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# “WE WANTED A PLACE WHERE CHILDREN COULD JUMP UP AND DOWN”

**JIM AND LINDA STRICKLAND** designed a colorful **FLORIDA** cottage that makes everyone feel a little bit younger



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ABOVE, LEFT: **ROBBIE CAPONETTO**

**T**HREE HUNDRED SIXTY-FIVE DAYS A YEAR, visitors marvel at the sparkling white sands of WaterColor, Florida. And 362 steps from the beach (we counted), Jim Strickland built a cottage that makes his friends marvel, too.

“It’s a cozy getaway,” Jim says with a humble smile. “It isn’t highly designed or decorated—it’s just comfortable.” For Jim and his wife, Linda, their Florida retreat is a cherished place to spend time with friends and family, including their two children, four grandkids, and Linda’s sister, Karen Vance, and her family, who co-own the home. “This is really a place for all generations, for the children and grandchildren,” Jim says. Unbelievably, the 2,000-square-foot cottage can sleep 18—in a pinch.

The house was inspired by a friend’s family cottage on Tybee Island, Georgia, where Jim visited every summer when he was growing up. “That house didn’t have air-conditioning and it wasn’t slick or fabulous, but it was wonderful,” he remembers.

So is this cottage. Everything about it says zero attitude, from the wide, welcoming porch to the unfussy old furniture. “I wanted a place where the grandchildren could jump up and down, scream, and spill ice cream; where the dogs could bark and chew; and where you could bring in sand and not have to worry about it,” Jim says. His laid-back style makes even first-time visitors feel right at home: “This is a place where people aren’t worried about someone saying ‘Oh my.’”

**THE STRICKLAND FAMILY** often gathers on their porch, where shutters and draperies with a Bahamian influence provide shelter from sun, wind, and rain.



**JIM AND LINDA FILLED** the living room with flea market items and family heirlooms. “If you collect secondhand furniture,” says the Stricklands’ friend Ruth Edwards, a designer, keep the walls a neutral color “so the different pieces of furniture can still work together.”

“Our house isn’t highly designed or decorated—it’s just comfortable”



**PLATE RACKS** in the kitchen windows come in handy and admit lots of light. The café curtains over the lower panes offer privacy. Ruth Edwards says the red on the island “is a great color to go with food and entertaining.”

The front room, which combines the kitchen and living area, provides an ideal spot for family gatherings. Linda says everyone likes to huddle together here in the afternoons doing different activities—playing board games, watching football, or just hanging out. The high ceilings and huge windows make the space feel large, even when it’s crammed with kids and dogs.

At this family house, entertaining’s easy because there’s great flow from one room to another. Chilled wine and soft drinks are always on hand in the refrigerator, which Jim installed a foot above the floor to give youngsters quick access to frozen treats in the bottom freezer. The long kitchen table—a secondhand piece that Jim topped with heart-pine planking—seats up to 12. “You just pull it out a bit, and the room’s still huge,” he says.

Three double doors along the front of the house encourage folks to spill onto the porch, where neighbors riding by on bicycles often stop to chat. Huge Key West shutters and floor-to-ceiling porch curtains allow the space to do double duty as a sleeping nook. “The little guys can sleep outside, and that’s just supercool for them.”



ROBBIE CAPONETTO

**UPSTAIRS, VISITING COUSINS** love to sleep and play together in the built-in beds with operable curtains. Drawers below provide extra storage.



**MATCHING THE TRIM COLOR** to the walls in this tiny guest room (or any small space) creates an unfussy, unified background for bold patterns.



**THE MASTER BEDROOM** turns common decorating wisdom on its head with a neutral color on walls and a more vivid hue on the ceiling and trim.

Jim says. The grandkids also love to hide out in two built-in beds tucked upstairs beneath dormer windows.

Throughout the cottage, the interior walls are white, while the window trim, floors, and ceilings pop with hues of sky blue, cherry red, and seafoam green. Bright pillows, patchwork quilts, and Kurdish rugs also add vivid color; plus, their patterns tolerate tremendous wear and tear. All the beds are covered with washable quilts, “so it isn’t a problem if the dog gets on the covers or if somebody drops some M&M’s,” Linda says.

**H**istoric details quite literally fill every corner of the cottage. “There’s no drywall in the entire house,” says Jim, who used No. 1 select clear pine for the ceiling and walls and 200-year-old planks of knotty No. 2 pine for the floor. Lighting includes refurbished gaslights from the early days of electricity.

