

Island GETAWAY

A creative renovation transforms this historical fisherman's cottage into a dreamy New York farmhouse escape.

BY LYNN FONG

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LAURA MOSS

"This was one of the sweetest tiny houses on the island, only accessible by ferry."



(opposite) "We added a freestanding pergola, to try to not only balance the site but also get a connection to the outdoors," Steve and Rhea say. It's the perfect place to entertain guests.

The quintessential farmhouse is one that brings us a little respite from our hectic modern lives. Husband-and-wife duo Steve Schappacher and Rhea White, respectively architect and interior designer of Schappacher White Architecture DPC, were looking for exactly that when they discovered an old fisherman's cottage on Shelter Island, New York.

"This was one of the sweetest tiny houses on the island," Rhea says, "only accessible by ferry." Drawn to its rustic charm and historical locale, the couple decided to take on an extensive renovation to transform the dilapidated cottage into a dream coastal farmhouse escape.

RUSTIC REVIVAL

Built in 1904, the home had no shortage of historical atmosphere, but that also meant there was a lot of restoration to be done. "There was roofing work, trim work; we gutted the first floor," Steve and Rhea say. "The original wood posts were eaten by termites and needed to be completely replaced." They also installed a bathroom to the first floor and "jacked the building up" to create a second.





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The wood wall art panels in the living room act as a contrast to the white walls while giving a wonderful rustic vibe. "At night, it looks like another window," Rhea says. (top, right) "As architects in the city, we were so used to lofts and apartments," Steve and Rhea say. "We are very used to using every square space." The couple makes use of the staircase space with cupboards that hide the TV and have plenty of storage room.



Because the original cottage had so little detail, Steve and Rhea had to rely on their own creativity to make the most of the woodwork. The couple repainted the interiors in white and installed white planks to the floor. To keep that essential rural vibe, they left "spaces between each plank to make them look older, and tried to get a bit of the wood color through."

SIMPLE AND SPACIOUS

Another challenge with this home was its size. At only 1,100 square feet, it needed to feel open and spacious in order to be a comfortable retreat. "We attached many windows and opened up some doorways, turning the home into one big space instead of many separate rooms," Steve and Rhea say.

For a simple, coastal farmhouse look, the couple first painted everything white, including the floors. "My whole idea was that it was a whole white beach house," says Rhea. "But there wasn't enough contrast." They chose a stark black to balance out the whites, and then brought in a lot of wood elements "to warm everything up."

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Repurposing found items is one of the best ways to collect antiques. "The dining room chairs we found on a snow bank," Steve and Rhea say. "We lightly scraped off the rusty spots and lacquered them."



In the kitchen, the couple maximized their space with a custom island, as well as a closet that stores the washer and dryer. A huge chalkboard wall enlivens the space and makes the kitchen a fun place to be.

Tip

INSTEAD OF WALLPAPER, CREATE A FEATURE WALL BY PAINTING WITH CHALKBOARD PAINT. THIS WILL WORK ESPECIALLY WELL FOR A BLACK AND WHITE SCHEME. LIKE STEVE AND RHEA HAVE HERE.

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"We just kept it as clean and simple as we could," Steve and Rhea relate. Everything feels cohesive because of the simple color palette, and plenty of natural wood and metal elements add "history and texture" to each space. For an older home, Steve says, it's important that "the new doesn't necessarily look new." The result is a unique blend of farmhouse and cottage style.

Right next to a window, this shelf bed is a perfect place to lounge and relax. The dark pillows contrast the white painted wood surrounding it.



"We chose this home because it was one of the least expensive, and also it had a history, just cute as can be," Rhea says. The couple further opened up the smaller home with a connection to its spacious yard.

(clockwise from top left) You don't have to overspend on basic pieces. "Our bedroom, except the lamps, were Pottery Barn," Rhea says. • It often pays off to stay vigilant on the hunt for great vintage finds. "The metal beds we found in New Orleans when we were there for a wedding," Steve and Rhea say. • "In the bathroom, the shower enclosure is steel framed," Steve says. The metal elements help give even the bathroom a lovely rustic feel.

FINDING ENCHANTMENT

To decorate in rustic style, Steve and Rhea use lots of found items from vintage stores and secondhand shops. "The rocking chair was an old fisherman's chair that we hosed down," the couple explains. Originally caked in sand, the chair was treated as "basically junk" until they repurposed it as a vintage piece. "Even if you don't have a big budget, you can still do a lot of fun things," Rhea says.

As for their advice on trying your own ambitious farmhouse restoration: "Hire an architect," Steve says, laughing. Rhea says, "Seriously, I think one of the best things you can do is get rid of the weird paint colors." Erase the previous homeowners' imprint by giving everything a fresh coat of white paint. "That's a great place to start."

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Small Space TRICKS

5 ways to make use of every square foot in a small home

- **STAIR STORAGE.** Make the most of the space under your stairs by adding closed built-ins, a small closet or even a set of bookshelves.
- **FOLD-UP DESK.** If you or your kids need a place to work, add a desk that's mounted to the wall and can fold up when you're not using it. This will help prevent desk clutter too.
- **SLIDE-OUT PANTRY.** If you have a few inches next to your refrigerator, build a thin set of shelves on wheels that will hold pantry items such as canned good and spices.
- **DOOR JAM SHELVES.** That 4-6 inches above your door is perfect for storage. Mount a simple shelf on the top of the door for your extra linens, towels or rolls of toilet paper.
- **CLOSET ROOM.** If you can spare a closet, turn it into its own room, whether a tiny nursery, bunk beds for your kids or a reading nook.