

# Marshland Magic

*Nature's enchantments lure a retired couple to a tidal creek in Hilton Head Island, South Carolina*

*By Deborah K. Dietsch  
Photography by Richard Leo Johnson*







*The Wetmores' house extends along a peninsula jutting into marshy Broad Creek (previous spread). Raised above the flood plain, it is entered from a travertine-clad staircase next to a tiered fountain (above). Inside, the hallway leading from the foyer (opposite) to the kitchen incorporates archways finished in antique oak.*

**O**n a peninsula jutting into Broad Creek, the house built by Dave and Patty Wetmore is poised to take in the fall display presented by the salt marshes of Hilton Head Island. Visible through the tall panes of glass are old oak trees, their leaves about to yellow, and the grasses turning golden along the shoreline. "If you're on the ocean," says Patty Wetmore, "the colors don't change that much. But you can see the seasons change here. That's why this house has a unique view."

No casual cottage, the Wetmores' stately home frames the marshland scenery through carefully composed windows in elegantly appointed rooms. Just beyond the glassy wall in the entrance foyer is a crystal-draped light fixture and velvet settee. At the heart of the house are a library and a formal dining room,

both paneled in wood. Even the screened porch has a fireplace and a floor tiled in antique French stone.

Many of these luxurious touches were part of a 16-page "wish list" assembled by the Wetmores while planning their home in a gated community called Long Cove, which boasts one of the country's most highly ranked golf courses. "We knew what we wanted on the inside," says Dave Wetmore, a retired software company executive and avid golfer. He quickly recites the desired items, including "a warm wood library, a patio off every bedroom, lots of crown moldings and a view of the water from every room."

The couple's decision to build the waterside home came after nearly three decades of vacationing in Hilton Head and deciding to retire to the South

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*Architecture:* Frederick & Frederick Architects, Beaufort, South Carolina









*Nautical maps were applied to the ceiling of the library-study (opposite) at the center of the house. W.D. Bosworth Woodworking in Beaufort, South Carolina, crafted the antique oak paneling and bookcases in the library and painted and glazed the paneling around the dining room (above). A Holly Hunt chandelier is mixed with a Queen Anne dining set recycled from the Wetmores' previous home in Reston, Virginia.*

Carolina resort. After selling their Reston, Virginia, townhouse, the two moved into their former vacation home, also located in the Long Cove community, and then started looking for an architect to design their ultimate dream house on a waterfront parcel they had purchased.

The Wetmores ultimately selected architect Michael Frederick, who runs Frederick and Frederick Architects, a Beaufort, South Carolina, firm, with his wife Jane. "Of all the architects we interviewed," recalls Dave Wetmore, "Michael really listened to our needs. Our personalities just meshed." One of those needs was to find an architectural style that reflected both Dave's love of "Tudor traditional" and Patty's preference for a more Mediterranean look.

Inspired by the academic, revival-style architecture of the early 1900s, Frederick managed to satisfy both tastes through hipped roofs of imitation slate, broad eaves with exposed wooden rafters and classical columns of stone and arched windows. Walls and

chimneys are finished in layers of traditional, pale yellow stucco, recalling the worn villas of Italy.

Since the house is sited on a peninsula jutting out into the tidal creek, the architect created a long, narrow footprint of rooms that parallels the shoreline while respecting the regulated 20-foot setback from the water. In most places, the house extends only one room deep so that views of the marshy creek are offered on two sides of each space.

"Here we have to build above the flood line," explains Frederick. "So we raised the house 10 feet above the ground and created a transition between the ground and the main floor with terraces and stairs." Travertine wrapping around the foundation is repeated in a broad staircase leading to the entrance, a tiered fountain next to the steps and a terrace around the swimming pool at the rear to create a unified effect. Inside the house, travertine is applied to the floors in most of the rooms to reinforce the connection to the outside.







*At the end of the main hallway, the kitchen incorporates granite countertops, glazed kitchen cabinets (top) and a farmer's sink (above). The curved family room (previous spread) is positioned next to a screened porch (opposite). The porch floor is covered in antique French stone tiles in a basketweave pattern.*

Classical details also extend throughout the interior to provide the sense of tradition sought by the homeowners. Tall, rounded archways and crown moldings framing the long hallway leading through the house past the swimming pool and rear terrace are made of oak from reclaimed timbers.

In the library-study, antique oak is applied to walls, fireplace and built-in bookcases to create the feeling of a library in an old house. A pool table, television and clustered upholstered chairs keep it casual. Between the grid of wooden slats in the ceiling, the architect inserted "wallpaper" of enlarged nautical maps, including one showing the location of the house.

Next to the study, the dining room is wrapped in painted wood paneling with curved corners and cove lighting around the ceiling. Both the millwork in this room and the library were built by W.D. Bosworth Woodworking and Sculpture, a Beaufort company owned by master woodworker Bill "Buzzy" Bosworth, whose furniture has been featured on the HGTV show "Modern Masters."

Dave Wetmore assembled the cherry Queen Anne dining table and chairs from a kit decades ago, while the chandelier is newly purchased from Holly Hunt. "I like to keep things and work around them," notes





*The screened porch and family room (above) face the tip of the peninsula on Broad Creek. A swimming pool projects from the rear of the house (opposite) with a vanishing edge. Varied windows include a large arched opening (opposite) that extends up from the hallway in front of the library to the upper-level guest room to maximize the water views.*

Patty, an interior designer. "I only buy things I really love." To help in the selection of new furniture and fabrics, she enlisted daughter Emily Mahoney, an interior designer in Chicago.

With its curved wall of windows, the family room next to the kitchen and screened porch offers some of the best views of the Broad Creek marshes. "It feels like you're on the prow of a boat," says Frederick, who positioned the room at the end of house, nearest the tip of the peninsula. "This lot needed a curve like that." Behind the comfortable leather sofas and chairs is a telescope for spying on activity up and down the creek. "Boats go by all the time," says Dave. "There's always something happening on the water."

Those views inspired Patty Wetmore, who says she took her decorating cues from the outdoors. "You see a lot of water and greenery from the house. I didn't want to compete with that." Natural materials such as stone, wood and leather are blended with pale fabrics and finishes throughout the rooms. Fabrics patterned with palm trees and orchids reinforce the nature theme.

After a game of golf or a boating trip on the water, the Wetmores often enjoy a meal on the screened porch or relax in the family room without losing sight of the salt marshes outside their windows. "We're best at reconnecting people with the land," says Frederick of his architecture. "When you're in the houses we've designed, you can see the tide going up and down. You can see the moon and the stars." ≡

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*Photographer Richard Leo Johnson is based in Savannah, Georgia.*



