

A bright and breezy renovation brings modern convenience and functionality while honoring the rich legacy of this vintage cottage located on Little Balboa Island.

BY LAURA SHIMKO | PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRET GUM | STYLING BY CLAUDIA REESE, KELLY MCMASTER & JICKIE TORRES

The vintage appeal of the cottage is visible from the street. "The white picket fence is a favorite on the island," Pete says. The history of the home further adds to its charm and evokes memories of the island's past. The flagpole was found by the prior owner Kathy's husband while on a run after a storm, and is originally from the Balboa Island Ferry.



# History & Heritage



Textures play a dominant role in this seating area. The rug and table are relaxed and rustic, while the pillows and woven vase add a beachy feel. Claudia chose the pillows to play off the colors of the framed vintage nautical flags. "This sofa is right across from the front door, so it's the first thing you see when you walk into the house," she says.

*When Pete and Angi purchased what would become*

*the Blue Door Cottage,* they knew it would be a labor of love. For years, they had dreamed of a home on Balboa Island, located off Newport Beach on the southern California coast. The island holds a special place in their hearts, as it's where they met. The opportunity came to purchase a cottage on smaller, lesser known "Little Balboa Island," and Pete saw it as a chance to create the quiet retirement getaway he and Angi had always wanted. Built in 1928, the Crystal cottage was filled with vintage features like double Dutch doors, exposed beams and shingles imported from the East Coast. While it was in need of some attention and care, Pete saw the possibilities. With help from designer Amanda Chappell of Amanda Chappell Design and styling by longtime family friend Claudia Reese, this cottage exudes vintage charm and breezy coastal beauty, creating the perfect island retreat.



**[TOP]** The ample patio space of the Blue Door Cottage was one of the key aspects that drew Pete and Angi's interest. Here on the front patio, Adirondack chairs beckon for you to take a break and enjoy the quiet scene. Claudia added the pillows and red geraniums as pops of color. A picnic basket sits ready to go. "The beach is a short walk away, so the idea of a picnic on the sand is perfect," says Claudia.

**[RIGHT]** Pippa, Pete and Angi's beloved golden retriever, peeks out from the Dutch door leading onto the back patio of the cottage. As well as being the namesake for the home, the blue doors are a timeless touch. A blue glass vase filled with anemone flowers and tablecloth continue the beachy theme while adding a pop of red. "I used a vintage Turkish towel to double as a tablecloth," Claudia says.

**[OPPOSITE]** By the front door, this wicker chair and ottoman provide the perfect place to relax after a day at the beach. The vintage surf posters framed on the wall are from movies set on the Southern California coast, and are a personal touch from Pete. "I had some minor involvement in some surf movies, and the posters speak to the local surf culture," he says. A lover of surfing and the history of surfing in the area, he keeps a tide log and books about surfing history and art in the living room.

"We are losing these cottages, and so it was important to us to keep the *history of the home.*" – Pete



With low, brown painted ceilings and exposed beams, the room desperately needed something to visually lift and open the space. "By painting the ceiling white, it lightened the load and lifted it all enough to change it from feeling oppressive to feeling cozy and charming," Amanda says. She opted for sconces on the walls and a small overhead light to prevent any sense of heaviness.



In the dining room, a picnic table gifted to Pete by neighbors serves as a relaxed and charming place to gather. To accommodate the narrowness of the room and Pete and Angi's wish to accommodate 10-12 people, Amanda decided that keeping the benches instead of adding chairs would be the best use of space.

**[OPPOSITE, BOTTOM LEFT]** During the renovation, a challenge arose: the whole house needed to be rewired. "This meant eliminating some of the original plaster walls downstairs as well as wall paneling both upstairs and down," Amanda says. Wanting to preserve the integrity of the original feel of the cottage, they replaced the paneling downstairs and painted it white.



### SAVING CRYSTAL COTTAGE

Since its construction, the cottage has been a well-known and beloved landmark on the small island of only three blocks. For 50 years, the home had been lovingly tended by prior owner Kathy Parks. Her son ran a cottage tour business on the island, and Kathy spent much time, love and energy creating award-winning decorations. Channeling an Americana vibe with primarily red, white and blue décor, Kathy's home over the years became a time capsule of rich history, filled with antiques and East Coast historical pieces. "She had an amazing collection, and it was like a museum inside," Pete says. Looking past the décor, Pete was drawn to the cottage because elements reminded him of childhood vacations in Rhode Island. "We didn't see dark rooms—we could see a white bright beach cottage that was like the homes Angi grew up in and the ones my family rented in the summer," Pete says.

