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# This Old House



## Dream Remodel

A free-flowing home for a modern family

# modern CLASSIC

This Old House TV takes a dated ranch to new heights, with an all-new second story and family-friendly, free-flowing living spaces downstairs • BY JILL CONNORS

Photographs by Anthony Tieuli  
Styling by Jennifer Vreeland McDermott



LEFT: With what turned out to be a nine-month renovation behind them, Scott and Shayla Adams gather happily at their new kitchen island with Malin, 6, and Emily, 2.

ABOVE: The living/dining/kitchen area gains a new sense of spaciousness with an open plan, wide expanses of glass, and ceilings that rise to almost 10 feet high in the step-down living area. A coffered ceiling and white oak flooring unify the spaces. *TOH* master carpenter Norm Abram built the two-tiered salvaged-pine coffee table.

**Within hours of moving into their renovated house,** Scott and Shayla Adams and their two daughters felt right at home. There was food on the table, toys were spread out in the playroom—and even more toys spilled into the living area. But that’s just what Shayla had envisioned. “I knew I wanted the main living area to have an open floor plan. Now I can stand in the kitchen and be part of the action while the girls play,” she says. “This is what home should be, somewhere the girls can play, run around, do whatever they want.”

The Adamses’ dream-house journey began in August 2018, when the couple purchased a run-down ranch in Westerly, Rhode Island. When they moved in a little over a year later, that ranch had been transformed into the perfect home for their young

**THESE PAGES**  
WINDOWS AND PATIO DOORS: Marvin Windows and Doors  
WHITE OAK FLOORING: Baird Brothers Fine Hardwoods  
BOOKCASES AND COFFERED CEILING: Sweenor Builders Cabinetry Shop  
RUG: Dash & Albert  
QUARTZ COUNTERTOPS: Cambria  
WALL PAINT: Benjamin Moore’s Stonington Gray  
DINING ROOM CHANDELIER: Pottery Barn  
WINDOW TREATMENTS: Eileen & Taylor

“It wasn’t until this project that I came to appreciate just how efficient the gambrel roofline is for creating more space.”  
—KEVIN O’CONNOR, TOH HOST



ABOVE: The house’s New England-style elements include a gambrel-roofed addition, cedar shingle siding, and white trim. Bluestone steps lead to the front and side doors.

TOP RIGHT: The working area of the kitchen has an L-shaped layout with white flat-panel cabinets and custom crown molding.

BOTTOM LEFT: The mudroom is lined with a combination of closed and open storage.

BOTTOM RIGHT: South-facing patio doors provide easy access from the dining area to the deck.

**THESE PAGES**

- RAFTER TAILS: Lamco
- CEDAR SHINGLES: SBC
- ROOF SHINGLES: GAF
- EXTERIOR TRIM: Lifespan
- SOD: Sodco
- KITCHEN CABINETS: Signature Custom Cabinetry
- QUARTZ COUNTERTOPS: Cambria
- KITCHEN SINKS AND FAUCETS: Kohler
- RANGE HOOD: Panasonic
- WINDOWS: Marvin Windows and Doors
- THERMOSTAT: Bryant
- FLOORING: Baird Brothers
- FINE HARDWOODS: Fine Hardwoods
- RUGS: Dash & Albert
- KITCHEN PENDANTS: Rejuvenation
- BACKSPLASH: SomerTile
- DINING TABLE: Serena & Lily
- MUDROOM FLOOR TILE: Merola

family—a spacious two-story, gambrel-roofed Dutch Colonial.

Their first decision after buying the house proved fateful: They hired *TOH* home builder Jeff Sweenor, whose work along the Rhode Island coast Scott had long admired, and soon after, the renovation became a subject of *This Old House*’s 41st television season.

“From the very start, Scott’s idea was to incorporate the gambrel style, which he had seen in other houses we did,” says Jeff. “The twist was that we were taking a one-story ranch and turning it into a two-story, but the house had a solid foundation, so we knew there would be no problem, structurally, adding a second floor.”

The gambrel made all the difference in *TOH* host Kevin O’Connor’s mind: “It wasn’t until this project that I appreciated just how efficient the gambrel roofline is for creating more space,” Kevin says. “They just added a second floor, and it feels like they tripled the space because of the gambrel shape.” In fact, the remodel added 1,250 square feet to the original 1,850-square-foot house.

