

RISE OF THE **RANCHER**

SEE HOW THE ALLURE OF THIS CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA, **MID-CENTURY MODERN** HOME CONVINCED A PAIR OF TRADITIONALISTS TO TAKE IT BACK TO ITS SWANKY 1950s ROOTS

BY MARION LAFFEY FOX

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAUREY W. GLENN

STYLING BY MATTHEW GLEASON



The brown wall keeps an outdoor dining area private.



#83: Explore Charleston, SC

800 ALABAMA

- 1 Alabama Tourism Department
- 2 Festival of Flowers
- 3 Gulf Shores & Orange Beach Tourism
- 4 Romar House Rentals

801 ARKANSAS

- 5 The Natural State

802 DELAWARE

- 6 Delaware Tourism Office
- 7 Bethany-Fenwick Chamber of Commerce
- 8 Dover: Delaware's Capital
- 9 First State Heritage Park
- 10 Lewes Chamber of Commerce
- 11 Rehoboth Beach-Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center
- 12 Visit Wilmington, DE

803 FLORIDA

- 13 Amelia Island, FL
- 14 Daytona Beach, Florida
- 15 Edgewater Beach Condominium
- 16 Florida Blueberry Festival — Brooksville, Florida
- 17 Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa
- 18 Laketown Wharf
- 19 Ponte Vedra Inn & Club
- 20 Sundial Beach Resort & Spa
- 21 Tallahassee, Florida
- 22 The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel
- 23 The Emerald Coast of Florida
- 24 The Lodge & Club, Ponte Vedra
- 25 VISIT FLORIDA
- 26 Visit Panama City Beach
- 27 Visit Pensacola
- 28 Visit Sarasota County
- 29 Visit South Walton
- 30 Visit St. Pete/Clearwater

804 GEORGIA

- 31 Georgia Department of Economic Development
- 32 Jekyll Island Club Hotel

33 Northeast Georgia Mountains

- 34 Pine Mountain Tourism Association
- 35 Visit La Grange
- 36 Visit Metro Atlanta
- 37 Visit Savannah

805 HAWAII

- 38 Maui Visitors Bureau

806 KENTUCKY

- 39 Experience Kentucky's Unbridled Spirit

807 LOUISIANA

- 40 Louisiana Office of Tourism
- 41 Louisiana's Northshore/St. Tammany Parish

808 MARYLAND

- 42 Maryland Office of Tourism

809 MISSISSIPPI

- 43 Mississippi Development Authority/Tourism Division
- 44 Alcorn University, Vicksburg
- 45 Ameristar Casino & Hotel, Vicksburg
- 46 Hinds Community College, Vicksburg
- 47 Keystone Antique Furnishings
- 48 Live Work Play
- 49 Downtown Vicksburg
- 50 Main Street Vicksburg
- 51 Outlets at Vicksburg
- 52 Pigs-In-Flight
- 53 Children's Museum
- 54 Ridgeland Tourism Commission
- 55 RiverFest, Vicksburg
- 56 Riverwalk Casino, Vicksburg
- 57 The Union of the North & the South
- 58 United Way, Vicksburg
- 59 Vicksburg Catholic School
- 60 Vicksburg-Warren County Chamber of Commerce
- 61 Vicksburg CVB

- 60 Vicksburg Hampton Inn & Suites
- 61 Vicksburg Post
- 62 Walnut Hills Restaurant

810 MISSOURI

- 63 Branson CVB

811 NORTH CAROLINA

- 64 Visit North Carolina
- 65 Bentonville Battlefield 150th Event — Smithfield, NC
- 66 Crabtree Valley Mall — Raleigh, NC
- 67 CVB — Pinehurst, Southern Pines, Aberdeen Area of NC
- 68 Greensboro Convention & Visitors Bureau
- 69 Hampton Inn & Suites
- 70 High Hampton Inn
- 71 High Point Convention & Visitors Bureau
- 72 Kure Beach, North Carolina
- 73 Little Washington, NC
- 74 New Bern/Craven County CVC
- 75 Pine Needles Lodge & Golf Club
- 76 See Little Switzerland, Marion, Old Fort
- 77 The Bascom Visual Arts Center — Highlands
- 78 The North Carolina Arboretum — Asheville
- 79 Village of Pinehurst
- 80 Visit Maggie Valley
- 81 Wrightsville Beach, NC

