A beveled-glass door in the Southern style is a favorite touch for everyone who visits the Spring Island home of Jim and Sharon Edwards. Opposite: The house has a spectacular view of the Colleton River.
A South Carolina island retreat appeals to young and old alike, thanks to a unique design created by a team of Atlanta architects.
FROM THE GREATEST GENERATION to Generation X, the media love to lump Americans into groups. But most people don’t fit neatly under one label—they often straddle more than one generation, or identify with one far removed from their own.

A good house can span generations, too. For proof, look no farther than the home of Jim and Sharon Edwards, located on secluded Spring Island in South Carolina’s Colleton River. It was designed by an Atlanta firm called Historical Concepts with an eye toward representing the various stages in a house’s life all at once.

Instead of one large volume, the house has a major mass and a minor mass connected by a breezeway that forms a strong axis. The latter, containing the large, separate kitchen and attached sitting room, seems as if it was added on, even though the house was completed as a whole.

“We call it generational architecture,” says Terry Pylant, who worked with his partners Aaron Daily and Historical Concepts founder Jim Strickland on the project. “It looks like a farmhouse was added to by a second and third owner as their needs became greater.”

For the Edwardses, who frequently host their son and grandchildren, this generational idea made a lot of sense. “I wanted it to have a sense of having been there for a very long time,” says Sharon, a part-time interior designer who decorated the house herself. “And I wanted my grand-

Top: A French farm table and a picnic bench turn this part of the great room into a casual dining area; it can also be surrounded by armchairs for a more formal feel. Above: The house’s exterior is taupe with Charleston green trim. The crimped metal roof is meant to give it a farmhouse look. Left: Sharon Edwards mixed new pieces with antiques, like this English desk and a collection of silver vases. Opposite: A view of the great room with its large windows shows how the house takes advantage of river views. The sofa and club chair are by Ralph Lauren.
children to come there and feel like I had lived there all my life.”

Former residents of Connecticut and Atlanta, the couple relished the chance to enjoy an idyll on a low-density private island. They wanted to honor the local character as much as possible.

The house may be asymmetrical, but the classical revival look draws on Southern roots, as does its informal crimped metal roof, a detail with a farmhouse feel.

The old-fashioned beveled-glass front door was a point of particular importance to Strickland. “We wanted to give it a lot of depth,” he says. “Instead of having just a two-dimensional door, we tried to play with it in every dimension.”

The house’s lot may only be an acre, but in terms of location, it packs a wallop. The Edwardses wanted every room to get the spectacular view of the Colleton River in the back; except for the study, they got their wish.

Screened porches were a major part of a strategy that Sharon calls “bringing the outside in.” The

“I wanted the house to have a sense of having been there for a very long time,” says Sharon Edwards, “and my grandchildren to feel like I had lived there all my life”

Above: From the back, it’s clear that porches make up about half of the house’s 8,200 square feet. Right and opposite: The kitchen is effectively a separate wing of the house. Sharon Edwards hired specialty painters to give the yellow bead-board walls an old patina. Despite the casual kitchen feel, she chose Brunschwig & Fils fabric for the chairs. Some of the wood for the floors, walls, and vaulted ceiling came from an old house in Kentucky. The antique armoire was retrofitted to hold a TV, and Oriental rugs were scattered throughout.
The house is about 8,200 square feet, and about 4,000 square feet of that comprises porches.

Live oaks surround the house, and wood is the primary material in its construction—clapboard on the outside and bead-board on the interior walls. “We wanted the bead-board because it reminded me of my grandmother’s home,” says Sharon.

The kitchen has been done up to look like it holds decades of memories, too. Recycled materials are a part of that; much of the wood in the bead-board, flooring, and vaulted ceiling came from an old house in Kentucky.

Throughout the house, Sharon combined Southern antiques with English ones, and she achieved a casual elegance by dressing some things up and some down. Although the kitchen is the most informal room in the house, she used gorgeous red-and-white Brunschwig & Fils fabrics on the room’s chairs to kick the panache level up a notch.

In the great room, the look is traditional but not dull. A Ralph Lauren sofa and club chair work well with an antique English desk and a vintage lamp made from a silver trophy. Sharon created a dining area around an old French farmhouse table, but then placed a picnic bench in front of it.

No doubt her family appreciates the effort, especially the youngest generation of all. “The grandchildren love it here—they feel like they’re going to camp,” says Sharon. “And we always end up on the porch watching the sunset at the end of the day.”

Top left: A wicker Ralph Lauren bed, and plaid by the same designer, adorn the guest room. Top and above: Two views of the master bedroom, which Sharon Edwards painted a sea-foam green “to bring the outside in.” Opposite: A screened porch off the kitchen is one of many spaces off the back of the house. The cedar swing was a gift to Sharon from her mother and sister. For more details, see Resources.