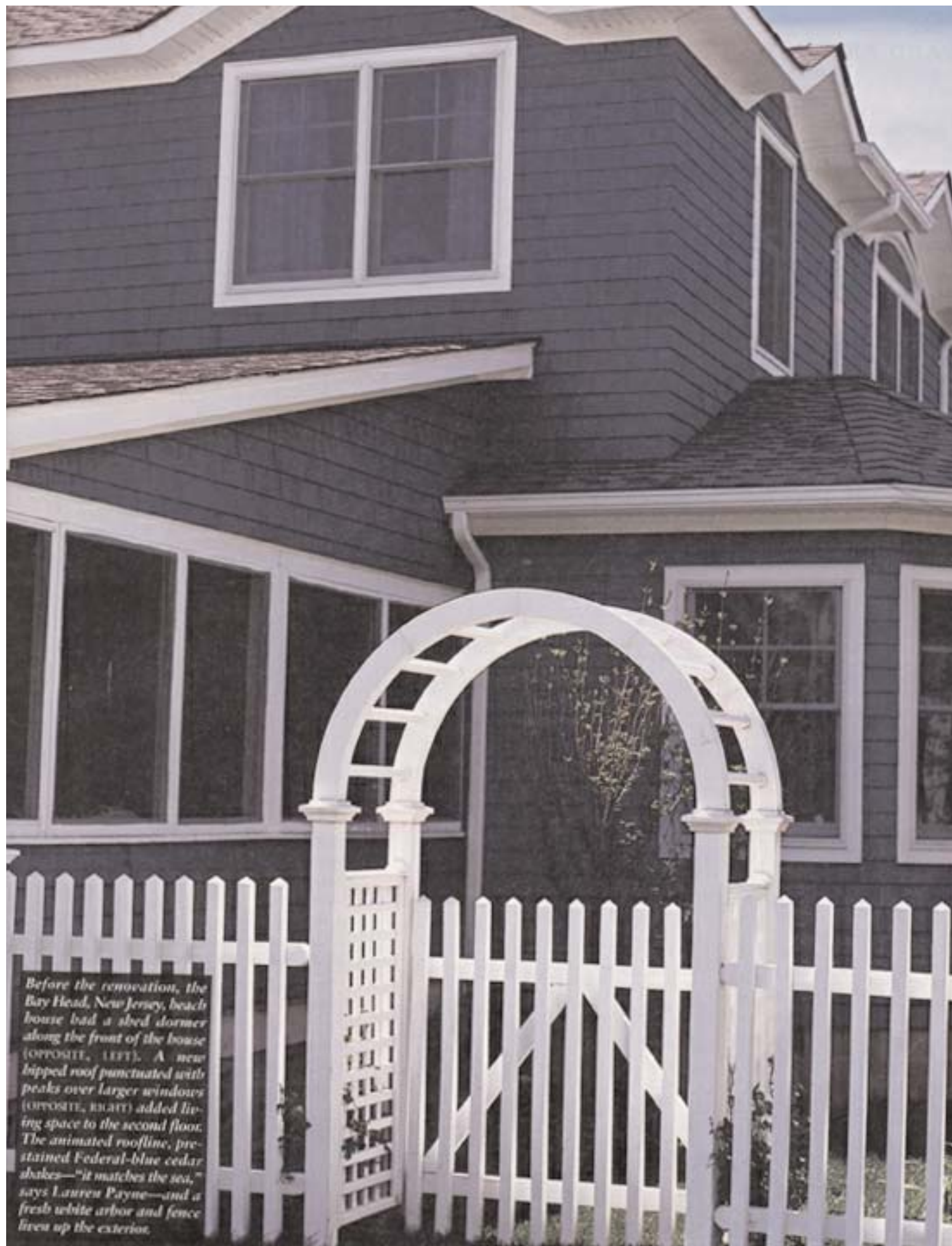
And that was fine, for a while. Then it was time to make some serious changes to their life—and their Bay Head, New Jersey, house. With the help of a clever redesign, Lauren and husband Perry Pappas transformed their one-time weekend hangout into a full-time family home—with a new master suite, kitchen, home office, and nice-sized bedrooms for two kids. “It’s cozy and cute from the street, so people are always shocked to see how much room there is inside,” Lauren says.

Raising a family was not at all what the couple had in mind in 1993, when they bought what was then a five-bedroom, two-bath cottage. The town was simply a place to have fun. Lauren, who had “taken shares” in several summer weekend houses with friends from Manhattan, had introduced her future husband to Bay Head years earlier. After Lauren and Perry married, they rented different houses for a few years before finally deciding to buy.