812 OKLAHOMA

- 82 Oklahoma Tourism & Recreation Department

813 SOUTH CAROLINA

- 83 South Carolina Parks, Recreation & Tourism ExploreCharleston.com
- 84 11th Annual Charleston Antiques Show
- 85 68th Annual Festival of Houses & Gardens
- 86 Beaufort County Regional Chamber of Commerce
- 87 Bluffton, SC & The Taste of Bluffton
- 88 Charleston, SC & Resort Beaches
- 89 Columbia
- 90 Courtyard by Marriott, Columbia
- 91 Discover Berkeley County
- 92 EdVenture
- 93 Children's Museum
- 94 Hampton Inn Myrtle Beach Oceanfront
- 95 Island Realty, Charleston
- 96 Island Vacation Rentals
- 97 Nature Adventures
- 98 Outfitters, Inc.
- 99 SC's Hammock Coast
- 100 Town of Mount Pleasant, SC
- 101 Upcountry South Carolina
- 102 Visit Summerville South Carolina

- 100 VisitGreenvilleSC
- 101 Walterboro — The Front Porch of the Lowcountry
- 102 Wild Dunes Resort, Isle of Palms, SC

814 TENNESSEE

- 103 Tennessee Tourism
- 104 20th Annual Memphis
- 105 Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp

815 TEXAS

- 106 The Great State of Texas
- 107 Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau
- 108 Bandera County CVB
- 109 Beaumont Convention & Visitors Bureau
- 110 Brenham/Washington County CVB
- 111 Bryan-College Station CVB
- 112 Fredericksburg — The Texas Hill Country
- 113 Laredo CVB
- 114 Port Aransas, Texas & Mustang Island
- 115 Port Arthur Convention & Visitors Bureau
- 116 Rockport-Fulton Chamber of Commerce
- 117 Visit Plano

816 VIRGINIA

- 118 Virginia is for Lovers
- 119 Virginia Beach — Live the Life

817 WEST VIRGINIA

- 120 The West Virginia Division of Tourism

818 CRUISES

- 121 American Cruise Lines
- 122 Pearl Seas Cruises

819 REAL ESTATE/RETIREMENT

- 123 12 Oaks — Holly Springs, NC
- 124 Cape Fear Station on Bald Head Island, NC
- 125 Del Webb, Charleston/Summerville, SC
- 126 Del Webb, Sun City, Hilton Head/Bluffton
- 127 Grande Dunes, Myrtle Beach, SC
- 128 Nexton, Summerville, SC
- 129 Reynolds Plantation
- 130 Spring Island, South Carolina
- 131 Summers Corner, Summerville, SC
- 132 Tellico Village On Tellico Lake — Loudon, TN

HOMES/GARDENS/OTHER

- 133 Colorado Springs CVB
- 134 Dulles Electric Supply, Sterling, VA
- 135 Lennox Industries, Inc.
- 136 Methodist Hospital
- 137 Tchoupitoulas Furnishings & Design, Alexandria, VA
- 138 Texas Oncology
- 139 Walpole Outdoors



A bold front door, in Pratt & Lambert's Premium Yellow, sets a lively tone.