Having raised her family in Crystal cottage, Kathy's concern about the current trend of tearing down historic cottages to replace them with modern structures made it very difficult for her to sell it. While the cottage is smaller than their current residence, Pete and Angi had already decided they did not want any major structural changes to extend the square footage. "We realized that we only used the kitchen, our great room, master bedroom and patio at our big home," Pete says. "All the other rooms collected dust or were used once or twice a year." To ease Kathy's concerns, they penned a letter assuring her they did not want to demolish the cottage. They had discovered that both Kathy's husband and Pete's father had worked for Disney. "I think that connection helped give her the trust that Angi and I would care for the cottage," Pete says.



In the kitchen, function and style come together to create a beautiful and efficient space. Originally, the cottage had part Formica, part butcher block countertops, but Amanda replaced these with solid butcher block counters. "The wood counters helped keep an old feel and warmed up the space while being easy to maintain," Amanda says.

**[OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT]** Brass pulls add warmth and vintage charm to the soft and breezy feel in the kitchen. After the original butcher block counters were removed, Amanda decided to repurpose them to create open shelving in this kitchen corner. "The flooring in the kitchen was in pretty bad shape, so we decided to paint the floors white," she says.

## SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

When it came to renovating the cottage, Pete and Angi knew they wanted to keep the vintage Balboa Island feel while also upgrading the design to accommodate modern conveniences. "Our goal was that the house would be light, bright and airy, and feel like a beach cottage," Pete says. After seeing the work Amanda Chappell had done in other homes in nearby Emerald Bay and Lido Island, Pete felt she was the perfect fit for the job. Describing her style as "California casual," Amanda loves creating bright, uncluttered spaces while mixing old and new elements in her design. "It gives off warmth, personality and keeps a house from looking cookie-cutter," she says.

To bring together the old and new, the first step was to determine what would stay from the original design. First to catch Pete's eye were the exposed redwood beams in the living room. "When I saw that the cottage was made out of durable redwood, I knew that it had good bones," he says. The single pane glass windows, wood floors and Dutch doors likewise charmed the couple, as well as designer Amanda. "The original wood flooring, wall paneling and ceiling planks and beams were all great," Amanda says. "I loved it and knew we just needed to edit and simplify the design, and that we needed a lot of white paint." The white-and-blue palette updated the look of the cottage, as well as brought a clean, fresh and beachy feel. The blue Dutch doors ended up being the inspiration for the cottage's new name: Blue Door Cottage.

## STYLE & FUNCTION

Intending Blue Door Cottage to be their retirement home, Pete and Angie decided in the meanwhile to use it as a vacation rental property. This required an additional layer of functionality in the design. "The house needed to be bright and inviting, comfortable, washable, easy to care for and needed to be able to accommodate a lot of people in a small space," Amanda says. In the dining room, Pete supplied a gifted picnic table to serve as the dining table. "The benches can be pushed all the way under the table when not in use, freeing up the walkway through to the kitchen," Amanda says. In the cozy living room, Amanda carefully selected just enough furniture to strike a balance between accommodating a large family and avoiding a claustrophobic feel.



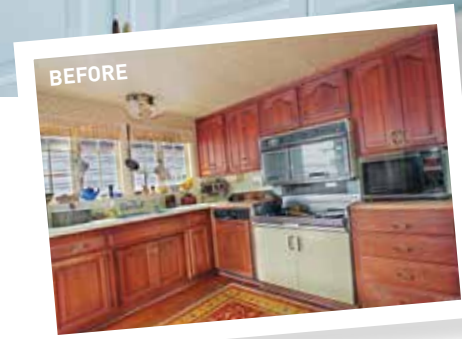
**[BOTTOM LEFT]** Bringing together relaxed vibes and elegance, Claudia's tablescape is full of detail. "A striped table runner adds a beachy quality to the table and plays nicely off the homeowner's floral-patterned benches that are used for seating at the table," she says. She chose placemats and dishes that include seashell detailing, and blue glass drinkware recalls sea glass.



“Taking stuff away is the easy part—*adding charm* where there is none is much harder.” – Amanda



This fold-down kitchen table is another example of the unique charm of the cottage. “It’s like a Murphy bed,” Pete says. The shelving behind can be used for extra storage, while the table can safely be folded up until it’s needed. “It is one of our favorite parts of this vintage home,” stylist and friend Claudia says. Amanda also painted the dark floors white for a classic cottage look.



