

BHG SIP Yellow Checkout

RENOVATION STYLE

THE BEFORE & AFTER MAGAZINE

SPRING 2011
1 102
BHG SIP Yellow Checkout

RENOVATION STYLE

**NOVA
SCOTIA
MAKEOVER**
Page 46

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Contrasting wood treatments contribute to the layered look of the sunroom at the Nova Scotia home of Philip Mitchell and Mark Narsansky. See the rest of the home starting on page 46.



Spring 2011

Though there might still be a chill in the air, we're already thinking about spring. We've gathered fresh ideas for creating comfort and beauty on patios, on porches, and in sunrooms. We think you'll be inspired.



CARPENTER
GOTHIC

CHESTER
NOVA SCOTIA

Curb Appeal

Paint Choices

Give your front door a contrasting color for a dramatic welcome.

Welcoming Benches

Greet guests from seating plumped with outdoor pillows.

Balanced Planters

Accessorize the entry with colorful topiaries.

MORNING TIDE

Coastal Connection

A Nova Scotia cottage restoration honors the village's past, present, and future.

BY MARA BOO PHOTOGRAPHY BY STACEY BRANDFORD PRODUCED BY JACK MURPHY AND MARK NARSANSKY



Opposite Gray-blue paint and cream-color trim soften the exterior of the wood-sided cottage. *This Photo* A game table and linen-upholstered chairs, adorned with embroidered backs, nestle into the living room's bay window.



B

By the time Philip Mitchell and Mark Narsansky discovered their 1860 vacation cottage in Chester, Nova Scotia, it had been languishing on the booming real estate market for two years. While Philip and Mark were lured to the Colonial-era fishing village by its picturesque harbors, rose-blooming lanes, historic architecture, and gracious, neighborly charm, prospective buyers of the cottage had come and gone, none brave enough—or willing—to approach the thoughtful restoration unofficially demanded by local tradition. “It’s not a code thing so much as the fact that you feel obligated, when you buy a historic house in a village where the same families have lived for hundreds of years, to maintain the character of your surroundings,” Philip says.

Creative thinkers—Philip owns an interior design firm; Mark heads his own ad agency—whose primary residence is in the heart of downtown



This Photo A woven sofa dressed in mohair and a sisal rug edged in suede define the living room's cozy seating area. In warm months, the furnishings lighten up with airy white slipcovers. **Opposite Right** Returning the fireplace to its stately origins and installing reproduction iron sconces reinforced the living room's focal point. **Opposite Top Left** Light fixtures with period ambience wear purposely inconsistent finishes, as though added through the years. **Opposite Bottom Left** The entry's pine staircase and floor establish the honeyed hues that warm the house during long winters.



*"As soon as we entered the front door,
we both knew this was the house for us."*