F

unny looking and forgettable. That was the collective sentiment about suburban ranch homes—until now. It's taken 40 years, a debonair fictional adman, and a great big recession to make us reconsider the homes built by our Depression-surviving, cocktail-swigging grandparents who understood the value in these striking, light, boxlike structures. Fewer walls, more windows, and sleeker lines created sunnier, larger living areas on a more affordable scale than the rancher's Colonial and

Georgian counterparts. Leslie and John Culbertson rediscovered these modern-living benefits in 2011 when they fell for the Lassiter House, which is Charlotte's oldest surviving mid-century modern home. Built in 1951 by Arthur Gould (A.G.) Odell, Jr., one of the city's preeminent modern architects (he also designed the Charlotte Coliseum and the Wachovia Building), the 4,300-square-foot home had fallen into disrepair and was slated for demolition. Six weeks after touring it, the Culbertsons ceased their traditional-home search, opting instead to restore the swagger to this 64-year-old gem.

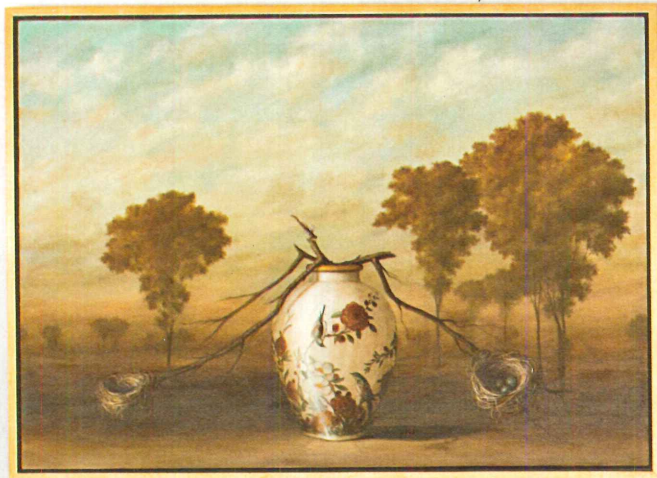
What's a Rancher?

THE BEGINNING

This style began in 1930s California, where the rambling homes could stretch out on big suburban lots. It reached its peak across America in the fifties and sixties. Early editions of *Southern Living* were full of them.

THE TERM "Ranch" has become a catchall word associated with many modern residential architectural styles that flourished from the 1950s to the 1970s, such as mid-century and contemporary.

THE TRAITS Typically, they are one-story homes with low-slung rooflines and minimal ornamentation.





The 11-foot-long vintage sofa in the living room is a mod counterpoint to a pair of traditional antique chairs.



REALIZING THE POTENTIAL

"We came into the picture at the eleventh hour," Leslie says. "We had already sold our traditional house around the corner and were living in a rental when we heard the house was to be razed. I always thought the design was an unusual counterpoint to the classic neighborhood. John, who grew up a few doors away, said he always wondered what was behind that

mysterious front wall." During their initial visit, they found serious mildew and moisture damage, squirrels inside, and a tree growing through the floor. "But John fell in love with the prospect and was enthralled with the idea of preserving Odell's legacy," says Leslie. "It was overwhelming and alluring at once, but we both realized the potential. The open floor plan felt different yet wonderfully sophisticated. When I was inside, I felt as if I were outside. After that visit, I could never go back into another brick box with small windows."



Plenty of wood, old pottery, and family silver (shown at left) keep this sleek kitchen's vibe down-to-earth.

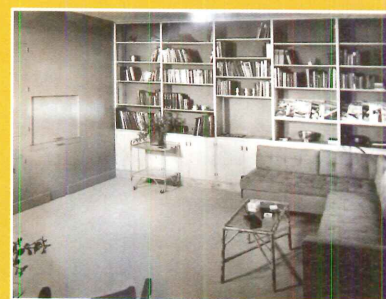
RESTORING THE AUTHENTICITY

Soon after their visit, they learned that local architect Matt Benson (mgpb.com) had previously restored an Odell house for his own family. "It was serendipity," Matt says. Immediately, the Culbertsons bought the house and assembled the team they needed to carry out what John calls "Project Swank." With Matt as the architect, Aida Saul (luxehomecouture.com) as the interior designer, and Ted Cleary



A formal dining room setup would have seemed too precious in this house.