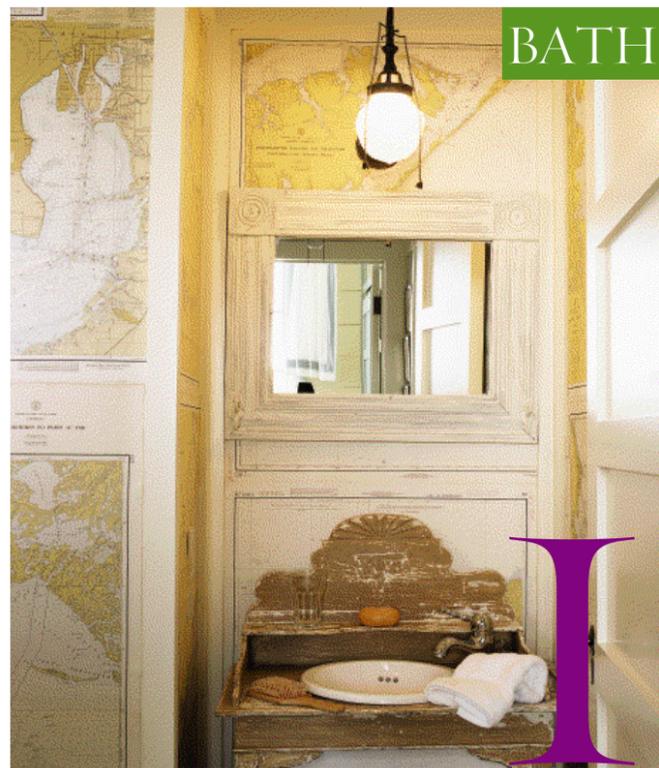
Even the objects on the walls have historic value. Jim and Linda decorated the downstairs hallway with old photos showing their grandparents and great-grandparents when they were children. Then Linda added contemporary shots of her own children and grandchildren to the collection, tinting the images a traditional sepia tone on her computer. The photos are displayed in identical frames, and Linda labeled each picture so visitors can identify who’s shown where and when. “This is a family place,” Linda says, and on the downstairs walls “you can see the family thread.”

With its lazy rituals and its gentle romance, Jim and Linda’s WaterColor cottage entices visitors to return. Jim knows that feeling well, of course: “I’ve always wanted to go back to that old house at Tybee . . . and now it feels like I can.”

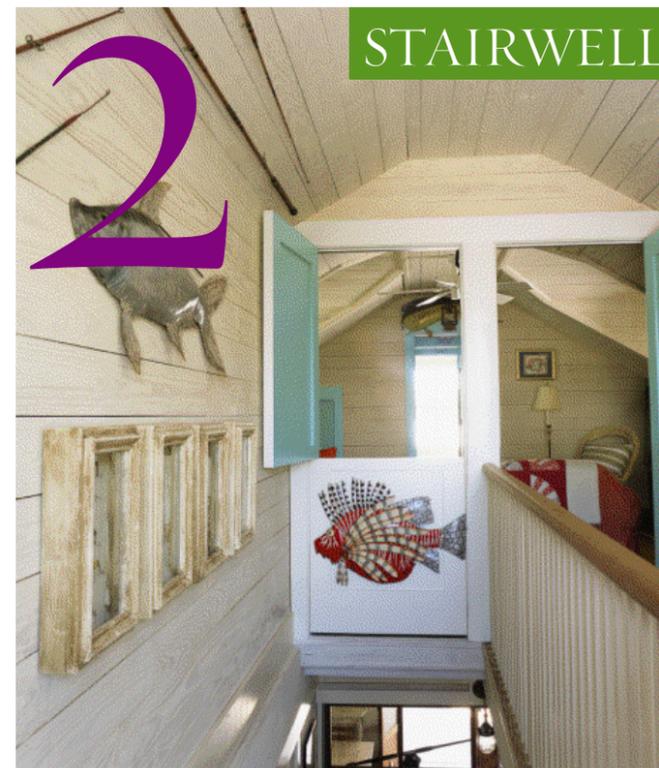
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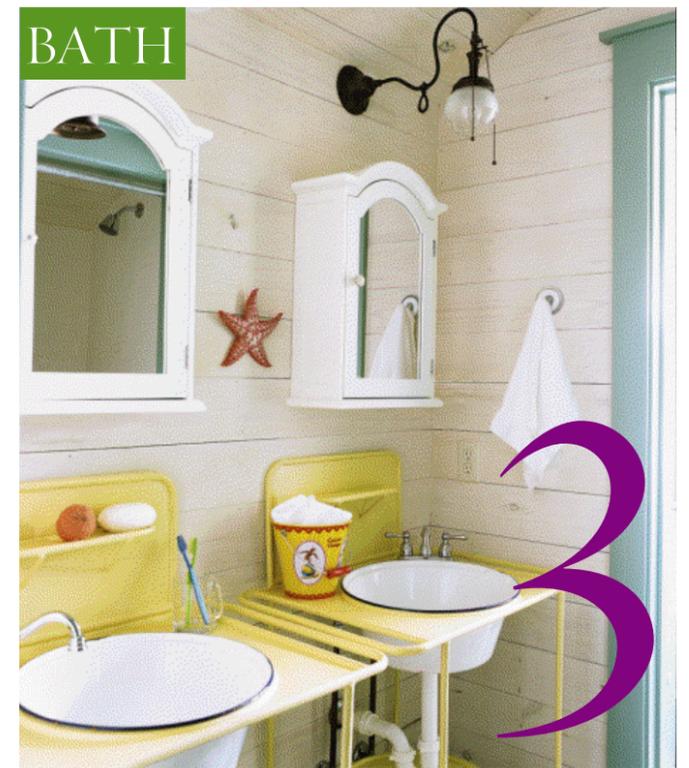
Try your own variations on these 7 finishing touches from the Stricklands' cottage