Homeowner and designer Philip Mitchell



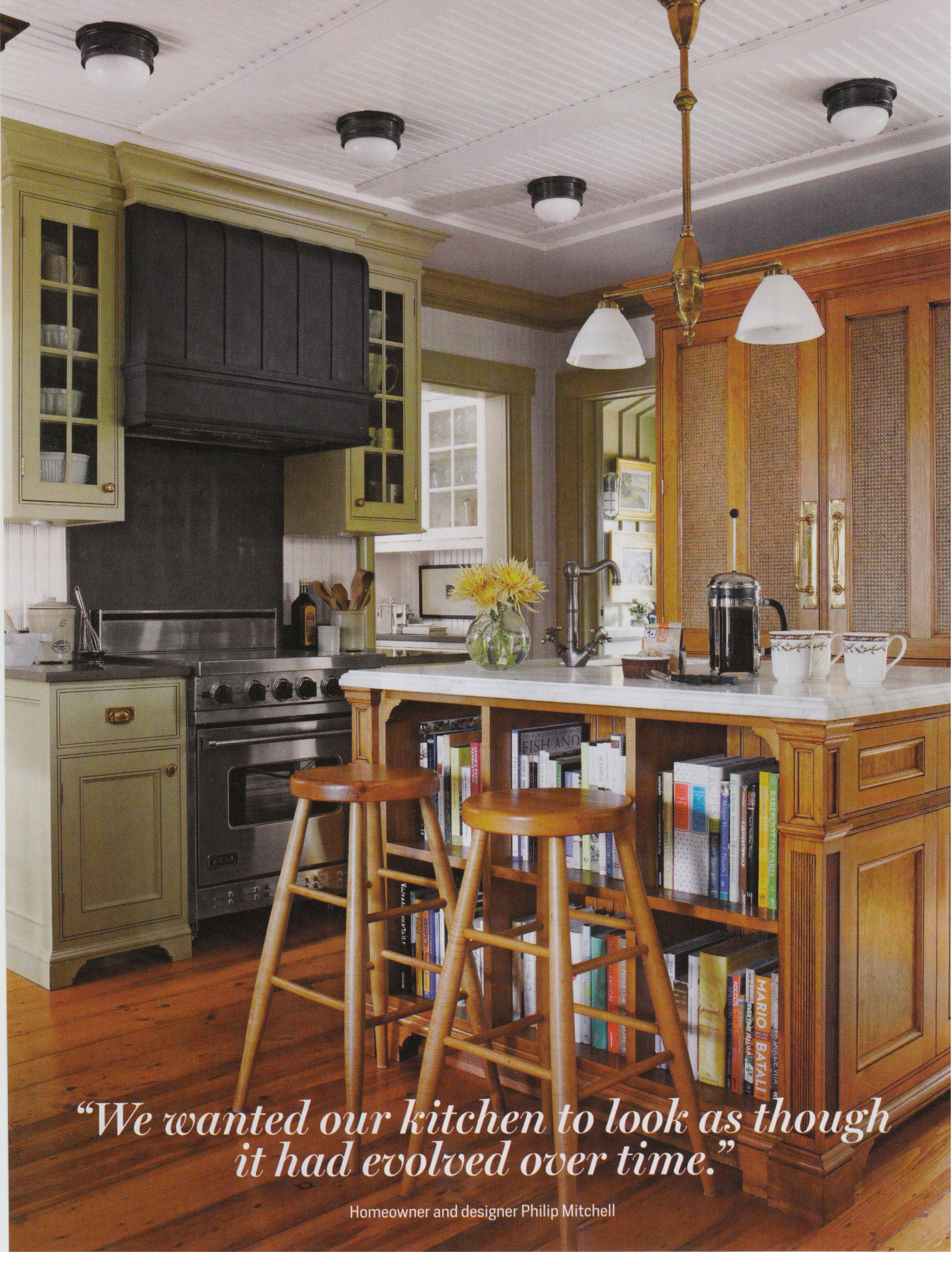
Opposite Moss-green wainscoting ties the dining room to the kitchen cabinets within view. The china cupboard is antique pine. The trestle table was custom-made by a local craftsman. **Left** Open dish storage, Shaker-style cabinetry, a porcelain farmhouse sink, and a beaded-board backsplash all honor the kitchen's vintage aesthetic. **Below** The powder room walls and ceiling gain interest with vertical trim pieces. The generous sink is a favorite for cutting flowers.

Toronto, the pair were able to see far beyond the cottage's crumbling exterior and tired, lackluster rooms. "As soon as we entered the front door, we both knew this was the house for us," Philip says. "Even though the inside had been updated in the 1960s and 1990s, removing its period detail, its room proportions were warm and inviting. The potential for sensitive and authentic restoration was obvious to us."

Indeed, the men welcomed the opportunity to not only refurbish the house, but to honor it. "We took great pains to take everything a step further than expected," Philip says. They pored over historic photographs of Chester's front harbor, scrutinizing their home in the distance for clues to its exterior. They dissected aging interior photos, as well, seeking inspiration because "there wasn't anything left inside for us to go by," Philip says. And they carefully researched architectural details and construction methods common to the region in 1860, then hired local carpenters and craftspeople to execute their plans.

"It's rare to have the opportunity to preserve history," says builder Greg Cole. "From the beginning, they had the feeling that they owed the house respect."





“We wanted our kitchen to look as though it had evolved over time.”

Homeowner and designer Philip Mitchell



Voice of Experience

There are six surfaces in any room: four walls, the floor, and that oft-forgotten ceiling, which provides a rich opportunity to add unexpected interest. Covering these surfaces with a minimal treatment of drywall and white paint lessens your

opportunities for adding character. Try painting a ceiling to with color to visually stretch its height, apply wallpaper to walls to wrap a room in pattern, or, as shown here, layer on molding and trim in a variety of styles and widths to give a ceiling depth and texture.