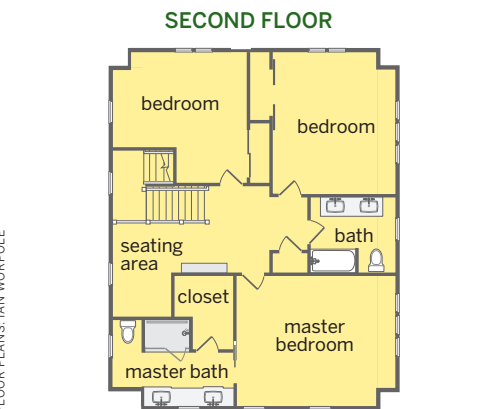
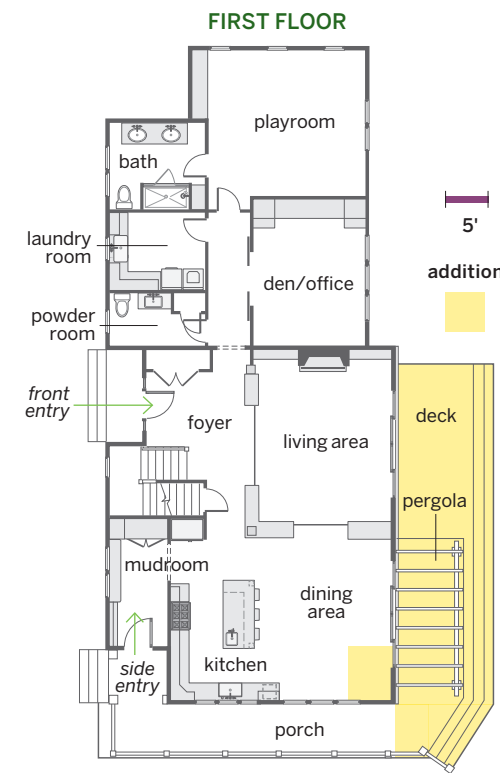
Still, the Sweenor Builders design team, led by architectural designer Lori Foley, managed to incorporate all of Scott and Shayla’s wish-list spaces: an open-plan kitchen/dining/living area on the main part of the first floor; three bedrooms and two baths on the second floor; a den/office, a laundry, a playroom, plus one and a half baths in the remaining one-story section of the original house; and outdoor living spaces that include a stone patio, a wrap-around deck, and a pergola.

But the showpiece of the finished house is definitely the main floor’s open kitchen/dining/living space, which is brightened by an abundance of windows and patio doors, and enhanced by traditional trimwork that reflects a high level of craftsmanship.



**floor plans**

The original ranch’s footprint was only enlarged by about 25 square feet, to square off a corner of the new dining area. The second floor added another 1,225 square feet, creating a 3,100-square-foot house with three bedrooms, three and a half baths, a mudroom, a laundry, a playroom, and an office.



FLOOR PLANS: IAN WORPOLE

“The knotty pine that was everywhere in the original 1949 house was so true to the era. It’s great that we could reuse some of it in the playroom.”  
—JEFF SWEENOR, TOH HOME BUILDER



**MORE TO EXPLORE**  
See additional photos of the Adamses’ home at [thisoldhouse.com/westerly-ranch-house](http://thisoldhouse.com/westerly-ranch-house)

**OPPOSITE, TOP:** The playroom occupies a former bedroom; the room’s knotty pine wainscoting boards were salvaged from the original house and given a whitewash finish.

**OPPOSITE, BOTTOM LEFT:** The bathroom off the playroom evokes mid-century modern style with its minimalist vanity and black accents.

**OPPOSITE, BOTTOM RIGHT:** The stairway to the second floor is located in the front entry and features custom-milled newel posts.

**ABOVE:** Sliding barn-style doors with glass panels allow parents to close off the den/office while maintaining sight lines.



The flowing spaces are unified by a coffered ceiling, which Jeff put together using preassembled picture-frame molding fitted inside beams that crisscross a ceiling of white oak tongue-and-groove boards. Low bookcase built-ins with integrated posts and pilasters define the step-down living area. The fireplace wall’s nickel-gap cladding, with floating shelves and lower cabinets on either side, establishes the space as a casual gathering spot for a modern family. In the kitchen, marble-look quartz countertops offer a durable complement to the classic woodwork.

“I like the detail in this house,” says TOH general contractor Tom Silva. “Details like coffered ceilings and built-ins are why people love old houses, and here those details are done really well.”

Beyond the kitchen/dining/living area, the trim details become just slightly simpler, the atmosphere just a bit more casual. The den and playroom, for example, have no crown molding and simple base molding, but the wide door and window casings reflect the robust trim used elsewhere in the house.

In the playroom, knotty pine boards salvaged from the house’s original walls have been whitewashed and recast as wainscoting. The cladding protects the walls from the dings of active play at the same time that it allows the old house a continued presence in the new home.

Throughout, furniture with contemporary lines in tones of gray, taupe, and white reflects a modern mind-set. Natural light spills into the first floor, where wide glass doors also provide access to the deck. “The house has a nice balance of iconic New England elements on the outside—shingle siding, gambrel roof—and lighter tones and a mid-century modern feeling on the inside,” says interior designer Kristen Martone.

