



DESIGNING

Bedding Down

ONE HUNDRED YEARS LATER, THE MURPHY BED IS STILL A GOOD IDEA. **BY REGINA COLE**

In 1900, William L. Murphy built a bed that folded into the wall because his one-room San Francisco apartment limited his ability to entertain guests, his future wife among them.

Ever since, the bed that bears his name has been a boon for small-space dwellers like Boston photographers Kim Fernald and Tim Gray, who use their Seaport District loft as both living and work space. A Murphy bed allows them to make the most of their 10-by-10-foot bedroom, which doubles as a models' dressing room during business hours. More Space Place, a national chain with a store in Salem, New Hampshire, has found a market for the beds in second homes, where they come in handy for guests. European manufacturers have incorporated surfaces for office equipment or for an upper bunk. There is even a Murphy bed for pets. Today, the Murphy bed is no longer entitled to trademark protection, but the brand name continues with Clark Murphy, who heads up the company his grandfather founded.

Modern Murphy beds might hide behind sliding bookcases or descend horizontally from a short wall, but the basic mechanism has changed little in 100 years: Springs hold a platform flat against the wall, often in a recess or a specially built cabinet. Counterweights make it easy to lower the bed when needed. In some pricier beds, pistons do the heavy lifting. And, classic comedy shtick to the contrary, there really isn't any danger of unplanned descent or ascent.

Martha's Vineyard contractor Benjamin Kelley has taken the concept a step further with his prototype unit. A bed, storage container, recliner, and table in one freestanding piece, it could serve as the only piece of furniture in a very small living space.

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