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"EVERY TIME I GO OVER THAT BRIDGE, I THINK, 'I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE I'M ON THIS ISLAND.'
IT REALLY FEELS LIKE HOME." (See page 81)

THE CHARLESTON HOME

Turn Back Time

A thoughtful renovation transforms a rambling 1970s beach house into a classic coastal cottage that feels like it's been in the family for decades —written by JENNIFER PATTISON TUOHY // photographs by JULIA LYNN

When a Chicago couple found their ideal beachfront property on Sullivan's Island for their retirement, they knew the existing one-story house would require a bit of work to achieve the classic coastal aesthetic they desired. "We wanted a house that felt timeless," says the husband. "Something you could look at and not really be able to tell when it was built."

The couple and their now-grown children had been visiting Charleston and the surrounding area for many years, escaping the bitter Midwest winters first to a condo, then a home on Kiawah Island. But when considering a permanent relocation, they sought out the seaside village of Sullivan's Island. "Kiawah is wonderful, but we wanted to live closer to town in this sort of setting," says the husband, of the island, its history, and its neighborhood feel.

They envisioned living in a beach house, a home with "some soul," where they could relax, entertain, and spend time with their three grandchildren, who live with their



IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS: When the homeowners first saw the Atlantic Avenue property and its ocean views in 2017, they fell in love with the locale and saw its potential. Their original intention for a "modest renovation" turned into a full-scale metamorphosis, working with Dufford Young Architects and Sheppard Construction to turn the elevated, three-bedroom, 1970s house into a two-story, five-bedroom classic beach cottage. Details, including the clipped gable roof line, white cedar shingles, and wooden roof shakes, reference a historical East Coast coastal vernacular, creating the timeless effect.



Before

daughter in Mount Pleasant. Other must-haves: five bedrooms, plus a home office for the husband, who is in investment management in Chicago, but mostly works remotely.

Transforming the three-bedroom, rambling structure would require more than the "modest renovation" they had originally envisioned. "I was really determined to try to be economical on this," the husband says with a chuckle. "But at some point, you realize it has the

potential to be a great house. So, you go for it."

Working with Dufford Young Architects, Sheppard Construction, and interior designer Melissa Ervin, they undertook a marathon two-year renovation focusing on the group vision of "old-school beach house" for every detail—from salvaging the old-growth heart pine floors to restoring the pecky cypress paneling to staining and distressing new kitchen cabinets to appear original to the house.



LIGHT IT UP: Thanks to the wife's expert eye and quick fingers on 1stDibs.com, a treasure trove of vintage and antique light fixtures complements the interiors. In the dining room (above), both the nautically inspired chandelier and brass wall sconces were sourced from the site, the latter to illuminate the melting ice cream triptych, *Picture Global Warming*, by Swedish photographer Clara Hallencreutz. Brass ceiling lights and wall sconces from Urban Electric in the kitchen continue the nautical motif (left), while the Delft tile in an off-white mix adds depth and dimension.

The overall renovation plan called for creating five bedrooms out of the existing 3,800 square feet, while leaving plenty of spaces for entertaining and the rooms on the clients' must list. "The house had a very large first-floor plan, which appealed to the owners as it accommodated their living on one level," explains architect Philip Dufford. However, it also had a very low roof line, due to a number of previous additions, along with a large fireplace that obscured the ocean views.



BIENVENUE: The large foyer provides an ideal space to showcase some of the couple's sculptures, including the bronze *Horse and Rider II* by Tom Corbin. A spectacular pair of Parisian street lamps repurposed into chandeliers hang in front of matching Holland MacRae Carlton chests. The layering of art and vintage rugs with blue and white porcelain lamps creates an inviting entrance.

During their first meeting with the clients, Dufford and partner John Young hopped on the roof to assess what was feasible. They quickly realized that in order to meet their client's goals, they needed a second story.

"We kept the integrity of the original footprint, which gave us a broad house with a lot of rooms," notes Young. By creating a modest upper level, they could accommodate the required four guest bedrooms and raise the roof line to give the house more

"I was really determined to try to be economical on this [renovation]. But at some point, you realize it has the potential to be a great house. So, you go for it."
—the homeowner



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ART SMART: The architects designed spaces for the client's artwork, such as this built-in made for Hunt Slonem's *Bunnies* (above) and the mantelpiece that frames the Damien Hirst spot painting (left). Interior designer Melissa Ervin designed the living room to be comfortable and livable with a green and blue color palette playing on the natural scene beyond its large windows. The Edward Ferrell sofa is covered in CalvinFabric's "Camino-Lake," tipped with grosgrain ribbon, a small detail with a large impact.

