

Southern Living

SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY

Celebrate Porch Season in Style

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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



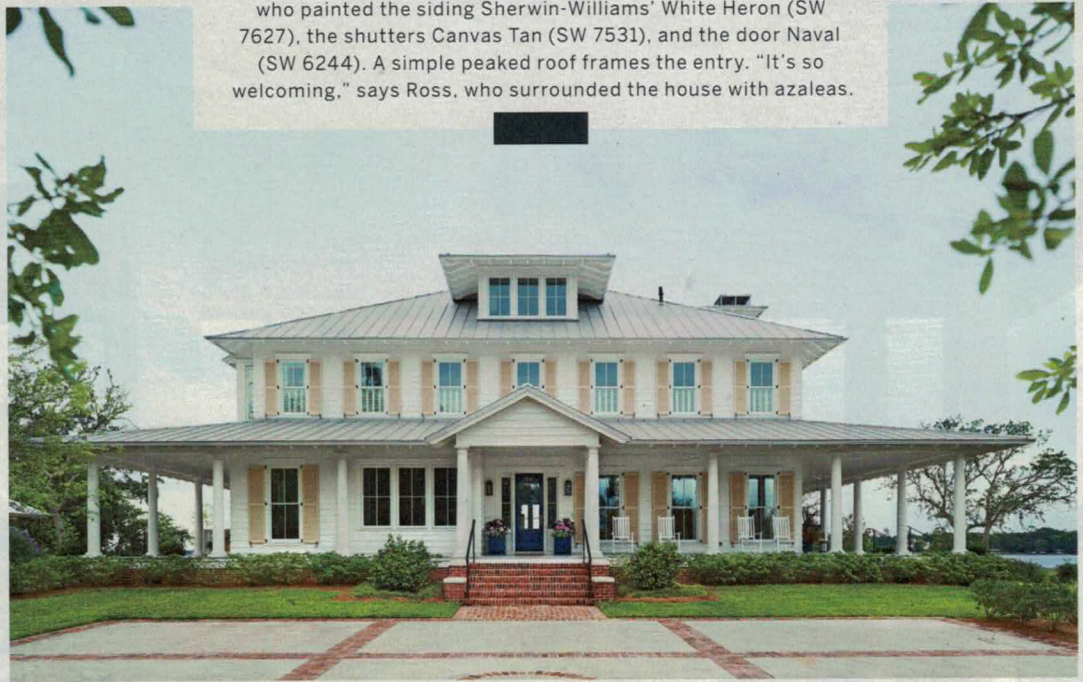
DON'T CHANGE A GOOD THING

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

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.