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BY CARA GREENBERG PHOTOGRAPHS BY COLLEEN DUFFLEY

DOING AWAY WITH SOLID WALLS
TURNED CONVENTIONAL
ROOMS INTO FREE-FLOWING
SPACES FOR A GROWING FAMILY.

HOUSE







hen Carrie and John Lonsdale first purchased their 1950s Colonial in Falmouth, Maine, they thought it was just right the way it was. That was in 1998 before three children came along in quick succession—Reed, 5, Riley, 4, and Stephanie, 1½. “All of a sudden, I was stuck in the kitchen three or four hours a day, and couldn’t see what anybody was doing around me,” recalls Carrie.

Previous owners had converted the old garage into a family room, now used by the Lonsdales as a play/TV room, and added a gracious sunken sunroom overlooking Casco Bay. But the problem was that the core of the house was a throwback, with a formal living room, dining room, and kitchen all separated by solid walls.

The solution arose from an existing element that had helped sell the Lonsdales on the house in the first place: two sets of double columns flanking the steps down to the sunroom, with wide open space instead of walls on either side. “Soon we realized we could do the same thing everywhere in the house,” Carrie says.

The Lonsdales had an enormous supporting beam installed in the ceiling so they could

A rattan sofa and straw-color carpet (*left*) anchor the sunroom’s neutral scheme. French doors and generous windows flood the room with light. The 1950s Colonial (*below*) is a veteran of several remodelings. The bay window envelopes the living room sofa, and the one-story structure to its right is the sunroom addition. John Lonsdale with Riley and Reed (*above*).





remove virtually all interior walls on the ground floor (there are four bedrooms upstairs). A second doorway to the play/TV room, this one near the foyer staircase, was also added. With boundaries eliminated, Carrie says, “you can walk one big circle around the house.”

The easy flow of people is mirrored in the flow of color, masterminded by architect/interior designer Linda Banks. Without walls for delineation, it was especially important that spaces serving different purposes be visually unified with compatible colors.

John, who is an ophthalmologist, wanted a restrained palette—a request Banks honored, with modification. She conceived a scheme based on neutrals in the taupe family, accented with watery blues and greens suggested by the sea glass that washes up on nearby shores—colors “inspired by the surroundings without being hokey nautical,” as she puts it. “The use of color was a response to having three young children and wanting to make the house a little more cheerful and whimsical. There’s still a clean, tailored elegance, but it’s not as serious.”

Because only perimeter walls remain, wall color has a subtle effect on the light-filled interior. Walls in the bay-windowed living area are “the color of cappuccino,” Banks says. A faded jade runs from the kitchen walls into the dining area, and is picked up again in the living room curtains. The sunroom’s textured blue wall covering, a handmade Japanese paper with threads of taupe and green running through it, ties everything together.

Except for the grand piano and an Empire-style butler’s secretary that belonged to John’s grandmother, all furniture was bought new. Traditionally styled pieces, such as the living area’s camelback sofa, oval cocktail table, and high-backed lounge chair (right), are used in a spare, uncluttered way. Though the living room is appropriate for formal entertaining, it is most often used by Carrie who takes a momentary respite in the lounge chair while keeping watch over what’s cooking on the stove. None of the rooms are large; each is only a few steps away from the adjoining spaces. In the living room, a chocolate-color shade on the silver lamp (left, top) is edged with ice-blue grosgrain ribbon. In the sunroom (left, center), tactile wall covering, textured chair fabric, and whimsical pom-poms on a throw pillow make a more casual statement. An architectural painting (left, bottom) adds color and a touch of modernity to a pass-through space.





COLORS REFLECTING MAINE'S SEACOAST
ENLIVEN A NEUTRAL
SCHEME, BLENDING CHEERFULNESS
AND SOPHISTICATION.



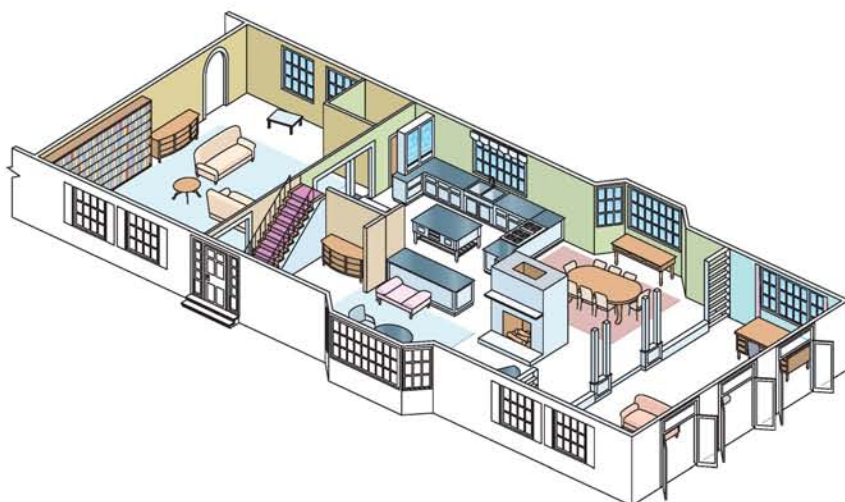
BEFORE WALLS CAME DOWN, THE KITCHEN WAS THE HEART OF THE HOUSE, BUT IT DIDN'T LET ME BREATHE.

CARRIE LONSDALE

The Lonsdale house is, of necessity, kid friendly. "Every inch of the house is usable," Carrie says. There is no area or piece of furniture from which children are banned. Without a breakfast room, and no seating at the kitchen island, the family's only dining table is the same one that serves for entertaining adult friends. "The kids sit on the chairs with their sneakers on and play with their metal trucks on the table, but we also have formal dinners there," Carrie says. The blue-striped dining chairs have had Play-Doh and poster paint smeared on them, but not to worry: They're covered in an outdoor patio-furniture fabric that wipes clean easily. The rustic wood tabletop has a rough-hewn look and isn't too precious to stand up to spills or climbing kids.

Best of all, the house's new open plan keeps Carrie from feeling isolated in the kitchen. "The visibility is great," she says. By removing the upper part of the wall between the kitchen and the kids' playroom, and eliminating overhead cabinets above the kitchen's U-shape counter, "I can see my boys playing and my daughter in her high chair at the table, and if my husband is down in the sunroom working on his computer, I can say, 'Hey, what do you want for lunch?' Now I don't care if I spend all day in the kitchen."

The kitchen (*left*), where stay-at-home mom Carrie once felt trapped, is now wide open to the rest of the house, with upper walls and overhead cabinets removed. Its modified farmhouse feeling, like the rest of the house, is grown-up looking and kid-friendly at the same time.



The entire plan (*above, right*) is designed for increased flow between spaces, with very few interior walls. Subtle color shifts help define areas with different functions. Carrie bathes baby Stephanie (*left*) in the kitchen sink.

ILLUSTRATION: STEVE STANKIEWICZ



For greater connection between the kitchen and the much-used play/TV area, the doorway was widened and the upper half of the dividing wall removed. "I'm so glad we didn't move in as two single people and do a gorgeous renovation right away," Carrie says. "We would have made all these spaces much more separate and formal. As it is, they're pretty, but they're not museum rooms." 🏡

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A heather-gray flecked carpet in the play/TV area was chosen for its "forgiving" quality. Beyond the playroom, a back hall connects to a secondary staircase and the garage.