

TOWER PLAY

BY DUO DICKINSON GOING UP? A TOWER CAN BRING VIEWS, SPACE AND SUNSHINE TO YOUR HOME—ALONG WITH A TOUCH OF WHIMSY.



The addition repeats the style and materials of the existing home while adding a note of verticality.

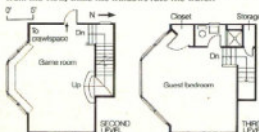
When Karen Owen-Buckley and Richard Buckley purchased a large, rambling home in coastal Connecticut, the last thing they thought they needed was extra space. So when they came to me with the idea of adding onto their dream house, I was interested in their motivations.

"We found we had no informal living space and no room for guests," says Karen. Then too, I raised the issue that the home's present orientation offered a very limited view of Long Island Sound and the Thimble Islands, only a few hundred feet away. A game room and guest bedroom answered the couple's space needs, and by stacking the rooms on top of an existing studio, we created a three-story tower with some spectacular water views.

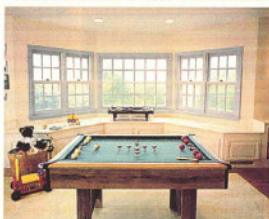
The product of several additions, the Buckleys' U-shaped house was actually two structures—part single-story painted clapboard and part gambrel-roofed natural cedar shingles. The new tower incorporates both clapboard and shingles, reconciling the differences while bringing home and addition into harmony.

As is true of many tower additions, this one was built over an existing part of the house, saving money by utilizing the first-floor framing and foundation.

Plans of the two new floors show how the stairs are kept away from the view, while the windows face the water.



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Above: The middle level of the tower is a 280-square-foot game room. Beneath the window seat is concealed storage. Below: Window bay in the third floor's 215-square-foot guest bedroom is larger than the second-floor bay to take in a sweeping view of Long Island Sound.



Left: The author/architect, Salomon Prasad. Below: Prasad's home, opposite the original first floor, reinforced to accommodate the tower's upper levels, was retained. Siding and windows match existing ones.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOY ALVAREZ





Above: Consistent use of materials and alignment of eave and trim lines help link the two-part ensemble. Below is the living area, grouped windows unite inside and outside, while fireplace, furniture and decor divide the space into functional areas. A wood stove sits behind the salvaged mantel.

Another variation on the multifunctional tower "solution" can be seen in the addition to John and Anne Nolan's 1880s carriage house in Westchester County, New York. "It was like trying to add onto a diamond," says John Nolan of his family's concerns about altering their charming jewel of a home.

The Nolans wanted to replace a leaking, creaking sunroom—an earlier addition that served as a dining area—and they were desperate for play space for their growing daughter. Restrictive sideyard setback requirements and the desire to preserve a valued lawn determined the location of any addition. By creating a two-story structure, we would be able to include an upstairs master suite—a hope-for-but-less pressing addition. The tower form seemed the most practical and economical in terms of space and cost—and offered the advantage of telescoping potential future disruption into a single project.

The two-story addition comprises a 462-square-foot dining/living area on the lower level and the master bedroom suite above it. The verticality of the new space provides active contrast to the static, solid existing home.

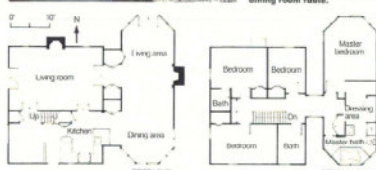
With this simple move upward, the addition takes on the look of a tower; its sense of separateness is enhanced by the recessed position of the narrow second-floor hallway running between the tower and the main house. Use of the same materials, window types and eave lines integrates the two structures. Grouped into large bays, the new windows bring in the outside world in a manner not possible with the Mansard architecture of the original carriage house.



Above: The home before the addition. Below: A tiled tub fills the south-facing bay of the second-floor master bath. Bathroom opens onto dressing area.



Left: The sparsely furnished master bedroom features a simplified cathedral ceiling, which gives an airy feel to the 180-square-foot room. The expanse of windows looks out to the Hudson River.



Below: Plans show how the long, narrow addition is held away from the main body of the house. Bottom: A south-facing window bay wraps the dining room table.





PHOTOGRAPHED BY LARRY FICUS



Left: Stair tower sits between the two gable faces and the two new entries—left for the apartment, right for the office. Decorative elements are carefully retained. Note how the existing bargeboards, decorated with hearts and crosses, stand away from the tower's copper roof. Above: The tower interior's expressive windows and lights fill the tall space.



Left: Floor plans demonstrate how both the first-floor office and the upstairs apartment incorporate the new octagonal stair tower into their design.



Above: Before photo shows the two existing wings, the left one a previous addition to the 1870s house. Right: Wraparound windows, new Victorian detailing and a fanciful gargyle light fixture embellish the stair, as viewed from the entry to the second-floor apartment.



Distinctive architecture can help inspire distinctive additions. In the case of Dr. Roger Lowlicht, the great appeal of the single-family house he purchased for a new office and apartment was its lovely early Victorian farmhouse detailing.

Designed by architect Solomon Lindsey in the 1870s, the house is a local landmark at a busy intersection in North Haven, Connecticut. Nothing could be done to the front or sides of the building—but the change in function demanded reorganization and expansion.

The chief impediment to the home's conversion was the stairway at the center of the existing plan. Before the space could be rearranged, the stairs had to be relocated. Looking at the original rear facade, featuring two very similar gables, it was clear where the new stairs to the second-floor apartment had to go—in the gap between the two wings. By placing new entries at the rear as well, we functionally reoriented the structure away from the street facade.

Dr. Lowlicht and I drove around to every Lindsey building in North Haven, and discovered that the architect was not only a master of early Victorian decoration, but a builder of towers. What better use for a tower than to accommodate a stair? Deliberately separated from the existing decorative bargeboards and crowned with a copper roof, the tower stands in dignified deference to its parent building.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, SEE BUYING GUIDE ON PAGE 78.