When they began looking, they wanted only one thing: proximity to the water. “This house just happened to be the one nearest to the ocean—a block and a half away,” Lauren says. The 1,700-square-foot cottage wasn’t particularly beautiful, but they didn’t care, since they figured they’d be spending their time at the beach anyway. They also thought the five small bedrooms would make a convenient “youth hostel” for visiting friends.

But after they had a daughter and son, Lauren and Perry gradually discovered that “we liked our weekends better than our weeks.” Compared with the day-to-day logistical challenges they faced shuttling kids around New York City, the beach, the backyard, the friendly neighbors, and the ease of living there became increasingly seductive.

So they decided to move to Bay Head and to make the house more livable. Because Lauren didn’t want to commute to the city, she needed a home office. And the four bedrooms upstairs were small and dark, with tiny closets, slanted floors, and sloped ceilings that were only 7 feet 3 inches at



Before the renovation, the Bay Head, New Jersey, beach house had a shed dormer along the front of the house (opposite, left). A new hipped roof punctuated with peaks over larger windows (opposite, right) added living space to the second floor. The animated roofline, pre-stained Federal-blue cedar shakes—"it matches the sea," says Lauren Payne—and a fresh white arbor and fence liven up the exterior.

ONWARD AND UPWARD





Since a wider staircase meant less space in the living room, Lauren and Perry made economical use of the area underneath the steps by building in shelving.

STAIR MASTER

As much as Lauren Payne liked the funky, multicolored staircase that came with the Bay Head home, she never warmed to the sight of her two small children bounding down its precarious bottom winders. So when it turned out that the steps were too steep and narrow to pass inspection, she considered it a blessing. "Once our contractor told us just how out of code the old staircase was, deciding to replace it became that much easier," she says. Though the new code-compliant unit steals space from the living room, it's well worth the peace of mind it delivers.

(1) Rather than remove the staircase in one unwieldy section, contractor David Thomas McCann and his crew dismantled it piecemeal, using a reciprocating saw to cut it into two equal parts.

(The treacherous winders are visible in the bottom right corner of the picture.) (2) To accommodate the more gently pitched new stairway, the stairwell opening had to be extended by two feet.

That meant tearing out a section of drywall ceiling so that the necessary modifications could be made to the framework overhead. (3) The top flight of the staircase was prefabricated from poplar by a local manufacturer, with 8-inch risers over 10½-inch treads, according to code. After attaching it to the header (and the wall studs, once they were in), the crew installed the site-built bottom winders. Where they formerly made the 90-degree turn in four steep steps, the new set completes it in two, with the narrow end of each tread measuring 6 inches wide. (4) Though safety prompted the replacement initially, the leveling and reframing of the second story would have required a new staircase anyway; as seen here, the new stairwell girder, framed out of a sturdy 3½-by-9½-inch laminated beam, actually floats a few inches above the old. —Dan DiClerico

their highest point. For a summer place, the rooms qualified as quaint, but in a year-round home, they just didn't cut it. The couple wanted to transform these four bedrooms into three larger ones—and throw in a few closets while they were at it—plus add a master suite for themselves. The question was, says project designer Tom Degan, president of In Progress Environments, in Red Bank, New Jersey, could these goals be achieved by renovating, or would they have to tear down the house and start from scratch?

The homeowners, who were proud of their 100-year-old house, were clear that they preferred to work with what they had. "We wanted to keep it looking like a vintage house," Lauren recalls. "And as we got further into it, we realized we could bump some of the rooms out and have a whole new home."