**OFFER GUESTS DETAILS** to discover. To enhance this downstairs bath's visual interest, Jim hung old navigational charts of Florida waters on the walls.

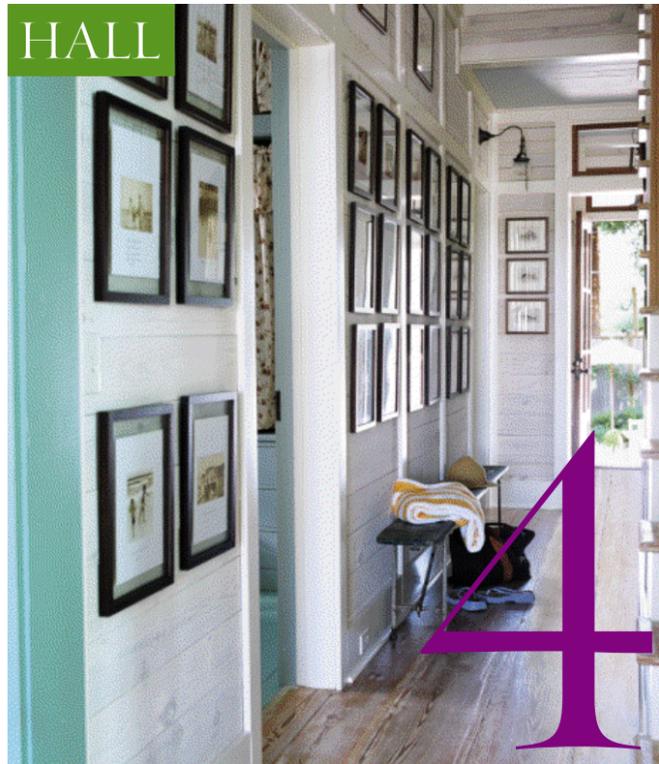


**ENLIVEN A BEDROOM** with a Dutch door over a stairwell instead of a solid wall. This door does double duty: Open, it admits light but still provides a safety railing; closed, it lends privacy.



**FIND NEW USES** for old objects. Jim took rusted washstands designed for a hospital, polished them up, added plumbing, and turned them into sinks for his grandchildren's bath.

“At our cottage you can spill ice cream or bring in sand and not worry about it”



**CAPTURE FAMILY HISTORY** by reproducing photos in a sepia tone at a copy center or on your computer printer. Write the date and locale on each one, match frames, and create a gallery.



**MAKE THE MOST** of limited space with a built-in storage area. “There’s nothing more uncomfortable than being in a small bedroom and trying to swing open a big closet door,” Jim says.



**BRIGHTEN** walls and create an illusion of additional space. Jim did so in the master bath with a huge mirrored door he took off an antique French armoire in his bedroom.



**CUSTOMIZE SIDE LAMPS** with a set of quirky bases. Jim found these old seltzer bottles on sale at a flea market and had them

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