





BUCK'S CREEK

reda

CHRIS HEREFORD REDESIGNS AN
OLD RANCH TO CREATE A BRIGHT, AIRY
SUMMER HOUSE.

by elspeth pierson | photos by eric roth



Below: Hereford introduced charming interior trim details to the space.



Opposite: The interior spaces open onto one another to allow for a more spacious feel.
Right: A light in the shape of a ship plays up the nautical feel.



Imagine deciding to renovate your home, update it a bit, only to realize you have to raze it.

This is what happened to the owners of the Buck's Creek house. "About five years ago," says the homeowner, "we thought, 'The kids are getting older, the house is getting older, let's do an update.' It was just a ranch, a one-story house on cinder blocks near the beach. When we looked to expand, we couldn't do anything without a new foundation. Suddenly, our renovation snowballed into a new house."

Well, sort of. They had to build a new house in order to expand, but it had to have the exact footprint of the preexisting home. It could have a basement and a real foundation and a second floor, but the footprint and the roof coverage had to be the same.



The family enjoys the outdoor decks overlooking the marsh. Below: The girls' bedroom is decorated in vibrant colors.



The challenge for the brother-sister architectural and design team they hired, Chris Hereford and Heather McGrath, was to create a new house—one that felt bigger and more modern—in the same old space. “The design task was to make a little footprint live big,” Hereford says. “It’s not a big house, but by using the second story in the most efficient way and uniting open spaces downstairs, we made it feel large.”

First, Hereford and McGrath divided the floors. The first floor would hold the communal spaces: living room, dining nook, kitchen, TV room, and guest bedroom and bath. The second floor would hold everything else: two bedrooms for the kids (one for the two boys and one for the two girls), two bathrooms, and a master bedroom with bath for the parents.

“Even though it’s really quite small, the house feels big,” says McGrath. “You’d be surprised. We did this by not isolating one room from another, so the main room is a combination of a kitchen and a living room and a dining room working in an L configuration.” Even upstairs, she adds, a hallway was made a bit wider and furnished with pillows to make a casual, comfortable common space.



A mural of the natural landscape decorates the upstairs landing.

Below: The family spends summer days outdoors. Right clockwise: Brother and sister team: Chris Hereford and Heather McGrath. Walkways are lined with hydrangea. An outdoor shower is tucked into the side of the house.

With the room flow set, Hereford played with the roofline. “We wanted to keep the house low, modest,” says the homeowner. “In our neighborhood there are a lot of older second homes, and we wanted it to be in keeping with the character of the street.” Rather than create a traditional colonial, triangular roof, Hereford kept the feel of the second story small, creating variations in the rooflines by adding dormers and a roof deck and giving the exterior of the home an appearance more English cottage than salt box.

Both brother and sister focused on light to expand the space. “Lighting gives the ability to change the mood of a space in a cost effective way,” Hereford says. “For instance, in the stairwell there’s a vaulted ceiling that runs right from the front of the house to the back. During the day, it gets a lot of natural light, and that carries through the home. At night, we used lighting fixtures to make it look like the night sky.” McGrath worked with a decorative painter, layering deep midnight blues and golds on the ceiling and moldings to complete the romantic, evening look.

Built-ins helped with space constraints, too. “We used a load of built-ins in this house,” says Hereford. “There are built-in bar cabinets, built-in armoires, built-in shelves. This creates very useful hidden space.”






McGrath worked particularly hard on the decorative side to maximize space in the kids' rooms. "The kids' rooms are not big spaces," she says. "I wanted to give them a seating area separate from their beds, so Chris designed built-in benches with storage underneath, and I hung two hammock chairs from the ceiling in each room." In the girls' room the chairs are made from a striped material in splashy tropical blues, pinks, yellows, and greens and in the boys room from a blue and green plaid. In both rooms, the hanging chairs in conjunction with the benches create the feel of an area where kids can read a book or sit and chat with friends.

The hammock chairs are also part of a larger theme; all over the house Hereford and McGrath worked to give the rooms a natural, outdoorsy feel. "The homeowners are outdoors people," McGrath says. "So we tried to bring the beach environment into the house." Hereford took advantage of views with large banks of windows, and McGrath

worked with the color scheme.

In the master bedroom, that meant layering different tones of beige to create the illusion of walking along a beach. "We used a darker color at the baseboard to suggest wet sand, and as we moved up the wall the tint got lighter and lighter," McGrath says. In keeping with this theme, she plastered the upstairs hallway with local maps and applied a decorative finish over top.

The final natural touch came with a front deck overlooking the beach. "That front deck is key," says McGrath. "Because it has an overhang, it feels like it's half inside and half outside. That's the feeling we tried to give the whole house." 

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