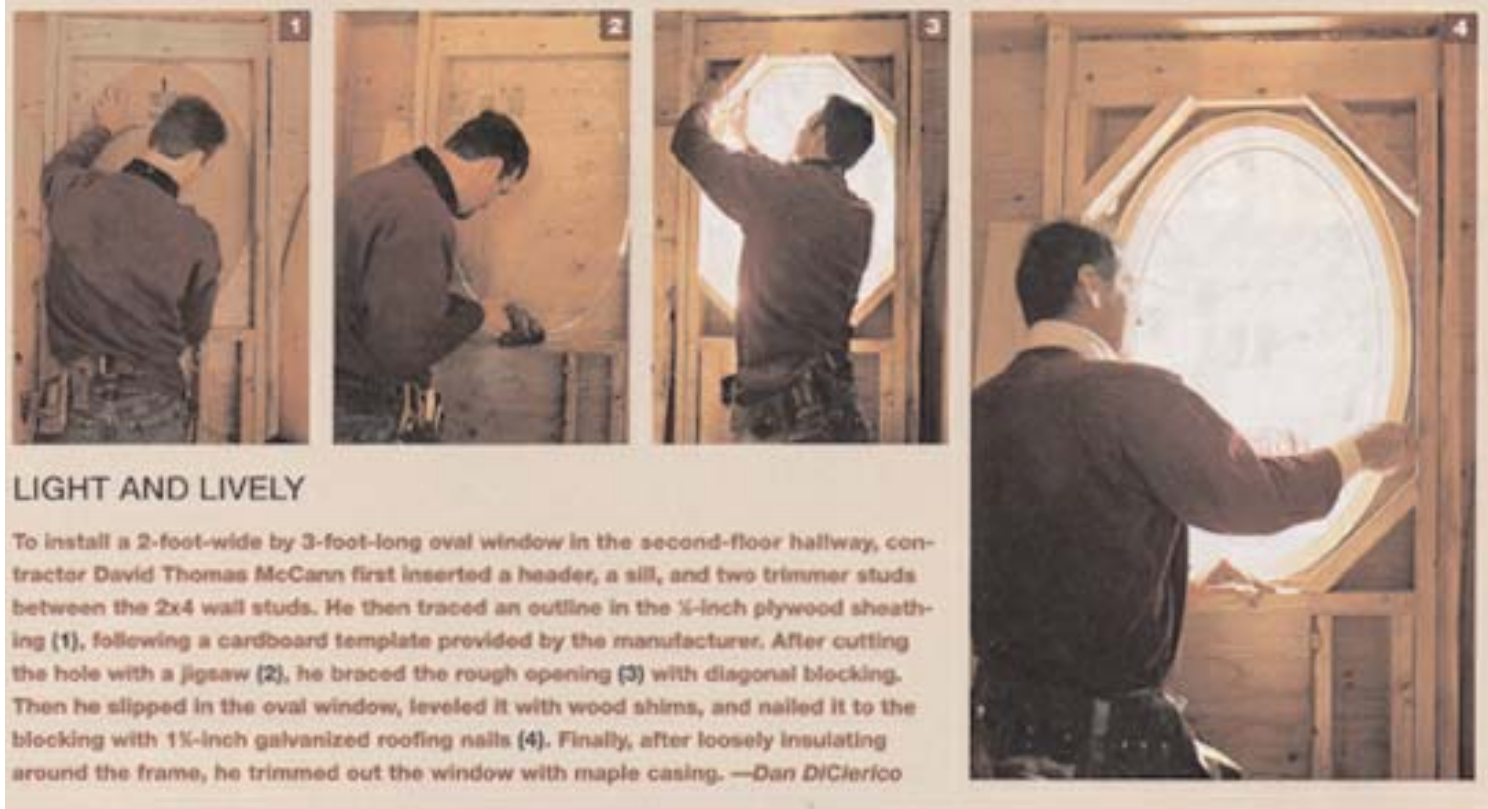
That was true for the downstairs, at least. There, architect Edward Ballantyne of In Progress enlarged the 1970s-era kitchen by turning an adjacent side porch into a 4-by-9-foot breakfast alcove. The couple replaced the worn linoleum floor and white-laminate Eurostyle cabinets with a limestone floor and white-painted wood cabinetry with a country look, and added an island topped with butcher block and enclosed with wainscoting. A playroom, bumped out and given a bay window, became Lauren's home office, while a downstairs bedroom was turned into a playroom. Although the living room stayed within the original footprint, the owners made it more comfortable and gave it more character: They replaced the cramped, winding staircase with a wider, more comfortable one (see "Stair Master," left), and offset the loss of those several inches by using the space beneath the stairs for recessed, built-in shelving. Then they tiled the fireplace surround in navy blue, accenting it with sun and star tiles, and paneled the walls with white-painted beadboard.



The kitchen appliances and island stayed in their old positions, but the laminated cabinets and counters were replaced with white country-style cabinetry and maple butcher-block countertops. A new 4-by-9-foot alcove made room for a dining area.

The addition of an eyebrow window and French doors leading out onto a narrow balcony opened up the master bedroom to the outdoors. "There are nights when I'll crawl into bed and the moon will be framed perfectly in that window," says Lauren.





