



Haven in the Lowcountry

This South Carolina home will inspire you to create your own comfortable retreat.

Nowadays, many of us move too fast to take a deep breath, and we've lost the time to simply read a book by a fire or gather with friends to just sit a spell. We yearn for a place where life once again moves at an easy pace.

This retreat in the South Carolina Lowcountry is one such place. Located near the hustle and bustle of Hilton Head Island, its land is actually unremarkable: flat, sandy timberland that boasts no mountain views or ocean access. But compared to the cost of a waterfront lot, these acres were certainly more affordable.

When the current owner acquired the land as part of a timber business nearly five years ago, he had this retreat in mind. "I bought it really for mixed use," he recalls. "We use it for family gatherings, sporting, fishing, and relaxing." Timbering the land, however, has given him the spot he sought. "We do a little clear cutting but have mainly cut selected small areas at a time. This lets us see the beauty of the woods and helps renew life throughout the forest. We started with the raw land, and that was fun.

"I wanted this place to tell a story about the South and to create a special environment at the same time. I



top, left: Perched out over a small pond, the 1,580-square-foot main house glows with life on a cool January afternoon. **top, right:** Small cabins, or "bunkies," add sleeping space. **above:** Nothing beats sitting by a fire on a winter day. Above the mantel, interior designer Ruthie Edwards continued the outdoor theme by hanging fishing lures on the shutters that frame the mirror.

BY DERICK BELDEN / PHOTOGRAPHY SYLVIA MARTIN / STYLING ROSE NGUYEN

envisioned a place that took you back in time, a farm based on a good period in the post-Reconstruction South. Farms then were more like balanced, interdependent communities from which a sense of modest yet strong values grew.”

To revive these ideals, the owner knew he needed help. So he contacted Historical Concepts, a Peachtree City, Georgia, architectural firm, and convinced its president, Jim Strickland, to come to the property. “When I first saw the land, I knew we were going to have to create sense of place,” Jim says. “I suggested we look at it as a village where we could introduce buildings that served different purposes. We approach many of our projects in



above: A Southern staple—the rocking chair—makes a welcome place to kick off your boots. **below, right:** This swing, which is outfitted like an old daybed, invites curling up with a good book and a wool blanket.

terms of generational architecture and seek to determine how a structure may have evolved. That’s what we needed to do here.”

Jim and his design team proposed a main house with a series of out-buildings to provide extra sleeping and entertaining space. “I did have some parameters for the concept,” says the owner. “I wanted an outdoor fireplace, a portion of the house cantilevered over the water, and the structure to appear to be a redeveloped wharf or cotton warehouse.” Building upon those desires, Historical Concepts created a 1,580-square-foot main house with a deck perched over the



left: The kitchen in the main house is ready for an afternoon of cooking, yet with its crackle-finished cabinets and farmhouse-style sink, it’s attractive and inviting even when not in use.

water. The floor plan is simple: It is essentially a large room divided by columns and beams with a bedroom, two baths, and a laundry room. Out-buildings, called “bunkies,” serve as additional guestrooms. As Jim notes, “The beauty of the bunkie concept is that you can add them as needed.”

The steeply pitched tin roofs and wraparound porches echo familiar

Lowcountry architecture. But in order to pull the project off, the team had to make the house and its environs look as if they had been in place for more than 100 years. The paint colors and finishes helped accomplish this. “I remembered an old place in the Adirondacks with a similar palette,”

Jim says. “The red and green add a richness that is instantly at home. We

CREATING COZY COMFORT

- Use rich, warm colors inside and out. Here, Jim’s bold exterior statement enriches the site, while Ruthie’s combination of reds, browns, and greens immediately creates a welcoming environment.
- Look for plush, oversize furniture. The porch swing is copied from an old house nearby, while sofas and chairs inside offer sumptuous seating.
- Combine both old and new in your interiors. The rich patina of the old accessories helps enliven the newer pieces of furniture.
- Don’t fret if something is old and worn looking. Ruthie found the leather chairs nearby and didn’t even think about having them re-covered.
- Make the room user friendly. Use down pillows and easy-to-clean natural fabrics such as cotton for comfort.
- Have fun with paint. Bring out different colors in places by sanding, and soften crisp whites with waxes and glazes. New rocking chairs were painted red and green, then sanded to look as if they had been around for decades.
- Select dark or patterned rugs. They don’t show dirt or traffic patterns easily.



even distressed the siding by hitting it with a hand sander to rub off the final paint in places.”

Inside, the house appears just as old and well loved as the exterior. Interior designer Ruthie Edwards combined new elements with old, making the home come alive.

“We were shooting for a boyish hunt-club-in-the-country look,” she explains. “By using mostly inexpensive antiques, we were able to instill a comfortable, worn feeling.” From the crackle finish on the kitchen cabinets to old camping lanterns used as sconces, no detail was forgotten.

With careful stewardship and a heartfelt idea, this once ordinary piece of property has become a place that’s hard to leave.

left: Natural light, streaming through the clustered double-hung windows, bathes the airy dining room.