Accordingly, Philip and Mark meticulously re-created paneling, trim, baseboards, cornices, casings, and doors that were either missing or weathered beyond repair, even commissioning milling tools to be forged to match profiles exactly. They replaced every window in the house with period-perfect reproductions of the originals and eliminated a wall that separated the living room into “two awkward, pokey spaces,” Philip says. They also stripped decades’ worth of stain and paint from the cottage’s original wide-plank floorboards and reused them throughout its renovated interiors.

While committed to their home’s long history, the pair sought to add contemporary comforts to enhance their coastal lifestyle, which includes adventurous cooking, informal entertaining, and frequent houseguests. They expanded the main level slightly to accommodate a much-needed powder room and mudroom and built a comfortable screen porch that serves as their summer living room. The porch is painted “so it would feel like a nice room you’d actually want to sit in,” Philip says. Then there is

Opposite The refrigerator hides unexpectedly behind caned doors. The carved-wood range hood is painted to mimic forged iron. **Above** The kitchen showcases homeowner Philip Mitchell’s fondness for layering finishes, styles, and millwork. **Right** Philip gives ceilings the same attention as walls and floors.





Outdoor Living Ideas

Employing indoor elements in outdoor living spaces adds comfort and style.

Add architectural elements. The pediment and brackets over the doorway, *above left*, confer age and interest, but they also make the entry's location clear.

Connect with your community. Say hello to passersby by gracing your yard with inviting seating, *above*. The existing concrete knee wall separated the home from the road, but it also doubles as bench seating.

Lend importance to your garden. Mark its entry and define its boundaries with a picket fence and arbor, *left*. A change from pea gravel to brick beckons visitors.

Hang outdoor-fabric draperies. In a screen porch, drapes will shield the hot sun, keep away rain, and provide evening privacy.

Attach a mirror to a screen porch wall (or a garden wall). It will reflect colorful landscaping and give the feeling of another wall opening. In this example, *opposite*, a decorative pediment adds flourish of style among the exposed beams and planks.







the kitchen, perhaps the most enchanting expression of Philip and Mark's gift for balancing historic accuracy with modern-day amenities. High-tech appliances hide behind paneled door fronts, tuck into the island, or, in the case of the refrigerator, resemble an antique armoire. Conversely, dishes and glassware are in plain sight. "The things we reach for every day are exposed and at hand," Philip says. They took the same plural approach in the kitchen's mix of materials, woods, cabinet styles, and hardware finishes. "The combination gives a charm and quiriness you can't achieve in a matching, modern kitchen," Philip says. "We wanted ours to look as though it had evolved over time."

In fact, subterfuge is the home's hallmark. Furnishings amassed from local antiques dealers and custom-made by area artisans, softly worn colors, and a variety of framed artwork enhance the cottage's maturity, both real and imagined. "We wanted to set an example of how to do a really sensitive restoration, versus a renovation," Philip says. "Our aim was to make this house fit with the rest of the village and to look as though it was always here, just like this."

RESOURCES PAGE 116

Top Left A window seat cozies the upstairs hall. Antique maps of Nova Scotia's coastline climb the staircase walls. **Above** Steeply angled walls—a feature Philip adores—envelop the off-center guest bed. **Left** Dramatic woodwork adds sophistication to the countrified master bath, which features exposed linen storage.

The Plans, *Before & After*

Charmed by its potential and smitten with its location, homeowners Philip Mitchell and Mark Narsansky set out to sensitively recraft their 1860 cottage. Most of the room proportions felt inviting, so the duo gently nudged the layout to maximize livability and maintain the home's character.



BEFORE
While the upper-level bedrooms had acceptable configurations, the bathrooms were completely renovated.

The main level lacked a bathroom, but this mudroom was the ideal place for one. A new mudroom was built next to it.

While roomy, the kitchen was inefficiently laid out, lacked usable counter space, and was awkwardly separated from the dining room.

AFTER

The door between the master bedroom and hall was removed because there's another door to the master suite at the top of the stairs. This opened up usable wall space in the bedroom.

The main level was expanded, providing enough square footage for a new screened porch.

The kitchen and dining room now open up to each other to encourage connection.

1,940 square feet

ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIOR DESIGN PHILIP MITCHELL LANDSCAPE DESIGN MARK NARSANSKY