

Dock of the Bay

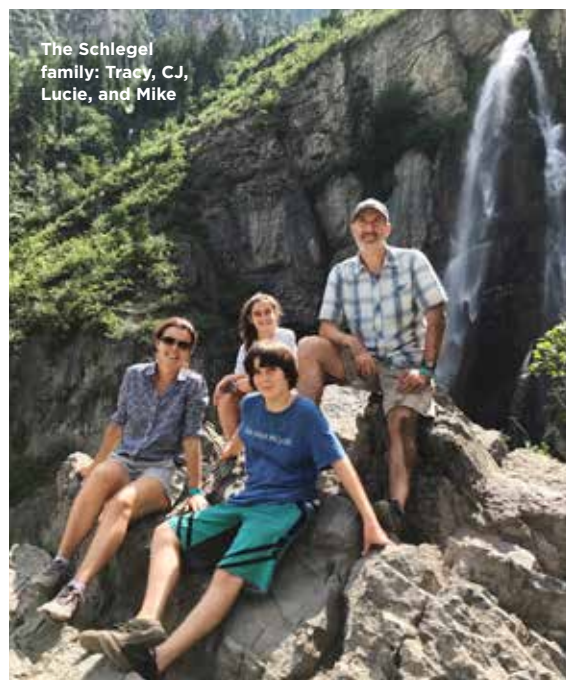
“From the first time we saw this cottage, it was love,” says Tracy Schlegel of the 1932 home with water views on three sides. The couple kept its shingled exterior as-is but painted the trim white for contrast.



Surrounded by deep water on a wooded peninsula, this Chesapeake Bay cottage has become a family’s memory-maker and beloved summerhouse

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Photography by Robert Radifera for Stylish Productions



The Schlegel family: Tracy, CJ, Lucie, and Mike

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Elevating the Porch

The screened porch’s heart pine flooring was stripped of old paint, and then sanded and stained to match the flooring inside. The new beadboard ceiling is painted Benjamin Moore Fresh Mint, in a nod to Southern porch tradition. Summery citrus hues on the ceramic stools and pillows pop amid classic white wicker furniture and navy blue accents (the floor cushion and striped rug).





Living Large

By integrating a former sunroom and adding French doors and picture windows, Tracy expanded the living room's footprint and connected it to the exterior (this page and opposite, top). "We also layered in new beadboard and trim to work with the existing paneling, making it impossible to tell what is old or new," she says, "and then painted everything crisp white." Transitional furnishings include swivel armchairs that can turn to face the scenery or stone fireplace as needed. A lively mix of ottomans makes it easy to configure any kind of gathering.



When Mike and Tracy Schlegel began looking for a weekend getaway that was an easy drive from their Washington, D.C.-area home, they were a young couple expecting their first child. What they couldn't have expected was discovering a bona fide fixer-upper—a circa-1930s, 1,800-square-foot cottage—that sat on a once-in-a-lifetime peninsula lot of one acre with a dock and a beach.

It was their Chesapeake dream come true. "We're outdoors people, and we wanted a base for keeping our sailboat," Tracy says. "A weekend and summer place to be on the water—boating, crabbing, and swimming."

An interior designer, Tracy knew that she had her work cut out for her. Almost in defiance of the sunlit watery charms surrounding the cottage on three sides, the interiors were gloomy and cramped, she says, "with dark brown wood paneling, walled-off rooms, and low ceilings."

Tracy enlisted her sister and partner at Waterlily Interiors, Kelcey Huff, to go big on the little house: They vaulted most of the original seven-foot ceilings, removed non-structural walls (including in a sunroom that blocked the living room from the waterfront), and added large windows and French doors. Throughout the newly opened-up floor plan, Tracy and Huff employed white paint to brighten the walls and trim.

But what stayed, Tracy maintains, is every cottage's central DNA strand: "It was important for us to keep the cottage's original charm, while updating it over time," she says. "Our aim was to make it airy and light. We went from dark cabin to coastal cottage."



Betting on Bold

In the kitchen, a mix of old and new cabinets are finished in Benjamin Moore Hannity Green; the vaulted ceiling plays second fiddle to the graphic floor pattern. "We discovered the original heart pine floors under layers of linoleum and decided to paint them black and white in a large-scale harlequin pattern," says Tracy. The visual trick makes the space seem wider than it is.

As the Schlegel family expanded (son CJ was followed by sister Lucie), a second-stage remodel took the cottage from two bedrooms to four by converting the attic into a spare bedroom and a bunk room for hosting the kids' friends. The new, finished space was a golden opportunity to create a transition to a nautical sensibility that playfully complemented the coastal vibe downstairs.

Now, with CJ and Lucie in their teens, the Schlegels love their little spot on the water all the more, feeling it having grown with them as family summer cottages do.

"We're deeply connected to our cottage," Tracy says. "Our kids have grown up playing in the water, learning to sail, hanging out by the fire at night. It's where we've celebrated all our most important events."

Festive Feasts

The dining room contains a china built-in (crafted by Mike) featuring open shelves, aqua beadboard backs, and a solid wood top to serve as a buffet. An antique dining table and armless Pottery Barn faux wicker chairs make it easy to add last-minute friends for dinner, and a pair of Currey & Co. beaded chandeliers hanging from the newly vaulted-and-beamed ceiling bring a festive glow to every meal.



Attic Ahoy

Tracy added a wall to break the large second-story attic into two rooms of usable space. She and Huff also added window seats, including a daybed-length version with drawered storage beneath. But it's the bunk room that packs the punch. "We decided to add old boat portal windows into the design of the twin bunkbeds, so the kids can peek out into the other room," she says. Painting the walls yellow, with navy blue and wood trim, contributes to a playful, yacht-like vibe.

Sweet Dreaming

The primary bedroom takes maximum advantage of its water views on two sides with new casement windows. A striped black-and-white rug, mirrored portholes, and indigo-dyed pillows nod to coastal vibes. In a clever reversal of the main living areas, the beadboard walls here are painted blue, while the ceiling is white.



Rise to Shine

With an oar-and-cleat railing and striped runner, the staircase to the converted attic signals that the kids' space upstairs transitions to a nautical feel from the coastal one below.





Landing Party

Chinese lanterns, a rainbow hammock, and a pair of Adirondacks on a treasured slip of sandy beach make it easy to pop up a party before or after a day spent on the water boating, crabbing, or kayaking. Lucie's johnboat, *Watermelon Stanley*, is named for her grandfather Stanley; she came up with the watermelon motif, and the rest is DIY history.

Clean Getaway

In a cottage with only one and a half baths, an outdoor shower becomes a warm-weather workhorse. "We use it all the time," Tracy says. "It's right below the bathroom, so when the kids were younger, we could shower them and hand them up through the window. No sandy feet!"



The Great Outdoors

The Schlegels installed a large stone patio at the rear of the cottage, rimmed in colorfully blooming planters and furnished with clean-lined Adirondack chairs for casual entertaining. The family's current sailboat, *Tupelo Honey*, rests at the dock. Taking advantage of the site's mature trees, hammocks throughout the property are must-haves. "A catnap in the hammock overlooking the water is about as good as it gets," Tracy says.

