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# Tall Order

THIS TOWERING BEACH HOUSE REACHES UP FOR ITS SQUARE FOOTAGE, THEN OPENS UP TO NATURE'S RICHES.

Writer **Shannon Howard** Photographer **Anthony-Masterson** Field editor **Sandra L. Mohlmann**

**B**reathtaking vistas of South Carolina's Sullivan's Island, a charming beach town known for its beautiful shoreline, were too good to pass. So the owners of this house built up instead of out. The unobstructed sight lines of the towering waterfront house are grand—worth the effort architect Stephen Herlong and project manager Sabrina Cochran put in to get them. “We had to be extra creative,” says Herlong, who was constrained by a shallow lot and zoning issues.

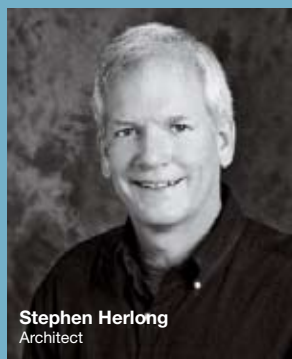
By designing a layout shaped almost like a barbell, Herlong, an expert at navigating the quirks of coastal home design, honored his clients' wishes for a spacious home that connects to nature. Essentially one room deep, the home climbs for four levels of usable living space and includes multiple porches and outdoor spaces. Herlong placed the main living areas and master bedroom on the upper level and a music room on the penthouse level. “The most stunning views are up high, and we had such a small

footprint to work with, so this plan made the most sense,” he says. “Plus, it gave us rooflines that create additional volume. We were able to create some really dramatic open spaces on the upper level using what would have otherwise been attic space. That, more than anything, helped us create a true beach house feel, which is what we were really after.”

As for capturing those views, the architect delivered on that too. “On a spring tide, one can see open water out the windows,” Herlong says. “A midtide shows hummocks and tidal flats that become finger creeks leading out to the harbor. Low tide is all green marsh, oyster beds, and sand flats. The elevated views provide dynamic and changing scenery.”

**ABOVE BOARD** Architect Stephen Herlong's exterior material mix includes metal overhangs and a shingled roof, *opposite*. Lush plantings soften the entrance. **ON THE HORIZON** While the home stretches upward, docks reach out into the quiet marshes, *above*.





**COASTAL INSIGHT** Architect Stephen Herlong has been designing coastal homes for more than 20 years. Here's his take on creating beautiful and functional dwellings that can withstand the elements.

**Q** Building a home near water is always tricky, isn't it?

**A** It can be. Besides some pretty rigid building codes, you always have to consider environmental conditions.

**Q** Such as hurricanes?

**A** Absolutely. We place additional steel reinforcements in the walls. We have strict structural codes that mandate window sizes, and the windows have to be impact-resistant. Proper window placement is vital to a coastal home. Air flow is important, and we want to keep things temperate, but it's nice to hear the view as well as see it.

**Q** How do flooding concerns affect what you do?

**A** By law, there can't be any living spaces on the ground floor—at least none that are heated or cooled. Humidity is also a concern. For exterior materials, we always choose products that will hold up to rot, mildew, even insects.

**Q** Sounds like a real challenge.

**A** It is, but the Low Country is so beautiful I really can't complain.



## Soaring style

"We wanted the space open with lots of volume but we also wanted a comfortable island style," Herlong says of the upper-level living room and dining area that has a light, airy feel and a prime bird's-eye view of the surroundings. White beaded board that covers the walls and ceilings gives a nod to historical Shingle-style homes in the vicinity, while massive trusses raise the roofline in breathtaking fashion, imbuing the room with a sense of grandeur.

"Some of the beams are absolutely structural because we're in a very high wind zone on the island," Herlong says. "But others are purely decorative." To disguise the structural pieces, which were essentially long, flat slabs of wood, he designed a sculptural pattern of trusses. "Without them, the beams would have been way overscale," he says.

**CORNER INTEREST** Salvaged items give the home character. In the dining room, *above*, an etched-glass door marks a distinctive corner cabinet. **LIGHT SHOW** The exposed ceiling allowed for dormers that bring additional light into the living room, *opposite*.