(scla.carbonmade.com) on landscape design, the group set out on the year-and-a-half project. "Our goal was to preserve the original fifties structure," Matt says. "We removed a poor seventies addition with a pool room, bath, and carport that blocked views and was prone to flooding. These spaces were inappropriate to Odell's original open-living intent." After the addition was gone, Matt enlarged the living room by 6 feet. In place of the carport, he added a family room, two bedrooms, a bath, and a laundry room. Incorporating the butler's pantry into the kitchen created a more gracious and efficient space. Outside, the prominent brick sidewall remained white, but for the siding, Leslie chose a darker stain without any hints of original red cedar stain.



NOW AND THEN

The Dining Room

1951: Odell left the space between the front of the house and the kitchen open enough to work as a family room, with built-in shelving and a mod sectional for ample seating.

Today: The walls are still intact, but the space now serves as a library/eating area, which is casually arranged with a table, sofa, and bench pushed against the shelves.

Having wall-to-wall curtains is essential to privacy in open plans.

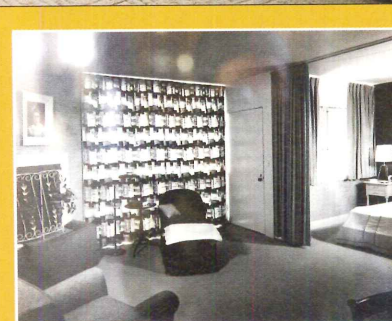


Monogrammed shams impart a Southern sense of place in this luxe room.



MOD-IFYING SOUTHERN STYLE

For the interiors, the Culbertsons and Aida, who had worked together on previous projects, came up with a plan for what to repurpose and what to acquire to give the house buzz. “We reused a lot of their existing traditional furniture and art and then scoured eBay, consignment shops, and flea markets to find creative, edgier pieces to mix in,” Aida says. “Imagine pops of Palm Springs style throughout the house.” Soothing white paint with a hint of yellow (Pratt & Lambert’s Silver Lining) covers most of the walls. Leslie’s classic collections fill open shelves, and fine art—mostly by Southern painters—graces every room. Surprises, such as the living room’s tiger-print ottoman and the kitchen’s artichoke light fixtures, add a sense of humor. The Culbertsons can enjoy meals outside, in



NOW AND THEN

The Master Bedroom

1951: Odell incorporated a lounge area with a fireplace in the bedroom to give the parents a private place to retreat amid the open floor plan. The room also has a door leading to the backyard.

Today: Matt furthered Odell’s open plan and removed a blocky closet that chopped up the space and obstructed light. Now, one entire wall in the big bedroom is a window overlooking the pool. Aida also departed from the original decorating plan, employing serene neutrals and solid fabrics. Tactile velvets, linens, and bits of fur add the necessary “Project Swank” plushness.



Three rear doors open to the rambling backyard.

the kitchen, or in the dining room, which is backed with floor-to-ceiling built-ins and doubles as a flexible space for hanging out. "I love that we are all so close together here," says John. "In the old house, we felt miles apart. Also, there's so much light in this home that we feel we are actually living outside. It's like life in a tree house."

REVAMPING THE LANDSCAPE

Ted worked to soften the angular facade and create slightly different views from every room using pockets of easy-to-care-for plantings such as ornamental grasses, evergreen ferns, and flowers. The street view in front presents a strikingly manicured look, while the backyard is livelier with boisterous plantings and zigzag walkways that reflect the energetic parties that happen around the pool and dining areas. 🍷



A glassed-in hallway runs across the rear of the house.



The circa-1800 Gaillard-Bennett House, part of this year's spring home tour from the Historic Charleston Foundation. **RIGHT:** The lobster roll at 167 Raw