"The clients wanted this to be a classic beach house, casual and comfortable, a place they could fill with the art and heirlooms they've collected over the years, so that it, too, would feel as if it had always been part of the family." —Melissa Ervin, interior designer

pleasing proportions and capture the views. That freed up the ground floor for the office, media room, and large laundry.

The architects also removed a former study, reclaiming that space to restore the classic front porch. With that change, light now floods into the previously dark foyer, creating a welcoming area with exceptional views of the dunes and the Atlantic beyond

the adjoining living room.

To achieve continuity between these numerous rooms and maintain flow through the home, the architects designed a series of paneled passages with lower ceiling heights and wide, symmetrical openings. "The goal was to create spaces that carry you from one large room to the next, allowing for the feel of an open plan but maintaining traditional



GREEN SCENE: Lacquered in Farrow & Ball's bold green "Banacha," the adjoining media room is a cozy place to watch a movie or curl up with a good book. Peter Fasano wallpaper on the ceiling gives the feel of mosaic tile. A mid-century Sputnik chandelier and whimsical dog prints by British artist Valerie Davide combine with a bamboo coffee table and leather sconces from Fritz Porter to add texture, depth, and interest to this comfortable, layered room.

room definition," explains Dufford.

It's these thoughtful designs and details that delivered the old-school beach house results. "The clients really went the extra mile when it came to the details," says Young, pointing to pecky cypress wall paneling repurposed in the guest areas, designed as a classic, summer camp-style space.

"The paneling was on every wall and ceiling and had been painted white on one side," says Rus Sheppard of Sheppard Construction. "We cleaned, planed, and remolded each piece, bringing it back to life and using it in all of the second-floor bedrooms, bathrooms, and hallways." The team even built pieces into ingenious open-faced wardrobes in each bedroom, inspired by the homeowners' Lake Michigan cabin.



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SOOTHING SANCTUARY: No art was needed in the owner's bedroom once the architects' expanded the room's east-facing windows to bring in the natural beauty of its live oak neighbor. Dufford Young also removed smaller windows from the north wall creating the perfect space for the antique four-poster bed, which is accentuated by Penny Morrison "Vasari"-wrapped pillows and Lewis & Wood "Bella" wallpaper from Fritz Porter. In the adjacent bath, a freestanding cast iron tub from Waterworks with brass fixtures from Bird Hardware is a centerpiece in the paneled room painted in Farrow & Ball "Light Blue."

Throughout the interiors, designer Melissa Ervin created a transitional feel by applying a soft blue and green palette, accentuated by a variety of fabrics and textures and an enviable selection of lighting fixtures. New and vintage furnishings mix with a variety of neutral and colorful rugs for a layered effect, while the homeowners' impressive art collection provides much of the visual interest. "The clients wanted this to be a classic beach



PORCH PERFECT: A swing is a must for a Lowcountry porch, and this one, covered in Sunbrella “Palm” canvas at the front entrance hints to the green and blue hues inside (left). The Rattan Infinity Loungers from Fritz Porter add a playful, artistic touch and the repurposed nautical light fixture brings in the vintage vibe. The back porch (above) got a major upgrade, too, with the addition of a swimming pool just outside the homeowner’s bedroom.

house, casual and comfortable,” says Ervin, “a place they could fill with the art and heirlooms they’ve collected over the years, so that it, too, would feel as if it had always been part of the family.”

For the homeowners, who moved in at the start of 2020, the finished project is everything they had envisioned. The house comfortably holds all their treasured art and furniture, as if each piece had always belonged. Their daughter and grandchildren visit most every day, and the couple enjoys spending time walking on the beach, riding their bikes, and getting to know their neighbors. “Every time I go over that bridge, I think, ‘I just can’t believe I’m on this island,’” says the wife. “It really feels like home.”



Cabin Fever! See the pecky-cypress covered guest rooms at charlestonmag.com.