## Petite perfection

The kitchen isn't large by luxury-home standards, but it's filled with function and style. "Beautiful millwork is the key to this space," Herlong says, noting the room's exquisite crown molding and custom cabinetry, which were designed to look clean and classic. "My clients wanted a casual family kitchen that also had a lot of warmth and character."

Situated at the heart of the upper level, the kitchen features an open layout that flows toward the living and dining rooms. The function comes in the use of clever storage and meticulous space planning. For example, a butler's pantry discreetly tucks into an alcove near the refrigerator, allowing decorative items to shine without sacrificing functionality. Glass-front doors on some of the ceiling-height cabinets turn hard-to-reach spaces into display areas.

**KITCHEN HUB** The island, *above*, is a workhorse. It houses the sink, provides seating, and, with open shelves, is a handy storage space for cookbooks. **TILE STYLE** With white tiles placed at different angles, the backsplash, *left*, gains interest. **WELCOME CONTRAST** Rich walnut flooring, *opposite*, grounds the cabinetry.

## INSPIRED LIGHTING

A chandelier adds unexpected kitchen flair. Recessed lights boost the room's illumination.





## EXTERIOR APPEAL

Vary the color and types of siding between levels to break up the mass of a grand facade.



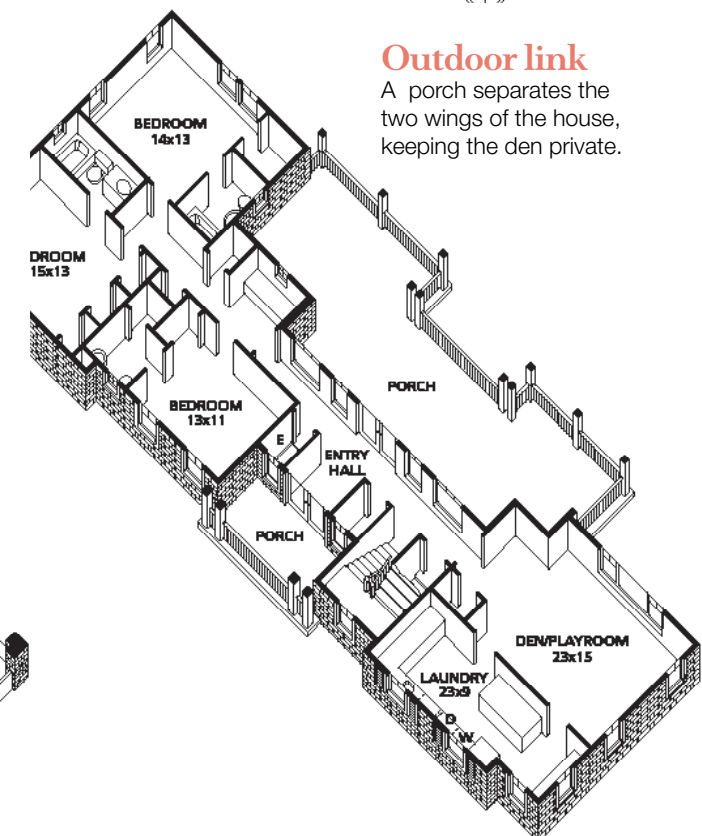
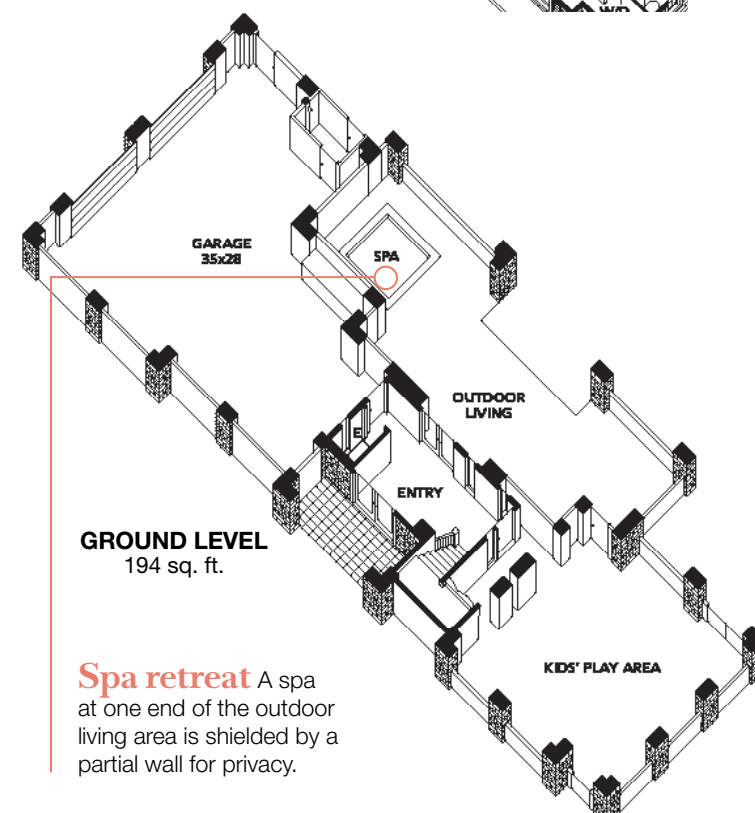
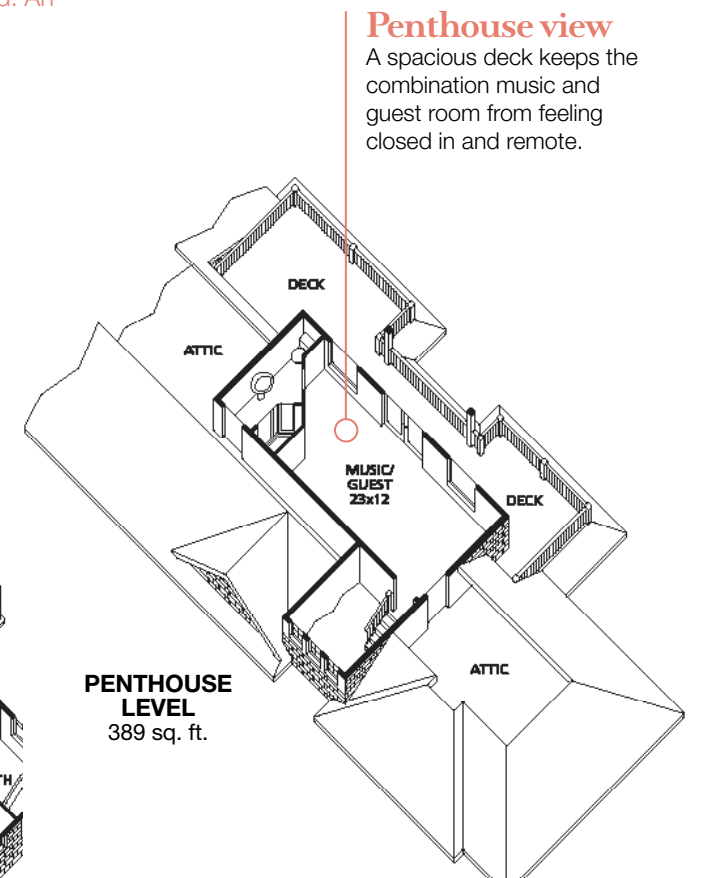
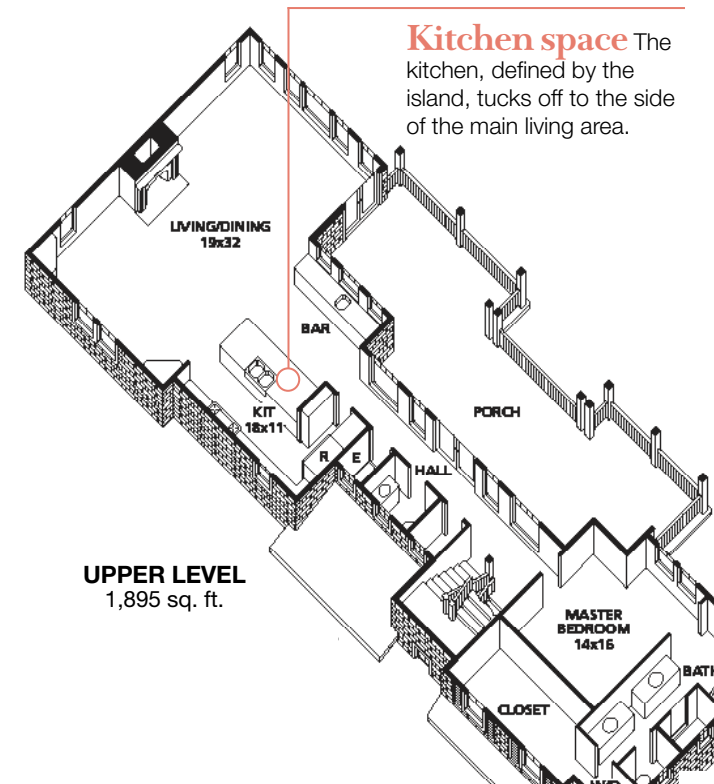
**SKY HIGH** The home culminates in a rooftop deck accessed via the penthouse-level deck. “The full island experience means living with the outdoor environment,” Herlong says.





