

REMODELING

A COTTAGE  
MAKEOVER  
HELPED THIS  
MINNESOTA  
FAMILY LEARN  
TO LOVE  
THE HOUSE  
THEY HAVE.

# RAMBLER REJUVENATED

BY SHARON OVERTON PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN REED FORSMAN PRODUCED BY BONNIE BROTEN

With its bird's-eye view of the living room, the stairwell makes a great hangout for 8-year-old Jack Holden. The stairway leads to a new second-floor addition, which encompasses two bedrooms, a shared bath, and a playroom/study for Jack and his sister, Abbey, 11.



The dining nook (top) was once a screened porch. Abbey Holden enjoys breakfast near a built-in bookcase filled with mementos. Tan clapboard (above) was applied over the home's original red brick to help blend the second-story addition. Sage shutters, white railings, and cheery window boxes add cottage character.

## REMODELING >> from 98

**B**efore Ellie and Dave Holden settled down in the neighborhood of their dreams, they switched houses more often than most people trade cars.

"We were on a three-year plan," says Ellie, who's not embarrassed to admit that the couple changed homes three times in roughly six years—from a Victorian to a modern to their current 1958 rambler (the Midwestern term for a ranch) in Deephaven, Minnesota.

They first saw the red brick rambler back in 1995, when a friend called to say a neighbor was hammering a "For Sale" sign in the yard. They rushed over and an hour later had made an offer. Even though they weren't particularly enamored of the style or the floor plan, they knew it would be a great area to raise their two children, Abbey, now 11, and Jack, 8.

They were so attracted to this neighborhood that they were willing to put up with a less-than-ideal house for a while just to get a toehold. Developed in the 1950s and '60s, the community has a sort of *Wonder Years* quality, Ellie says, with kids tramping over for pool >> on 102



#### REMODELING >> from 100

parties all summer and neighbors huddling in the kitchen for slow-cooker suppers in the winter. Plus, Dave had fond memories of growing up nearby.

So instead of changing houses, this time the Holdens changed the house to suit their needs. A top-to-bottom remodel in 2002 added about 800 square feet overall to the existing 2,800-square-foot house. But the end result is as different from its previous incarnation as a subcompact is from a luxury sedan.

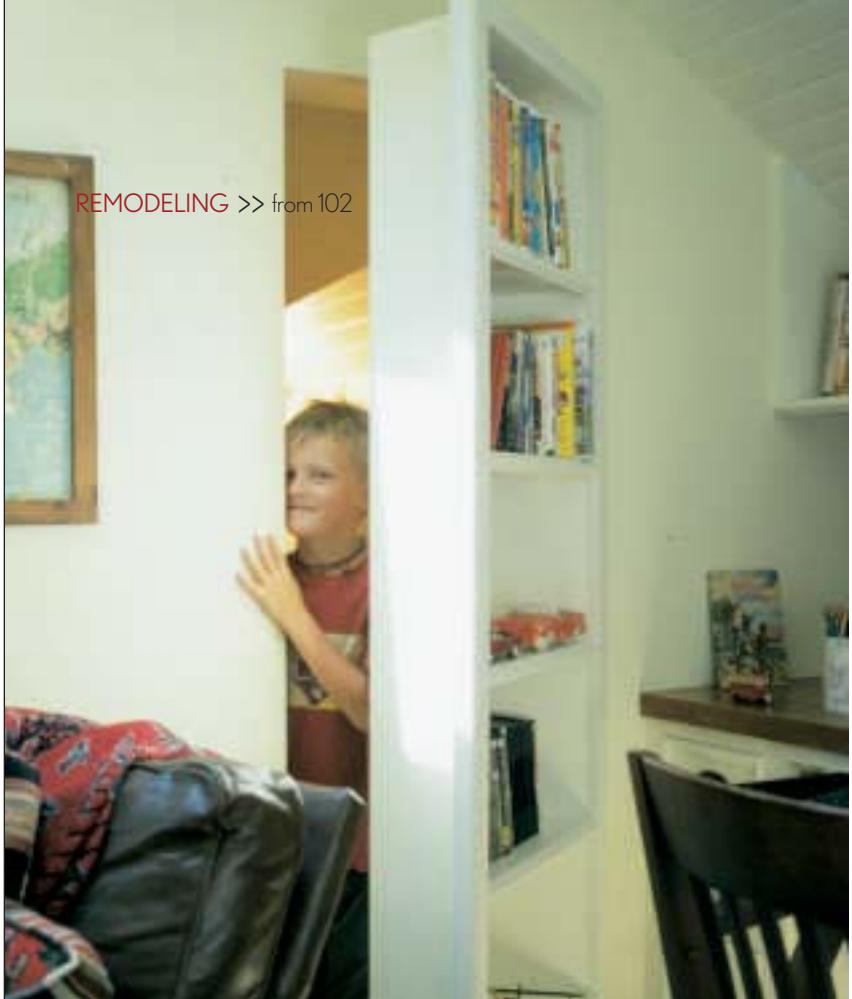
Now, Ellie says, they've happily put their house-trading days behind them. "We're going to stay put."

Before the remodel, the home's faults included children's bedrooms that were too close to the parents' bedroom, a front door that led right into a dreary kitchen, and "upgrades," such as pickled oak floors and a white marble fireplace, that left the house feeling too "fancy," Ellie says.

