

Homeport



(Above) The gabled 1891 cottage on Settegast Road in Galveston started life as an elegant house in the 2700 block of Broadway. (Opposite page) Bricks used for the fireplaces are said to be from the Nottingham Lace Factory, a residential suburb that connected the city of Galveston to the island's West End.

‘A distinct personality’

Once on an affluent island street, 1891 cottage settles into life by the sea

Story by Marsha Canright
Photos by Jennifer Reynolds

In Virginia Lee Burton's classic children's tale, "The Little House," a well-loved family home fades as time passes and the modern world engulfs it. Finally, it sits vacant and lonely.

Just when it seems the once happy house will be lost forever, a family rescues it and moves it to the countryside where it once again watches the sun rise in the morning and set again in the evening.

Such is the true-life tale of the classic gabled Galveston cottage built





(Above) The inlaid tile entry is original to the home. (Opposite page, from top) At the center of the cottage is an octagonal room. The cottage features three full bathrooms. The master bedroom on the first floor is bright and airy.

in 1891 at 2716 Broadway. Before 1900, the city's central artery was an affluent residential street and this cottage was elegant and upscale. The Moody Mansion is on the next block, although the cottage preceded its construction by four years.

"This house has a distinct personality," Kathleen Weathers, the home's owner, said. "You can feel its warmth and its history."

A house that has survived so many decades in Galveston and has seen the turn of two centuries becomes a part of the city's fabric. Still, in the 1970s, the future of the cottage was by no means secure, as many historic homes were torn down or not maintained. Broadway had become a mostly commercial street and the house was long vacant and used for storage by the neighboring flower shop.

"I remember the house from my childhood in the late 1940s and 1950s because of the wonderful people who lived there," said John Maisel, proprietor of J. Maisel Mainland Floral, whose family started the business in 1935.

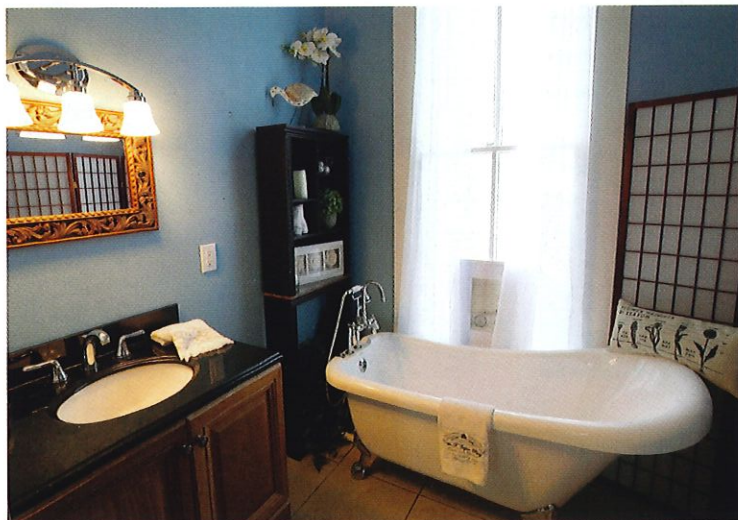
At that time, the cottage belonged to Elizabeth McCarthy, who was universally known as "Mama Mac."

"Mama Mac was an inspiration on the piano playing amazing ragtime music like Scott Joplin; it was revolutionary," Maisel said. "People would come and sit in the front yard and listen to her play. It was wonderful."

When McCarthy left in 1963, the Maisel family bought the property, and in 1983, they sold it to Harold Vanderpool, a professor at the University of Texas Medical Branch, and his wife Nathalie, who is credited with its careful restoration.

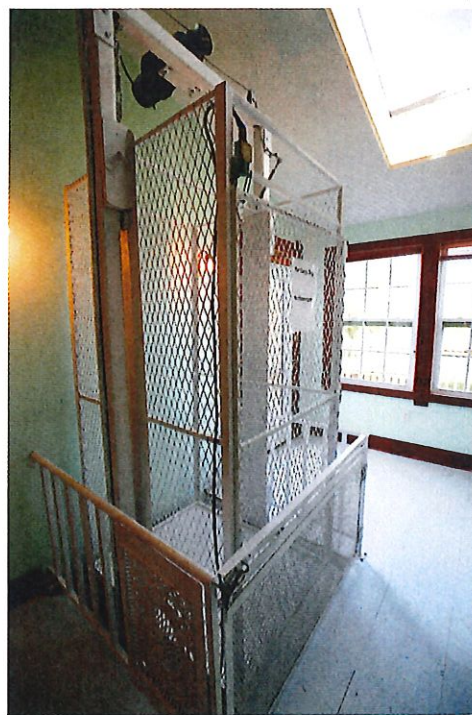
The couple definitely rescued the house, moving it to its new permanent address, 13330 Settegast Road, where it overlooks Eckert Bayou near the nature sanctuary at Lafitte's Cove.

"I recall that they had to take off the roof to move it, and the house was divided into two parts," Maisel said. "Still, it was so sturdy and well-built that there was not a single bit of damage."





(Clockwise from above) A seam in the fish scale details along the roofline shows where the house was divided into two parts for its move to Settegast Road in Galveston. The Victorian column details on the cottage are original. A cargo elevator is part of an addition to the house.



Maisel recalls that the house was transported all the way down Stewart Road, he said.

As if moving a house wasn't drama enough, it was caught in the brunt of Hurricane Alicia in 1983, and the house in parts was stuck on the side of the road for days after the storm.

The restoration took some months to complete, but when it was done, the renewed house looked much the same as it had in Galveston's heyday, now overlooking the coastal plain, the bayou and the bay. A barn and a pond was added, and a swimming pool, too.

The cottage has a characteristic wide front



A second-floor window offers views of Galveston Bay and the coastal prairie.

porch and floor-to-ceiling windows to catch the breeze. It has all the craftsmanship of Galveston's 19th-century jewels — the original woodwork, pocket doors, 14-foot ceilings and an inlaid tile entry. The main floor and the lofty upstairs contain almost 3,000 square feet, with five bedrooms and three full baths.

Weathers and her husband, Dave, have lived in this serene setting for 14 years, watching the migratory and sea birds amid the pastoral landscape.

"Our children are grown now with lives of their own, and we're moving to a smaller home," she said.

Weathers hopes a new family will find joy and peace in the house as other families have over the past 127 years, she said.

From a cityscape to a coastal view, from a city lot to nine grassy acres, the setting has changed but the bones and the spirit of the house remains. ⑨