LIGHT AND LIVELY

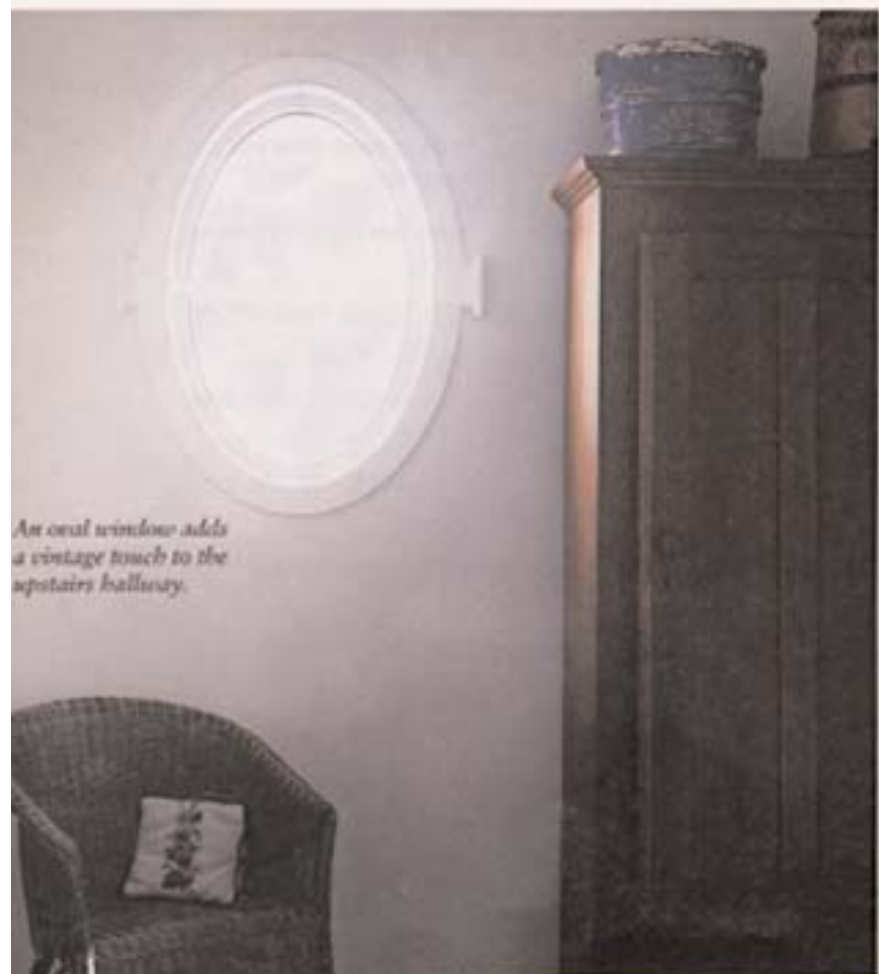
To install a 2-foot-wide by 3-foot-long oval window in the second-floor hallway, contractor David Thomas McCann first inserted a header, a sill, and two trimmer studs between the 2x4 wall studs. He then traced an outline in the 1/2-inch plywood sheathing (1), following a cardboard template provided by the manufacturer. After cutting the hole with a jigsaw (2), he braced the rough opening (3) with diagonal blocking. Then he slipped in the oval window, leveled it with wood shims, and nailed it to the blocking with 1 1/2-inch galvanized roofing nails (4). Finally, after loosely insulating around the frame, he trimmed out the window with maple casing. —Dan DiClerico

at the house was sagging. Although it wasn't unusual "to put beach houses right on the sand," McCann says, this one stood on brick piers that ran down the center of the house. But the house had shifted,

and the piers were no longer positioned in line with the main load-bearing wall. McCann strengthened the structure by pouring concrete footings around the entire perimeter and replacing the center piers with two 3 1/2-by-9 1/2-inch girders made of glued-laminated beams, spaced 4 feet apart, running from the front to the back. Then he was able to build the new, expanded second floor.

Higher and wider, the new second floor beautifully resolved the problem of the sleeping arrangements. The 600-square-foot master suite features a cathedral-like ceiling with an eyebrow window capping French doors. "We wanted to create some sort of special effect in the bedroom," says Degan. "The vault brings in light by capturing some of the sky and the moon." The French doors open onto a 3-by-9-foot balcony, just large enough to fit a couple of chairs. The master bath has twin sinks and a shower big enough for two; the walls and countertops are covered in a beige-to-ivory assortment of small square tiles, accented with larger, bas-relief tiles. In addition to the master suite, the upstairs contains two bedrooms for the kids, plus one guest room. The old bath got new fixtures and finishes. "In the summer, we rarely go a weekend without guests," Lauren explains. "We can pack a lot of people into this house. And everyone loves it because nothing is too formal."

However, there is one issue that even good architecture and construction could not address: "Sand," says Lauren, who remains undaunted. "I just keep vacuuming." ■



An oval window adds a vintage touch to the upstairs hallway.