

Steeped in Tradition

By Lynn Nesmith | Photography by Jack Gardner



Standing tall in WaterSound Beach, the Koran house has poise, a memorable presence and a personality all its own. Double porches along the front of the house create a gracious interchange with the wooden boardwalk that leads over the dunes and to the beach.



French doors flanking the fireplace and a continuous bank of clerestory windows flood the living room with sunlight. An overscaled chandelier crafted of an old wine crate accentuates the volume of the 18-foot-tall, barrel-vaulted ceiling. A painting by Georgia artist Sherry Cook on the mantel adds a contemporary accent.

BEACH HOUSES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN DIFFERENT FROM OTHER HOUSES. For generations, grand dwellings and simple cottages along the sea have nurtured a compelling connection to nature and possessed an inherently lighthearted spirit. David and Gay Koran's new house in WaterSound Beach celebrates its coastal setting and the unique sights, sounds and diversions of living along the water.

Since the early 1980s, the Korans have enjoyed long weekend and summer vacations in Mexico Beach and remote corners of Gulf County. David's brother Bill, aka Captain Black, owned Blacks Island in St. Joe Bay, which over the years had served as summer camp and a true getaway since the island is only accessible by boat. Five years ago, David sold his Georgia-based company and had the time, energy and resources to explore the entire Gulf coast looking for the right location to build his own family retreat. He ventured westward and found the new urbanist communities along 30-A to his liking.



Both David and Gay were drawn to the overall sophistication of South Walton. "When we saw the expansive dunes and the pristine stretch of beach in WaterSound, we knew that was the place for us," says David. It wasn't long before they had purchased a choice home site and started looking for an architect.

"We walked into a WaterColor house designed by Jim Strickland of Historical Concepts and immediately loved it," recalls David. The house stood as tangible proof of the firm's appreciation of craftsmanship and understanding of the process of building along the coast. In addition, the firm's office was located in Peachtree City, Ga., just a few miles from the Korans' permanent residence in Newnan, so it would be easy to work together throughout the design process.

In keeping with WaterSound's Shingle Style aesthetic, Historical Concepts partner Terry Pylant drew from the language of traditional coastal architecture of Newport and Nantucket, ever mindful of Northwest Florida's climate and geography as well as with lifestyles of today's active families. The 3,300-square-foot main house (plus another 1,200 square feet in porches) incorporates traditional cedar shakes and the classic forms of the Shingle style genre. Double front porches, shed-roof bays and an outdoor fireplace animate the front of the house, while a dramatic gambrel roof, symmetrical chimneys and a widow's walk provide the two-story structure with a bold silhouette against the Florida sky.

The expansive forms, grand proportions and romantic illusions of the Shingle Style create a striking profile, yet the marriage of a meticulously crafted palette of recycled heart pine floors, white-washed cypress paneling, rough-hewn box beams and exposed trusses define the house as a truly handmade object.

"Terry deserves all the credit," says David. "We came with lot of ideas, but Terry kept us on the right path." And what architect wouldn't be happy to



Above: Teal green walls and painted pine floors enliven their daughter's downstairs bedroom. A pair of matching antique metal beds ensures there's plenty of room for weekend guests.

Above Right: The house possesses a grace and elegance in its architectural expression. Exposed beams, rounded ceiling and an engaging window pattern create a memorable background for the dining room.

Right: Interiors combine the best aspects of a contemporary open plan with authentic historic details and deftly crafted materials. The sociable yet serious kitchen with its handcrafted cabinets and generous island stands front and center at the top of stairway.





Far Left: Textured woods and tones of blues and greens enliven the downstairs foyer hallway and provide a fitting introduction of things to come.

Left: Adapted gas lanterns from an old railcar and antique chandeliers complement the old-world finishes, textured woods and authentic architectural details.

Below: Darker wood tones and shades of reds and greens instill the downstairs master suite with its own character. A sunny reading room opens onto the front porch.



oblige a client whose first request was to include all wood finishes and not an inch of sheetrock or drywall anywhere.

David even provided a resource for all the wood. One of his old fraternity brothers, Willis Everett, is the founder of Vintage Lumber, one of the country's largest suppliers of recycled heartpine and old-growth cypress. "When you're at the beach, you want to go barefoot," says Terry. "And naturally finished wood floors feel great and get even better with age."

Like many contemporary beach houses, the main floor is hoisted up to augment the views, capture the breeze and afford privacy. Although the formal front door opens onto the pedestrian boardwalk, Terry afforded the back door equal billing, incorporating long views with a sense of procession and visual connection throughout the house.

Bathed in natural light, a ship-shaped open stairway ascends to the loft-like second floor, where the splendor of the interiors unfolds in one

continuous living space. In a great room that readily fulfills the promise of its name, Terry took full advantage of the added height of the gambrel roofline with a soaring barrel-vaulted ceiling of white-wash cypress.

For interiors to echo the architecture of the house, Gay and David turned to Linda Mann of JMG Interiors in Newnan and Dale Trice of Design Services in nearby Seagrove. Furnishings are deliberately subtle and sophisticated, with the clean lines and simple accessories deferring to the architecture and play of natural light. The palette of soft colors and textured neutrals interacts differently throughout day, sometimes evoking the warm tones of the wood surfaces, other times mirroring shades of the sand and the sea. Linda deliberately mingled old and new, pairing contemporary art with antique railway lanterns and vintage chandeliers.

With a fresh look that reflects the familiar, the architecture nods to the Shingle Style, yet the house is clearly rooted in the practicalities of Southern vernacular design with inviting covered porches, deep overhangs, shading and shadows and lots of windows.



The livable and likable layout accommodates David and Gay and their two teen-age children, who love to bring lots of friends down to the beach. With a second master and two additional bedrooms and private bathrooms downstairs, the house also works beautifully for multiple families with people of all ages who have come to the beach to be together and enjoy each other's company but still want a bit of privacy. The downstairs den has its own television and fridge, and easy access to beach boardwalk offers the teen-agers their own zone. In addition, a freestanding carriage house offers a comfortable, gracious and private guest suite.

Although new, this family home reflects the sentiments and sensibilities of a classic summer house. An effervescent mix of purpose and delight, it exudes an open invitation to relax, and enjoy life along the water while the sheer elegance of the architecture shines with undiminished style. ■



An outdoor fireplace anchors a pleasant conversation area on the second-floor porch, offerings views out over the dunes to the Gulf.