

A new home built on a strip of land
along Jacksonville's St. Johns **RIVER**
RUNS deep with Old Florida soul and nods to
Cracker-style architecture. **THROUGH**
IT all, the historic charm shines



DON'T CHANGE A GOOD THING

Because of the area's hot climate, Cracker-style homes revolve around a tall-ceilinged central hall. Before the invention of air-conditioning, the front and back doors stayed open and the hallway worked as a breezeway, circulating air throughout the house. With today's technology, this isn't needed anymore, but the design still has a big perk: It offers unparalleled views from the front door straight through the back to the river.

BY SARAH NEWELL /// PHOTOGRAPHS BY HECTOR MANUEL SANCHEZ



Stay Comfortable An outdoor rug (Dash & Albert's Herringbone) is soft and durable while the all-weather wicker furniture (Chatham by Kingsley Bate) is plush yet sturdy.

GO FULL CIRCLE WITH PORCHES

From quiet afternoons to bustling dinner parties, the 11-foot-deep wraparound porch shades the first-floor windows and walls from harsh summer sun and heat. Leaving the rafters exposed at the edge of the roof is an old-house detail worth keeping.

HONOR TRADITION

“Because the porch runs all across the front of the home, we didn’t want the entry door to overtake the exterior,” says Jarvis, who painted the siding Sherwin-Williams’ White Heron (SW 7627), the shutters Canvas Tan (SW 7531), and the door Naval (SW 6244). A simple peaked roof frames the entry. “It’s so welcoming,” says Ross, who surrounded the house with azaleas.



ONE EVENING, NEW PARENTS MICHAEL PAJCIC AND KATY DEBRIERE SAT ON THEIR SOFA

amid an explosion of baby gear. They were debating whether to move out of their historic 1,500-square-foot farmhouse in Avondale, a quaint neighborhood along the St. Johns River in Jacksonville, Florida, when Pajcic casually mentioned, “There is that pretty land at the end of the block for sale.” “I had no idea what he was talking about, but we got up right then and walked down there,” DeBriere says. “I immediately exclaimed, ‘This is perfect! Why didn’t you say anything before?’”

But there was one problem with building a new house: They love homes with soul. “My husband grew up in historic houses,” says DeBriere. “And I like the way they smell and the wood floors. Our long-term plan was to buy something old and renovate it, but here was this piece of land on the river.” It was also close to family, and they were already in the neighborhood. Soon after, they bought the lot and committed to building the closest thing to an old home.

So, the busy attorneys and new parents to daughter Ruth Anne pulled together a local team to guide them: architect William Leuthold, interior designer Stephanie Jarvis, landscape designer Jamie Ross, and builder Matt Carlton. They

collaborated on the Florida Cracker-style home, an architectural form popular in the 19th century, that the couple envisioned. The house would need a painted-wood exterior, a 360-degree continuous porch, and a standing-seam metal roof with cupolas and clerestories on top (another convincing nod to a time before air-conditioning). The couple was adamant about forgoing a contemporary open floor plan to keep the house in character. A wide central hallway stretches from the front to the back with lots of rooms branching from it. “The spaces all flow so well,” says DeBriere. There are toggle-style light switches, tons of paneling, and even a detached garage. Jarvis says, “The porch dimensions are period appropriate at just over 11 feet deep with 9-foot ceilings. You can’t even tell this is a new house.” Inside, she layered old rugs, vintage fixtures, and paintings for a lived-in feel. When the family moved their belongings (which included a few cherished heirlooms and a big book collection) down the street, DeBriere remarked, “There will be no more purchases or moves after this.” Steal their best design ideas for a new old home.

The Straight and Narrow Tongue-and-groove paneling on the walls and ceiling is another old beach house detail. It handles humidity better than plaster.

HIDE THE MODERN ELEMENTS

Because the couple chose to stow most of their appliances in the walk-in pantry, a wall of glass-front cabinetry was incorporated into the kitchen for storage, like a larder in a historic home. White paneled walls and painted cabinets create a seamless backdrop that doesn't steal attention from water views out the trio of windows over the sink. The blue island (Sherwin-Williams' Indigo Batik SW 7602) is topped with a walnut counter and inset with Vermont Danby marble so Pajcic, a baker by hobby, can roll out his dough.



Investment Pieces

"We use old rugs because they have a sturdy construction and hide a multitude of stains," says Jarvis. On the hunt? Seek out antique Persian Sultanabad wool rugs that are in good condition and have lots of color and pattern.



MIX HIGH AND LOW

Combining unlikely elements gives a home personality. Here, an 18th-century Italian beaded chandelier from Charles Hanlon's Mayfair Design adds classic dining-room fancy, but pairing it with the vernacular V-groove ceiling keeps the feeling relaxed. Easy-to-clean English-style dining chairs upholstered in faux leather encircle the table.



BRING IN THE "HAINT BLUE"

The living room ceiling was painted blue to make it look like it could have once been an open porch that was later enclosed. To add another pop of color, cube-shaped ottomans were upholstered in yellow plaid from Chelsea Textiles. The trio of brass botanicals is from the Marburger Farm Antique Show in Texas. "This is a lesson in having fun. You want a space that's a joy to come home to," says Jarvis.



TAKE A CHANCE WITH COLOR

Recessing the headboard just a little creates an intimate, cozy feeling and nods to French alcove beds. The rust-colored grass cloth wallpaper sets a strong backdrop to a pattern-heavy block print headboard and matching bed skirt (Eloise Steele Coral by Elizabeth Eakins). The deep shade keeps all that print from looking fussy, which is important in a master bedroom.





FIT FOR ALL AGES

Within Ruth Anne's bedroom, a grown-up layering of patterns sets the tone. The star of the show is a 19th-century American painted chest found at The Antiques and Garden Show of Nashville. The scalloped-edge drapes, bursts of pink, and tiny blue-and-white patterned wallpaper are girl-friendly elements amid the adult pieces.

FINE-TUNE THE DETAILS

Further blurring the lines of this new old house, the window seat is designed to look like a radiator cover, but it's actually used for toy storage. A vintage wall lantern has hinged doors that swing open. The room's wallpaper is Aviary Multi on White by Schumacher. **SL**

