

* bonus: 20 ways to pack big style into small spaces

Country Home



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organized grime Two New York attorneys stylishly win the battle against dirty laundry in their 1790 home.

written by CHRISTINE HOFMANN-BOURQUE

Numbers tell the story of this quirky Old Chatham, New York, laundry. At just 10×8 feet, this second-story room has a ceiling that peaks at a mere 6½ feet, then slopes down with the roof's 45-degree pitch.

Yet despite the room's cramped quarters, proud owner Robert Bixby had been eyeing the house for 20 years before he and his wife, Carol, spotted the "for sale" sign on its lawn just one day before their wedding, seven years ago. Under direction of architect Kate Johns, the 18th-century colonial underwent a 24-month stem-to-stern renovation. Along the way, the couple ripped out the home's existing downstairs laundry and relocated it to this upstairs space, originally used by servants as a linen closet. >



Minimal space and low ceilings were a challenge in this former linen closet, *above left*, which homeowners Carol and Robert Bixby, *left*, reworked into a stylish and efficient laundry room, *above*. The 19th-century cabinet's porcelain knobs are new, as is the sconce. Classic green paint is paired with what Carol calls "Chlorox white" paint.

before & after

"An upstairs laundry room is incredibly functional," says Robert. "What sense is a laundry room downstairs when all our bedrooms are upstairs? That's where we live, where our drawers and clothes are. It was such common sense."

A large three-door wood cabinet, which was probably built in the room during the 1800s, inspired the laundry's classic redo. Built on an angle to sit flush against the wall, the cabinet's simple design was likely influenced by Shakers who lived nearby. It's ready for another 100 years of use with a fresh coat of deep green paint—an obvious color choice for the Bixbys. "We're in the country, our farm has 140 acres, and we're surrounded by green," says Robert. "It was a nice thing to bring the green inside."

To maximize the usable space, Johns recommended a European front-loading washer and dryer that could be surrounded with simple cabinetry to provide practical folding space on top. Why European appliances? Just shy of 24 inches deep and 36 inches tall, "They're meant to fit with standard cabinet dimensions," says Johns. Above the appliances, a shelf with S-shape brackets provides storage

space and, mounted underneath, task lighting.

For a bold finish, the original 1700s pine floors were painted with a green-and-white checkerboard. "It makes the room fun," says Carol, who got an unexpected bonus with this renovation. "The best thing about the room is that my husband loves doing laundry now. It's fabulous."

the laundry list

Architect Sarah Susanka, author of *Home By Design* (2004, Taunton Press; \$35), *The Not So Big House* (1998, Taunton Press; \$23), and other books, offers these tips for designing a laundry.

BUY A STACKABLE WASHER/DRYER. In a tight space, make sure the dryer's door (which is usually fixed and can't be moved) swings open for easy unloading onto a counter—and not into a wall. "I have succeeded in making this mistake in both my houses," says Susanka.

DO DOUBLE DUTY. One of the reasons that our houses are so big, says Susanka, is "We tend today to make a separate space for every activity." The new trend is to combine the laundry with desk space, she says, so that you can pay bills, for example, while waiting for the rinse cycle to finish: "You can be doing things simultaneously."

MOVE AWAY FROM THE BACK ENTRY. "I strongly recommend not doing a walk-through laundry," says Susanka. "The back entry should remind you why you bought this land or this house"—not of the dirty clothes that await. Put this room out of the path of visitors. **CH**