Color is placed strategically throughout, mostly as an accent: A cheerful orange all-weather-fabric seat cushion brightens the mudroom; the blue island adds coastal cool to the kitchen; more blue cabinets turn up flanking the living room fireplace. Upstairs, the girls’ bedrooms are painted and accessorized in their chosen pinks and purples.

One noteworthy piece of furniture in the house is the oval coffee table in the living room: It was crafted by TOH master carpenter Norm Abram, using eastern white pine that was culled from a property in Scott Adams’s family and was being stored in a barn. “The elliptical pieces are 1 3/8 inches thick, but the boards were much thicker at the start,” says Norm. “It was old, wavy wood, so we planed it quite a bit.” The project was built in Jeff Sweenor’s new cabinetry shop, with Scott helping in the final steps.

“I used to watch *This Old House* with my great-

**THESE PAGES**  
FLOORING, SLIDING BARN DOORS: **Baird Brothers Fine Hardwoods**  
BATH TILE: **Merola**  
BATH VANITY, SINK, FAUCET: **Kohler**  
BATH FAN: **Panasonic**  
RADIANT FLOOR SYSTEM: **Schluter-Systems**  
STAIRCASE: **Sweenor Builders**  
ENTRY CEILING LIGHT: **West Elm**  
OFFICE SHELVEING: **California Closets**



OPPOSITE, TOP: The second-floor landing holds a sitting area/reading alcove for the two daughters, with a custom built-in bookcase to fill with favorite titles.

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: Pink walls and a beaded chandelier sweeten the older daughter's bedroom. Original oak flooring from the existing house was carefully removed and reinstalled in both girls' bedrooms, where it was refinished to blend in with the new white oak flooring used in the rest of the house.

LEFT: In the master bedroom, light-hued and natural elements—including pale blue walls, white oak floors, a beige-linen upholstered headboard, and wood furniture—create a serene retreat.

“Details like coffered ceilings and built-ins are why people love old houses, and here those details are done really well.”

—TOM SILVA,  
TOH GENERAL CONTRACTOR



uncle, who was a carpenter,” says Scott. “The pine is from his barn, where he stored a lot of wood, so it really means a lot.”

For comfortable living, the house has all-new HVAC, including a high-efficiency propane-fired furnace and variable-speed air conditioners. The furnace is state-of-the-art in terms of gas-fueled systems, says *TOH* plumbing and heating expert Richard Trethewey. “This type of furnace just keeps getting smarter and smarter,” he says. “It’s a high-efficiency furnace with modulating burners, variable fans, and dampers that communicate with each other, so everything is working together.” The house has four heating and cooling zones, with two on the first floor and two on the second.

“Our former house only had one zone, so we are really happy about the level of control we’ll have in this house,” says Scott.

Another big plus for Scott and Shayla is the property itself, which sits on about one and three-quarters of an acre, 10 times the size of their former property. “There are so many more possibilities here for the girls to play and for us to enjoy the outdoors,” says Shayla. The landscape plan, created by *TOH* landscape contractor Roger Cook and *TOH* landscape designer Jenn Nawada, emphasizes privacy and



found features. “We moved some rhododendron on the property to complete a hedge along the front of the house to make it more private, and in the backyard we cleared out brush to expose an old stone wall and create a big open play area near the existing flagpole,” says Roger. A wraparound deck along the kitchen, dining, and living areas offers easy access to the outdoors.

If its bright, open interior and comfortable outdoor living spaces weren’t enough to make this a dream home for Scott and Shayla, there is one more “found” element that really capped the project: the ocean views.

Where the original one-story ranch offered no glimpse of the ocean that’s just a half mile away, the two-story Dutch Colonial provides water views from most of the second-floor rooms. On a clear day, even when there are leaves on the trees, the family can spot Block Island in the distance. “We knew there would be something of a view, but we thought it would mainly be in the winter, and we never imagined it would be this much,” says Scott.

Adding up, it turns out, equals much more than the sum of a place’s total square footage. As Scott says, “This house is even more than I had hoped it would be.” ■

BELOW LEFT: The master bath’s marble floor tiles and marble-look quartz countertop add a luxurious touch to the wood vanity.

**THESE PAGES**  
BOOKCASE, STAIR RAILING:  
Sweenor Builders  
GIRL’S BEDROOM FURNITURE:  
Maine Woodworks  
MASTER BATH SINKS, FAUCETS:  
Kohler  
MASTER BATH VANITY: Signature  
Custom Cabinetry  
MASTER BATH COUNTERTOP:  
Cambria  
MASTER BATH FLOOR TILE:  
Bedrosians  
RADIANT FLOOR SYSTEM:  
Schluter-Systems