Their primary goals were more privacy for parents and kids, and a more comfortable, casual environment for family and guests. Building designer Lynne Pirkl helped the Holdens re-envision the spaces. By moving the >> on 104

Once stark white, the living room walls are painted a pale butter color ("Linen Sand" from Benjamin Moore & Co.). Ellie used a single coat of "Linen White" to lighten dark furniture, such as the coffee table. Several coats of brown-tinted furniture wax help "age" the piece. Wide-plank antique pine replaced pickled oak floors.

REMODELING >> from 102



EVERY  
SQUARE  
INCH  
OF THE  
HOUSE  
WORKS  
HARDER  
NOW—  
EVEN  
THE  
ATTIC.

As a surprise for the Holden kids, builder Perry Weisenberger tucked a secret room under the attic eaves. The room functions as a playroom/study (*below*) and is entered, haunted-house style, by way of a hinged bookcase (*above*).

>> on 106





REMODELING >> from 104

front door 4 feet to the left and widening a hallway, she created a more open entry. Reconfiguring the kitchen made it brighter and more efficient. And by bumping out the garage, the family gained a first-floor laundry and mudroom, which corrals coats, boots, and sometimes their Jack Russell terrier, Ringo.

A second-story addition netted new bedrooms for Abbey and Jack, plus a shared bath and a playroom/study. Moving the kids upstairs also freed space for a first-floor office and guest room, but more importantly, resulted in much-needed privacy for Ellie and Dave.

The process could have stopped there. But Ellie longed for a home with old-fashioned charm, like the godmother's home she remembers visiting as a child. "She had Oriental rugs and her knitting sitting out and her books." Ellie's reality—a boxy 1950s ranch with little architectural distinction—was more challenging.

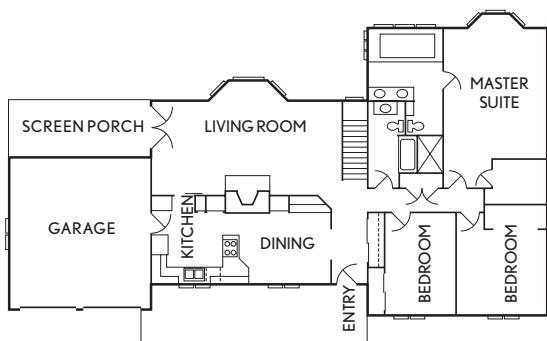
Changing some of the cosmetic details helped. In addition to re-siding the red brick exterior with clapboard, the couple replaced crank-out casement windows by installing divided-light double-hungs, beefed up skimpy moldings, and smoothed out the once textured ceilings. They nixed too-bright brass in favor of cut-glass doorknobs and polished nickel fixtures.

Once the background was in place, Ellie filled in with comfortable cottage furnishings: generously scaled upholstery in cut velvet and gently faded cotton; vintage wood furniture painted white and then distressed with a little sandpaper and brown furniture wax; and pile upon pile of pillows and prints that match, but not so well as to look planned or contrived.

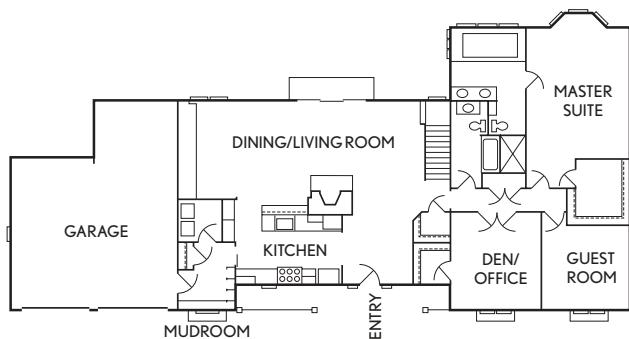
Ellie, who has a business rearranging people's homes with things they already own, finds the cottage style liberating, especially after living in a modern house that was decorated in a somewhat relentless >> on 109

Ellie found cowboy-themed accessories for Jack's room (above) at a flea market in Texas. The black boots are the first pair he owned, and he wore them everywhere, Ellie says. "We had to fight to take them off or he would have worn them in the bath."

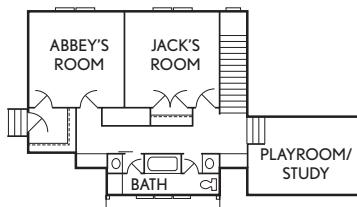
ILLUSTRATIONS: STEVE STANKIEWICZ



BEFORE: FIRST FLOOR



AFTER: FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



## REMODELING >> from 106

white-on-white scheme. A cottage home “isn’t limiting,” she says. “I feel like you can add a lot more or take away a lot, and you’re still there.”

It’s also a look that’s well-suited to her family’s casual lifestyle, which finds the kids hopping onto their parents’ bed on Saturday mornings before heading outside to swim or ride bikes. In the evenings, they often play games or read books. “We purposefully didn’t put a TV in the living room,” Ellie says. “I thought it would be great not to have it turned on all the time.”

On a recent evening, Ellie and the kids were working a 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle, which was spread out on the coffee table. It’s a far cry from the way she grew up, Ellie says, where everything had to be orderly and out of sight. But after years of moving and experimenting with different styles, this finally feels like home. 🏡

RESOURCES >> 266

## MORE ABOUT CREATING YOUR DREAM HOME, [www.bhg.com/remodeling](http://www.bhg.com/remodeling)

Almost a teenager, Abbey has “her own self-imposed uniform of khakis and a T-shirt,” her mom says. But in her room (*left*), pale blue walls and soft “granny” prints express her girly side. Sky blue also takes the hard edge off kitchen cabinets (*bottom left*). Ellie likes to balance all that softness with energizing accents of red.