**ABOVE** | Keeping with the desire to maintain many of the original features of the cottage, Pete and Angi did not want to replace the cabinets. “We just sanded them down, replaced the pulls and painted them,” Pete says. One design challenge they faced was updating the appliances. “This meant the sizes of the appliances would also be changing, and that affected the cabinetry,” says Amanda. A carpenter was called in to modify the cabinets to fit the new appliances. The result is a perfect mixture of old and new.

**BELOW** | Vintage glassware and bottles brighten the beverage station styled by Claudia. Watermelon spritzers stand ready to cool returning beachgoers on a warm summer’s day.

## WATERMELON *SPRITZERS*

Looking for a refreshing summer drink? Try this fun recipe by blogger and stylist Claudia Reese. For more tablescapes and design ideas, check out her blog [Ciao Newport Beach](#) or follow her on Instagram [@ciaofabiana](#).

### WATERMELON SPRITZER

(makes 6-8 cocktails)

#### WHAT YOU’LL NEED:

- 2 cups watermelon cubes
- 1 large cucumber, peeled and cut into thick slices
- 1 oz. Watershed Distillery Guild Gin
- Juice from 1 lime
- 1 tablespoon honey
- Ice
- Club soda
- Fresh mint for garnish

#### WHAT YOU’LL DO:

1. Add watermelon cubes to a blender or food processor and puree until liquified.
2. Pour the liquid with a fine mesh strainer over a bowl or pitcher. Discard any solids.
3. Add cucumber slices into the food processor and puree until liquid.
4. Pour through the strainer over the bowl, and press to get all the liquid through. Discard cucumber solids.
5. In a small glass measuring cup, stir together lime juice and honey. Pour into a bowl or pitcher with watermelon and cucumber juice and stir until mixed.
6. For each serving, add 3oz of the cucumber watermelon mixture into a glass filled with ice. Top with 2-3 oz. club soda, gin and garnish. For fun, serve these spritzers in vintage glass bottles and add a colorful straw.





Stylist and family friend Claudia's finishing touches throughout bring coastal sophistication and pops of color to make the cottage feel even more homey. Her work shines, especially in the main entertaining areas, the dining room and living room, where she plays off of the blue-and-white palette while adding starfish, shells and other beachy elements. Flowers throughout the home add pops of color and add to the welcoming feel. "The home gives off a Nantucket, Cape Cod vibe, so I thought blue hydrangeas and red geraniums would be perfect," she says.

The end result of Pete and Angi's original vision is a beautiful cottage that brings together the charm of the past and modern convenience. "Angi has her dream house and all our neighbors are thrilled," Pete says. "The 1928 cottage survived." **CB**

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**|TOP|** This nautical twin bunk room is a favorite for Pete and designer Amanda. Added by prior owner Kathy, it gives the appearance of the inside of an old sailboat. Honoring the history of the cottage, much of the room remains as it was. "We were able to keep the original wall and ceiling boards here along with the original built-in beds," Amanda says. White paint and a clean, simple design updates the room from its previous darker palette. Two porthole-shaped lights adorn the walls, adding to the nautical charm. "We can see grandkids having a sleepover in that room someday," Pete says.

**|BELOW|** Beautiful blue patterned tile in the downstairs bathroom adds elegance to the light and bright space. The shower features a door that leads straight onto the back patio, something original to the cottage that Pete loves for its practicality and convenience. "It is perfect for coming in from a day on the beach or bay," he says.

**|TOP LEFT|** In this other twin bedroom, Amanda took her inspiration from the polka dot pillows to create a fun and relaxed feel. Blue light fixtures above each bed add a pop of color on the white walls. Once again, functionality played a role in the design. "We wanted to make sure both little boys and girls would feel comfortable in this room," she says.

**|TOP RIGHT|** The upstairs bathroom is bright and airy with a predominantly white palette. Flowers add a touch of freshness. On the floor, blue diamond tiles add a nautical feel. Pete adds his own finishing touches for renters to make the space feel even more inviting and homey.

**|BOTTOM|** The cool gray-blue tones in the master bedroom are both calming and inviting. Paintings done by a family friend add a personal touch to the space. "This bedroom overlooks the street and the window opens to a huge orange tree that you can literally reach out and pick fruit from," friend and stylist Claudia says.

