

Cabin Fever

An 1830s log cottage gets a new lease on life in the Lowcountry. **Allison Hersh** cozies up to a reconstructed guest house.

» Photography by **Richard Leo Johnson**

Think of it as a giant jigsaw puzzle.

When Marnie Dawson Carr decided to relocate an authentic 19th-century log cabin from Fayetteville, N.C., to Spring Island, S.C., craftsmen numbered each rough-hewn log before dismantling the structure and reassembling it in its new setting. Experienced artisans hand-set the dovetail joints and filled in the spaces between the logs with plaster to weatherproof the structure.

"The biggest challenge was the process of dismantling and re-assembling," says Jim Strickland, senior partner at Historical Concepts, the firm that managed the cabin's relocation and renovation. "It was a real art. Because the cabin was built by hand before the advent of modern equipment, each board and log was hand cut and hand fit. There was no margin for error."

The move went off without a hitch, preserving even the original axe marks on the wood. Now, this decidedly rustic Beaufort-area guest house welcomes visitors throughout the year, staying remarkably cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

Laura Ingalls Wilder would no doubt approve of this "Little House on the Island," surrounded

The Carr Stats »

Owner: Marnie Dawson Carr
Year built: 1830s
Year purchased: 1999
Square footage: 1,094
Accommodations: 1 bedroom,
2 sleeping lofts and 1 bath
Time to complete: 10 months





by towering pine trees and massive live oaks on a magnificent site overlooking the marsh. Inspired by pioneer homesteads—and built at a time when settlers built log houses using raw natural materials and rudimentary building techniques—this is hardly a typical Spring Island abode.

“I love unique projects,” confesses Marnie, who originally hails from Scranton, Penn., and spent most of her life in Greenwich, Conn. “To me, this was a real preservation project and an important way to protect the architecture of the South.”

If These Walls Could Talk

Now adjacent to Marnie's main home, which was built to resemble a traditional Lowcountry-style raised cottage, this rural outbuilding overlooks a scenic Williamsburg-inspired garden and lends a bucolic magic to the property. Crafted from American chestnut and yellow poplar by Polish immigrants in the 1830s, the cabin blends vernacular European and American building techniques. For the Historical Concepts team, such a renovation project was just too tempting to pass up.

“We take great care in designing new homes to be sure they reflect the vernacular architecture of the area in which they are built, but in this case we didn't have to work very hard,” Strickland jokes. “The home was an authentic piece

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of the South's architectural history. We studied it, its materials and its method of construction; and it told us how it should be updated to reflect the needs of a new generation.”

In this case, the need was for a comfortable, inviting space to accommodate visiting children, grandchildren and friends.

Room to Grow

Strickland and his team set out to create a livable, breathable modern space within the traditional framework of the structure. This involved expansion—both upward and outward.

To augment the square-footage of the modest, two-room cabin, they split it down the middle, adding a central hall to

Home Tour

create a dogtrot layout inspired by other examples of rural Southern architecture. The hallway functions as an entry foyer and allows for more space between the bedroom and the living room. It also provides a passageway to access the kitchen and bath, both of which were added to the back of the cabin as part of the renovation. A 16-foot-deep wrap-around porch—crafted from antique wood to match the cabin's weathered appearance—was also added, along with a pitched tin roof with an extra-deep overhang.

To increase the headroom of the modest abode, ceilings were raised by approximately 8 feet, making room for dual sleeping lofts. Gables crafted from reclaimed barn wood were added to the roofline to complement the cabin's hand-hewn architecture.

A Little Bit Country

"I'm very pleased with how it all came together," says Marnie. "This guest house creates an aura of peace and evokes a simpler time. It has an atmosphere where you can really relax."

In the summer, guests at this homestead can "visit" on the porch, sipping sweet tea in wooden rocking chairs accented with ruffled pink pillows. In the winter, they can light a fire in the brick fireplace and curl up with a mug of hot chocolate in the unaffected comfort of the living room.

Inside, homey antiques define the décor, including a simple brass bed, handmade quilts, converted gas lanterns and checkered valences. Antique heart pine floors imbue the interiors with warmth. Upstairs, the two sleeping lofts—accessible only by ladders in the central living area—add character to the layout, reflecting how settlers accommodated the needs of a growing family nearly two centuries ago.

"Our guests love the cabin," Marnie enthuses. "They say it's extremely comfortable and cozy. It has all the accoutrements of the modern era, but it takes you back to a kinder, gentler time. When you step inside, the complexities of contemporary life just melt away." ■

The Carr Referrals »

Design team: Jim Strickland, Terry Pylant, David Bryant and Sandra Guritz, Historical Concepts

Contractor: Bill Loflin, Chechessee Construction Company

Interior designer: Annie Ballance, The Ballance Group

Kitchen design: Historical Concepts

Bath design: Historical Concepts

Lighting design: Eloise Pickard, Sandy Springs Galleries

Landscape/hardscape design: Don Hooten, Hooten Land Design

Furniture and accessories: Owner's collection and purchases from antique stores



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