

EVERGREEN

LARRY AND PATRICIA PAOLINI'S RENOVATION OF THE CHRISTMAS COTTAGE IS THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING.

BY KATHY BECKER • PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICK SHIRGHIO



CHRISTMAS COTTAGE

When Patricia "Trish" Paolini first looked at the circa 1914-1917 cottage with its peeling paint and jalousie-windowed porch on Broad Avenue South in 2002, she knew it was the house for her.

However, her husband, Larry, a Cape May, New Jersey, dermatologist, didn't even want to look inside, despite the home's location, steps from Third Street South's shopping and restaurants.

"This one was at the top of the list, and was the oldest and cheapest," Trish says. "We pulled up and he said, 'No way.'"

So for their second weekend visit to Naples—a month after their first visit—they looked at the other 20-some properties within their price range, most move-in ready. They ended up back inside the first house, which needed extensive work. On the porch was a decorated Christmas tree. Dorothy McLenon, the home's owner for six decades, said it had been standing on the porch for 15 years.



Trish Paolini saw nothing but potential in this early 1900s cottage near Third Street South. Her husband, Larry, took some convincing, but is delighted with the result.



Larry and Trish Paolini (above) opened up the space by incorporating the former porch into the main living area, and adding a kitchen and master bedroom, while maintaining original details like the beamed ceilings, beadboard paneling and wood floors.

"I had a good feeling about the house," Larry says. "It had original wood and history. How could you not like it here? You get to loving it."

The next obstacle was convincing McLenon to sell it. She had had the house on the market for two years, and had turned down other, higher offers because she feared the buyer would tear the house down or turn it into commercial property.

"I think I was the only person on the face of the earth who wouldn't knock it down," Trish says. The Paolinis became the fourth owners of the home, which was built by the man who oversaw the building of the Naples Hotel. When the house was built, there were no homes between it and Naples Bay on one side and the Gulf on the other.

Their original plan was to fix up the property and rent it out, but as they began to work on the old house, which had faulty electric wiring, a crumbling brick fireplace and only one working bathroom out of three, the Paolinis decided they would need a full renovation with additions to turn the house into their retirement dream.

A year of planning with builder Larry Porter of Porter Van Arsdale Construction, designer Falconer Jones, and landscape architect Ellin Goetz of Goetz + Stropes led to a \$1.5 million renovation which entailed a year of construction for the addition of a



A wing with the spacious kitchen and carport was added to the original cottage, making the home perfect for entertaining.



A private backyard with some of the existing landscaping connects the house to a guest house and garage, and provides an outdoor oasis.



Resort-like amenities make the cottage the perfect getaway spot, even as it is nearly in the midst of Third Street South shopping, dining and entertainment.

wing with a carport and kitchen, a wing for the master suite and reconstructed and configured garage and guest house.

"The people who worked on this house made it what it is," Trish says. "They put their heart into this house. We had it in our minds, but they brought it to life."

The original house provides the core as well as the upstairs rooms, made more spacious by removing drop ceilings to expose beams and cathedral ceilings. The board-and-batten siding, metal roof and expansive front porch, as well as some of the front yard's original trees, remain. Details in the new part of the house, including brackets, gutters, columns, paneling and beamed ceilings, provide a seamless transition from old to new.

During construction and since the work was completed in 2006, the Paolinis have received a lot of compliments. "All the locals would stop by and tell us 'thank you,'" Larry says. "It does get more expensive to rehab than to build new, but we love Old Naples. I love being able to walk everywhere and to meet my neighbors."

The couple furnished the house while it was still under construction, buying furniture, art and light fixtures and putting them in storage. There's only one chair they feel doesn't fit perfectly. The baby grand player piano in the living area was added because Larry's daughter plays, and because McLenon had several pianos in the house when they bought it.



"We had a folder and notebook and took pictures of the furniture," Trish says. "I haven't been in a furniture store since." While their Naples home was under construction, they were also renovating their home in New Jersey. "You lose track of time when you are so busy writing checks."

The home's distinctive red color came after the couple rode their bikes all over Old Naples, looking for homes they liked. Ultimately, they decided that they wanted their house to be different than anything in Old Naples, so they went to a bookstore, got two big cups of coffee and sat down with home books. They found the color on an old barn in a book, and decided the hue, called "radish," was perfect for their remade Christmas Cottage.

"The nice thing is the house is old, but has all the modern amenities," Trish says. "It has a contemporary look with charm. A creative architect and a cooperative city can make projects like these work." ♦