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In the South,  
they call it  
Low Country—  
those wet, reedy  
plains where  
the ocean and  
rivers frequently  
wash over  
the terrain. The  
homes of  
the region  
are much like  
the people:  
casual, friendly,  
and adaptable.



# Low Country



This is classic Low Country styling: friendly and welcoming in a down-home sort of way. There's no doubt where the front door is or where to lounge on a hot summer day. Should rain come, the metal roof sheds the water. If weather becomes more vigorous, shutters guard the windows. All that, and it's pretty as a picture.



# Comfort









**H**aving lived in 13 different houses, Chat and Jean Whitmore knew what they wanted—and, equally important, what they didn't want—in their retirement home. "We know how we like to live and how we entertain," Jean says. "We loved the idea of a Low Country home because we're on the outskirts of Charleston, South Carolina, and we didn't want our home to be formal. Everything we were drawn to was light and airy—like summer inside."

Knowing what layouts had worked in the past and referencing Jean's extensive stash of magazine clippings, the couple took an unconventional approach to designing their home: They pieced it together room-by-room, considering traffic flow, function, and connections between rooms before committing the plan to paper. "It really helps to visualize how you want the house to look," Jean says.

What the couple envisioned was pure South. "We wanted a house that evoked the romance of an old Southern home, one with a wide front porch where everyone gathers to sip cool drinks and chat, with doors that open to catch the coastal breezes," Jean says. To get an idea of the exact elements they

needed, the Whitmores visited homes in the area with their general contractor, Steve Kendrick. They saw wood siding, wood porch floors, and narrow windows and doors as they scanned the area. So that's what they ordered.

Geography and climate also dictated several choices. Because occasional flooding is a concern, the foundation was elevated to a foot above flood level. Blazing summer sun dictated the need for shade, leading to generously sized eaves and a covered front porch. Intense sunlight also drove the decision to install reflective light-color metal roofing, which reduces heat absorption.

Inside, the Whitmores opted for the feel of a Southern cottage—as interpreted for modern times. The heart of the

**ABOVE** | The fireplace design is based on an idea Jean Whitmore saw in another house. "Homeowners should never be afraid to borrow ideas," she says. Bricks were lightly whitewashed to emphasize the inviting country ambience. An adjacent den/study can be accessed through the doorway near the staircase. **OPPOSITE** | Exterior-style siding on interior walls creates an appealing backdrop recalling Southern homes of the past.





home is a broad, open public space of about 1,000 square feet that serves as a living room, dining area, and kitchen. "It's where we hang out most of the time," Jean says. Rugs and furniture delineate the living and dining rooms. In lieu of a center hall, five sets of French doors connect the front porch to the main indoor living area.

The most striking architectural detail throughout the house is the horizontal wood siding covering the walls. This was a signature element used in old Southern homes because wood was readily available at low cost and plaster walls were an expensive luxury. "I saw it in a photo, and it reminded me of how houses used to be built," Jean says.

Installation of the interior siding was one of the biggest challenges, Kendrick says. "We used 1x6-inch tongue-and-groove pine with a beaded edge. It has to be perfectly square and plumb, which makes the job more difficult. I think there are only 10 sheets of drywall in the entire house."

Furnishing the main living area also was challenging, interior designer Betsy Schmidt says. Not only did furniture define spaces, but also the many exterior doors pushed tables and chairs away from the room's longest wall. "You see everything at one time, so one element has to complement another. Yet you don't want the effect to look like a showroom," she says.

As with the architectural design, simplicity, functionality, and easy elegance were mandates for the interior decor. Beaded-board ceilings, heart pine floors, and plantation

**ABOVE** | Here is casual Southern living: Open space stretches from the living room to the kitchen, with a dining area in between. **OPPOSITE** | Jean's Queen Anne table was refreshed with a coat of white lacquer. The dark weave of the wicker dining chairs provides a textured contrast to the table's sheen. The natural-color wood stain on the main entry door distinguishes it from the four other French door pairs along the same exterior wall.





"You see everything at one time, so one element has to complement another."

interior designer Betsy Schmidt





## Extreme Weatherproofing

"Charleston is a challenging area to live in," builder Steve Kendrick says. "Our area has high seismic activity, and we are subject to hurricanes five months each year." With severe weather and its island locale in mind, the home's defenses include:

- **A block foundation** that raises the main level 12 inches above flood level
- **Windows rated** to withstand three-second gusts of 110 mph winds
- **Exterior shutters** that close and lock
- **A lot with few pine trees** which are prone to snapping in high winds
- **A galvanized-metal roof** resistant to high winds, salt spray, and intense sunlight

**ABOVE** | Jean got the idea for a stainless-steel sink and countertops from interior designer Betsy Schmidt's kitchen. A task pendant provides light for cleanup duty.

**RIGHT** | Built to a reasonable scale—no supersizing here—the kitchen puts everything within reach. Upper cabinets were banished in favor of windows that keep the kitchen bright. Storage abounds in the base cabinets and a full-size wall pantry.





