

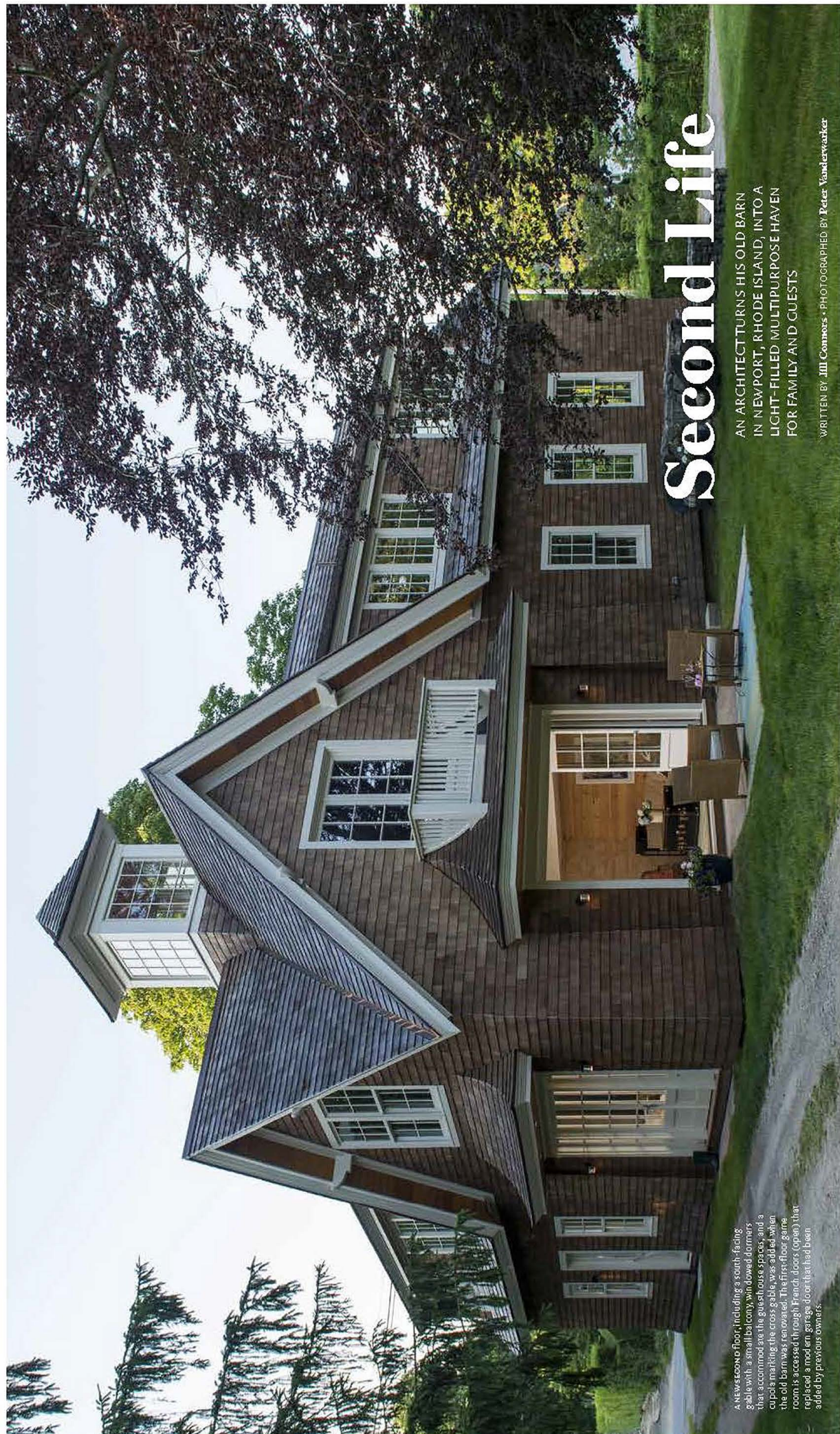
THE MAGAZINE of *SPLENDID HOMES and GARDENS* • MARCH/APRIL 2016

DESIGN

NEW ENGLAND



SIMPLY HOME



A NEW SECOND floor, including a south-facing gable with a small balcony, windowed dormers that accommodate the guesthouse spaces, and a cupola marking the cross gable, was added when the old barn was renovated. The first-floor game room is accessed through French doors (open) that replaced a modern garage door that had been added by previous owners.

Second Life

AN ARCHITECT TURNS HIS OLD BARN IN NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND, INTO A LIGHT-FILLED MULTIPURPOSE HAVEN FOR FAMILY AND GUESTS

WRITTEN BY Jill Connors • PHOTOGRAPHED BY Peter Vandervorker



Looking for a place to raise their young family 13 years ago, architect Paul Weber and his wife, Bonnie, chose a tree-filled property off storied Bellevue Avenue in Newport, Rhode Island. The 1¼-acre lot had once been part of a 19th-century estate, but when they bought the land, the only vestige of that past was an old barn. And while some old barns in Newport possess carriage-house charm, this one did not. Over the years, it had received such glorious additions as a modern garage door and a tack room. Nestled amid towering evergreen and oak trees, the old barn needed a new chapter.

