





Gathering Place

Joyce Owens melds historic charm and modern amenities in a Captiva cottage.

“When we first saw the cottage, we didn’t like it at all,” the homeowner admits. The modest two-bedroom, which was built in 1912 on Useppa Island, was moved to Captiva in 1948. The floors were uneven from the home being disassembled and reassembled in the move. Decades later, additions and modifications eventually yielded a quirky layout, which included a primary bedroom that could only be accessed through a bathroom and small, chopped-up rooms that didn’t flow into each other. “Its potential was wasted, based on its incredible location,” the homeowner says.

But, there was a whisper of possibility. “I’m the son of a builder, and as I meditated over this home, I started to envision what it would become,” he shares. The cottage was grandfathered into a location right on the dunes and the beadboard on the walls and ceilings had a retro-coastal vibe. Plus, in a location so beautiful, square footage didn’t really matter. “You can instantly have sand in your toes on your own Gulf-front beach—it could be

ARCHITECT: Joyce Owens

BUILDER: Benchmark General Contractors, Inc.

PHOTOGRAPHER: Michael Stavaridis

This two-bedroom home, originally built in the 1900s on Useppa Island, was moved to Captiva in 1948.

the setting of a Nicholas Sparks novel,” the homeowner says. He and his wife felt with the right touch, they could unearth the cottage’s historical character while bringing it up to date for their family.

Consequently, they enlisted architect Joyce Owens. “They could tell this home was well-built; it had this beautiful charm about it,” Joyce says. The architect, a recent recipient of the AIA Florida Gold Medal—the organization’s highest award—is known for her modern aesthetic. But she likes the challenge of bringing an older home into the current era.

The first steps were structural: Joyce removed the sagging, uneven floors, got them all on one plane, and installed white-washed oak floors throughout to brighten the space from the ground up. “They’re just beautiful,” she says. Then, she addressed the awkward floor plan. “We had to fix the circulation,” she explains. She removed some walls and moved others to improve the flow, for easy access to bedrooms and bathrooms.

To maintain the character of the house, Joyce replaced the roof, windows and shutters with new versions in the same style, but kept the paneling throughout and a fireplace with interesting stonework. “We didn’t want to come in too heavy-handed and lose the historical charm,” she explains.

The dining room saw the biggest transformation. Here, Joyce removed a wall between the kitchen and dining room to create one large space for cooking and dining. “We used traditional principles in the kitchen with modern detailing, but we added cabinets and appliances for the 21st century,” Joyce says. The couple loves the huge island. “This is a place for endless gathering and entertaining,” the homeowner says.







The homeowner saw potential and enlisted the help of architect Joyce Owens—known for her modernist sensibility—to update the home and reconfigure the disjointed layout for form and function.

The dining area saw the biggest transformation, with walls removed to create one large space with the kitchen. Concealed outlets and white cabinetry create a canvas for the landscape.



Concealed outlets and hardware along the all-white cabinets, walls and countertops create a sort of canvas for the view of the Gulf of Mexico out the bay windows. “Before, you couldn’t see the ocean from the kitchen,” Joyce says. Now, the homeowner says: “It’s seamless: the water hits you from everywhere you stand inside.”

The dining area opens to a living room that spans the south side of the house. Here, soft lighting and plush, oversize furniture invite family and friends to lounge. The house has a “MISC” aesthetic, a term coined by the homeowner: Modern Industrial Shabby Chic. “All of the lighting in the home is so well thought-out; it includes modern elements in one space and rustic industrial ones in the others,” he explains. “All of it is soft and gentle on the eyes to make you just drift away for a midday nap listening to the Gulf waves crash in the distance.”



Joyce removed the sagging floors and installed white-washed oak to brighten the space. Careful to respect the original design, she replaced the roof, windows and shutters with new versions in the same style, and kept the paneling throughout. Details like oil-rubbed bronze nod to the historic character.



Joyce renovated all bathrooms to maximize space. In the second bath, she added modernist steel-frame enclosures around the shower.

Off the living room is a media room, and the two bedrooms are located along the northern end of the home. “The primary bedroom is tiny, but it has an amazing view,” Joyce says. The second bedroom is roomy enough to sleep two or more. The architect was smart to eke out storage from the small floor plan so it would not feel cluttered. “It helps that the kids’ bedroom has unbelievable closet space,” the wife says. “It doesn’t feel like a dorm room.”

Joyce renovated the bathrooms throughout. The primary bath received a makeover in soft gray and blue tones and was reconfigured to make space for a luxurious shower, an enclosed toilet and double sinks. In the second bath, Joyce reconfigured the floor plan to include steel-frame enclosures around the shower and toilet for the shared space. The powder room is the most modern, with a floating vanity sink, a toilet and integral shelving that closes the gap between the cabinet and the wall with black, sculptural tile and glowing lights.

Throughout the home, they added lighting and hardware with traditional details, like an oil-rubbed bronze finish, to lend a historic feel that ties in with the original architecture. Joyce says she added more modern touches to really make the cottage unique. With these touches, “this cottage is and always will be timeless,” the homeowner says.

Beyond what can be seen, Joyce worked with the homeowners to seamlessly incorporate the latest technology throughout. “It’s a fully integrated home packed with an amazing full indoor and outdoor sound system, alarms and remote temperature control,” the homeowner says. “Every single space, even the closets and hallways, was meticulously designed to maximize the cottage.”

The star, of course, is the ocean. “It’s really all about the beach and opening up the views,” Joyce says. Situated on the dunes, with Captiva’s lush greenery around them and coquina shells at their feet, the family spends their time playing games on the back deck and appreciating all their home has to offer. “Joyce brought our magical cottage back to life,” the homeowner says; his wife adds, “Now we never miss a sunset.” 🌅



Though the cottage is modestly sized, the smart layout takes advantage of every inch with an easy flow between the common areas and the bedrooms and baths, and unobstructed Gulf views.

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