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destiny CALLING

Serendipity steers a couple toward their dream cottage inspired by classic 19th-century architecture.

WRITER **SUSAN STILES DOWELL** PHOTOS **RICHARD LEO JOHNSON** FIELD EDITOR **SANDRA L. MOHLMANN**



Funny how heaven and earth will conspire

to move a good idea from inspiration to completion. Around the time Vicki and Robert Brannon knew they weren't fully utilizing the 2,100-square-foot home they'd built 16 years earlier in Beaufort, South Carolina, they noticed some small shingled houses tucked into the charming side streets of their historic community. "Weathered-looking, like they grew out of the woods" was Vicki's first thought about these diminutive takes on the Northeast's historical cedar-shake Shingle style. But before the couple fully embraced the idea of living smaller, or even putting their house on the market, fate intervened. "A Realtor asked if we wanted to sell our house," she says. "A couple fell in love with it and made an offer we couldn't refuse."

That push was all they needed to commit to building their own shingled house. After moving to a rental, Vicki spotted an overgrown lot perfect for its proximity to town and a bike path on the Spanish Moss Trail. The couple reached out to developer Chuck Ferguson, who had built a number of these cottages, and brainstormed some prerequisites for their own custom design. Vicki's directive: "Make it

Opposite: Designer Laura Tucker chose slipcovered chairs, simple Roman shades, and punchy yellow accessories for a casual, modern look in the dining alcove. *Above:* Shingle-style architectural elements, including a small dormer between the roof gables and a porte cochere-like entry, give the new cottage a classic feel. The 9-foot-wide entry door and sidelights are solid mahogany.





one level, with exposed beams, concrete floors, and rustic-looking interiors to set off a little glamour.”

Ferguson sketched a plan for a 1,200-square-foot house featuring a central common room with living, dining, and cooking areas plus two adjacent bedrooms with baths; the smaller bedroom would double as a study. “My company has an in-house millwork operation that enables a precision fit for living smaller,” he says. “The objective here was incorporating as many built-ins as we could fit.”

Vicki’s request for bookshelves initiated the style direction. Setting a big bookshelf against one wall like a piece of furniture inspired Ferguson to create

Opposite: Double-hung windows flood the kitchen with natural light. The 12-foot beam above the windows conceals a range vent. *Above:* The living room opens to both the kitchen and dining alcove. Deep gray paint distinguishes the inglenook, which is lined with custom shelving for the owners’ collections. *Right:* Tucked into a niche in the living room, an Empire-style chest and antique lamps offset the room’s more contemporary elements.






an adjacent alcove around the fireplace, lined with built-ins, which he labeled an “inglenook” after the traditional Shingle-style house feature. Vicki’s favorite piece of furniture, an Empire-style chest, tucks into a paneled niche, further demarcating the living area. The same paneling anchors a dining area with banquette seating adjacent to the kitchen.

Throughout the house, a gray-and-white palette sets a contemporary tone, but designer Laura Tucker brought personality to the cottage with subtle accents of red and yellow in furniture and accessories. She also chose a couple of glitzy chandeliers to balance the rustic ceiling beams and weathered concrete floors, and to give Vicki the hint of glamour she was looking for. “Our Shingle houses have flair,” Ferguson says. And this one is no exception. □

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Above left: The marble-top vanity and self-rimming sink mimic washstands from the 1890s era of Shingle-style homes. *Above right:* An intricately carved four-poster bed nods to tradition in the master bedroom. The concrete flooring was tinted jet black before it was poured, then was exposed to the elements during construction and aged to its mottled gray appearance. *Opposite:* Plumbing for the master bath’s soaking tub was installed when the concrete floor was poured. A crystal chandelier adds a delicate touch overhead.



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—developer Chuck Ferguson