“Everything we were drawn to was light and airy—  
like summer inside”

—homeowner Jean Whitmore







shutters reflect a coastal sensibility. A neutral color palette reinforces the cool, welcoming feel.

There was also the issue of the kitchen, which is open to view as part of the main public space. An avid cook, Jean chose to create a modified galley design in a niche next to the dining room.

Modest in size but equipped with all the luxuries of the day, the kitchen features an efficient work triangle. "It is so user-friendly," Jean says. "I can get to the stove, to the sink, or to the refrigerator without walking my legs off. And when we entertain, everyone hangs out at the island."

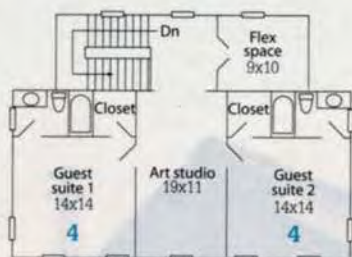
Jean kept the kitchen's look clean with flecked-granite

**LEFT** | French doors in the bedroom open onto the screen porch, extending the space to the outdoors.

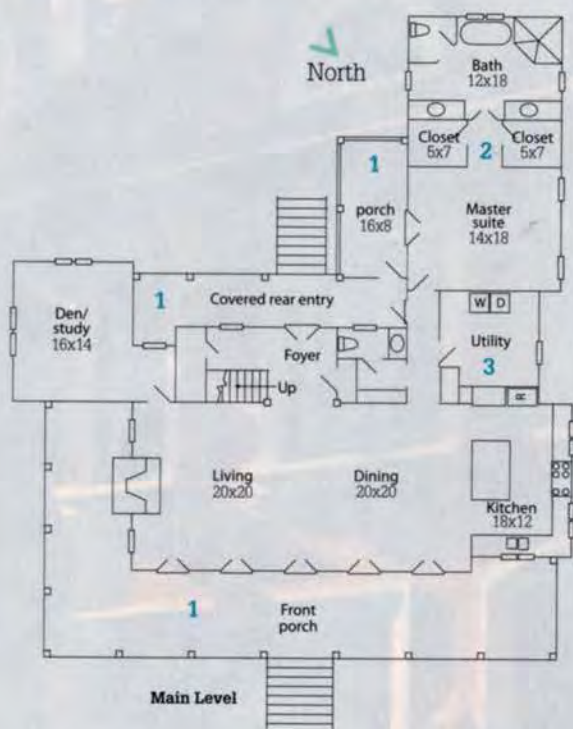
**ABOVE** | A must-have was a large master bath that could accommodate a claw-foot soaking tub and a generously sized corner shower with a showerhead and a hand shower.







Upper Level



Main Level

## About This Home

**SQUARE FEET:** 2,256  
(plus 1,152 of porch)

**BEDROOMS:** 3

**BATHROOMS:** 3 full, 1 half

**FOOTPRINT:** 54x62  
**LOCATION:** Daniel  
Island, SC

- Porch living.** Spacious porches at the front and back of the house add significant living space. Out front, five sets of French doors make the living and dining rooms easy-flowing indoor/outdoor spaces. A screen porch also expands the living area of the master suite.
- Convenient wardrobe.** Closets bridge the master bedroom and master bath.
- Well-positioned laundry.** A utility room between the master bedroom suite and the kitchen was the right spot to put the washer and dryer. It means no long treks to do the chore.
- Guest quarters.** A pair of guest rooms with baths creates an upper-level retreat for friends and family who stay. A small room on the upper level is used by Jean Whitmore as an art studio.

countertops, stainless-steel appliances and sink, and timeless fixtures. For the rest of the home, she chose furnishings that are quiet and cool, repurposing a few pieces such as her Queen Anne dining table and pine coffee table with white lacquer paint and slipcovering sofas for an easy, breezy look. She also added textural pieces, such as sisal rugs and wicker dining chairs, for contrast. "Contrast is especially important in an all-white room," Schmidt says. For interest, artwork by friends and accessories provide pops of well-positioned color. "It's really an eclectic look, but I enjoy mixing and matching what I have with the new pieces that come in," Jean says.

Private spaces on the main level include the den/study and the master suite. In addition to requiring a master bath with ample space for two, the Whitmores also insisted that the suite open onto a screen porch. "We wanted a bathroom with separate vanities and enough space so we wouldn't trip over each other," Jean says. "And we wanted a secluded, private area away from the front of the house where we could have a

glass of wine and enjoy the evening outside when it's nice."

On the upper level, rooms were designed with company in mind. The two guest suites each have a bath and walk-in closet. At the top of the stairs is an art studio, complete with a sink and cabinetry for supplies.

Overall, the Whitmores' home debunks the myth that good design is complicated. In fact, it's just the opposite. "Too much detail, too much stuff detracts from the openness of a room," Jean says. "Being open, airy, and light is what makes this house comfortable and unpretentious."

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writer HEIDI TYLINE KING • photographer JOSHUA SAVAGE GIBSON  
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