## Balancing cozy and open

In addition to outdoor access, the owners wanted a balance of cozy nooks and open spaces. The floor plan groups public rooms on one end of the upper level; bedrooms are more secluded. An elevator makes it easy to navigate the house.



## Screen Gems

Motorized retractable screens such as the ones on the porch, above, are a functional solution for outdoor spaces. Roll them down when the bugs are out; roll them up for unobstructed views. Customize the screening and shading to suit your setting.



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## Outdoor living

Hemmed in by zoning laws that limited the ability to build out, Herlong placed a deck, two porches, and a ground-level outdoor area inside the home's basic footprint. "That was actually a good thing," the architect says. Positioned at the center of the home, these outdoor spaces have convenient access points. "Nearly all of the rooms share the porch areas, so it creates a real sense of fluidity," Herlong says. "You can enter from the living room and exit to the hallway, so it's almost like there's no division between inside and outside."

Retractable screens further connect the outdoor areas to nature. "Screens block about 25 percent of the actual view, darken the rooms behind them, and can cut the breezes in half," Herlong says. "So the retractable screens are all but removed when the view is so spectacular."

**PORCH PANACHE** The porch serves as a much-used year-round family gathering spot. The beaded-board ceiling links the outdoor space to the interior rooms. A ceiling fan and chandelier bring additional function and style to the porch.



## DISTINCTIVE DETAILING

Salvaged items, such as ornate doors, provide an easy extra layer of architectural detail.



## Secluded retreat

In contrast to the volume and cottage charm of the living and dining area, the master suite is more intimate and moody, reflecting its role as a private space to relax. Intricately carved antique doors leading from the bedroom to the bathroom are a surprising focal point, their dark stain a contrast to the white millwork. The long, narrow layout of the master bath posed a challenge for Herlong, who worried that the space would feel too linear. To solve this problem, he chose a sinuous soaking tub, placing it at a slight angle just inside the doorway.

Architect **Stephen Herlong** Interior designer **Leigh Meadows-McAlpin**

Builder **Phillip W. Smith**

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**SUITE INTRIGUE** Antique doors, *opposite*, add personality to the master bath, where a soaking tub awaits. **DOUBLE DUTY** The vanities, *above*, resemble freestanding furniture. **REFLECTIVE SURFACE** Antique mirrors covering a master bedroom wall, *above right*, reflect light from the windows and visually expand the room.

## RECLAIMED STYLE

Salvaged architectural pieces add a surprising twist to this home's detailing and reflect the homeowners' eclectic tastes. Architect Stephen Herlong shares tips for incorporating salvaged items into a new house or remodeling project.

**Plan early.** Let your architect know at the beginning of the design process that you want to use salvaged materials.

**Think outside the box.** "Find what you really love, then get creative and find the right way to use it," Herlong says.

**Go with the flow.** Not every piece can be used as it was originally intended. Sometimes a decorative use, rather than functional, is the best choice for a salvaged item.