The first plan of action, however, called for the Webers to build a house, and they chose a location about 100 feet from the barn after walking the site many times with their two toddlers in tow. The house that Weber designed, featuring cedar-shingle gables, an irregular roofline, and deep overhangs (*Design New England*, May/June 2011, "A Forever Home"), was completed in the late 2000s and suited the family perfectly.

But the barn proved an irresistible challenge for this architect, whose practice, Paul Weber Architect, is in Newport. The possibilities prompted many sketches and schemes, but the final plan, which became reality in 2014, was for a two-story,

2,200-square-foot, multipurpose space that includes a game room, guest quarters, boat storage, and homework haven. There was no shortage of family debates along the way. "I nearly lost the battle for a first-floor boat-storage area to a squash court," laughs Weber, an avid sailor whose daughters, now teenagers, are nationally ranked squash players.

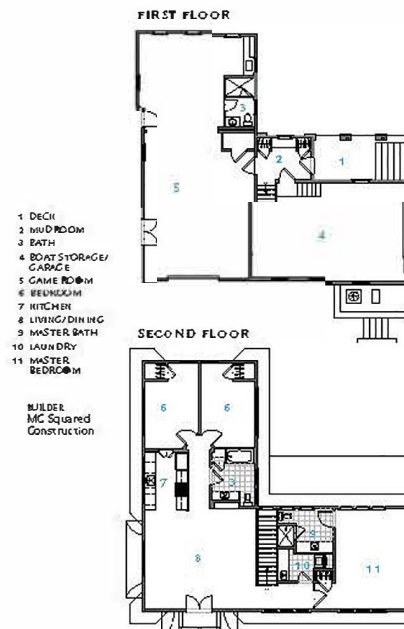
Although the barn's function evolved to meet many needs, there was no question what its style would be. "We updated the barn to be in the same family as the house," says Weber. "The two structures relate to each other in detailing, with the same eaves and returns and dormers. But we wanted to keep it rustic, not finished, and a big goal of mine was for there to be no sheetrock in the barn."

Working with Matt Cullen of MC Squared Construction in Newport, Weber began peeling away the layers of the old barn, which had a utilitarian second-floor loft and barnboard walls and

in the second-floor guest quarters, exposed ceiling joists are crafted from timbers salvaged from the original barn. The knotty pine ceiling planks are new. MDF boards on the walls are painted white and mimic shiplap siding. Interior and exterior windows throughout allow natural light into the spaces.



CHERRY CABINETS, SOAPSTONE COUNTERTOPS, and a pantry closet add functionality and a crisp look to the second-floor galley kitchen (left). The second-floor hallway ends with side-by-side bedrooms whose doorways are set at an angle (below). Windows from the original barn were repurposed as dormitories.





ceilings. Weber's design called for a raised roof and the addition of gables and dormers, all to gain the volume needed for the second-floor guest space while preserving the lofty barn aesthetic for the first-floor game room.

Old interior walls and ceilings were carefully removed with the intention of reusing the barnboard, timbers, and windows in the new spaces. "We salvaged everything we possibly could," says Cullen. On the first floor, a new concrete floor with a radiant-heat system gives the space year-round functionality. A dry-wall ceiling, one of the few instances of a conventional finished surface in the barn, conceals ductwork for the forced hot air and air conditioning installed to service the second-floor guest rooms. Salvaged barnboard and framing timbers, plus some new knotty pine (that Weber intends to whitewash) and shiplap-style MDF boards, cover nearly every wall and ceiling. "We wanted the barn to be fresh and crisp and new, with its own aesthetic," says Weber.

The first floor is essentially one big game room, with pine-covered walls, sofas for lounging, and two sets of French doors that let in the light. The second floor functions as a guesthouse, with three bedrooms, a galley kitchen, and living/dining areas.

Weber transformed the dark interiors of the original barn with windows or French doors placed in every gable, wall, and dormer so that natural light filters through the entire structure. To add even more light, he reused the original barnsashes as clerestory windows in the second-floor interior hallway. "To bring more light into the second floor, we built a new cupola and placed it at the cross gable," says Weber, noting the glass-sided cap that tops the barn.

FOR MORE
DETAILS,
SEE
RESOURCES

The utilitarian nature of the structure is still very much intact. For example, two side-by-side guest rooms share a novel size pocket door that can be opened to transform the space into one large bunk room. On the first floor, a series of sliding barn-style doors can close off one end of the space to create a separate sleeping area if needed.

There are other possibilities in the offing, with a first-floor kitchen, an outdoor swimming pool, and an outdoor kitchen all under discussion. For now, however, the wide-open first-floor game room is a favorite retreat for the girls, who head over to do homework, hang out with friends, or simply get out of the house. That alone is a great new function for an old barn. ■



THE SECOND FLOOR is accessed via a new staircase (left), where the wall is finished with wood reclaimed from the old barn and the floor is done with shiplap MDF boards painted white. A guest bedroom (above) has the feeling of a treehouse, with windows that provide a leafy view and a ceiling lined with new knotty pine. Reclaimed barnboard wainscoting and a rare use of drywall highlight the master bathroom (below). The vanity base, made from whitewashed rough-hewn timbers salvaged from the old barn, is capped with soapstone. A windowed dormer (facing right) added during the renovation creates a cozy, luminous space for the second-floor master suite.

