

VINTAGE REFRESH

With the help of interior designer Ashley Gilbreath, this historic cottage blossomed into a home that marries its vintage heritage with contemporary amenities.

Nestled on a charming, seemingly forgotten street in the historic district of Montgomery, Alabama, a once-tired 1920s cottage got a new lease on life—thanks to interior designer Ashley Gilbreath. The home had been in the same family since it was built, and when it came on the market, Ashley quickly recognized its potential. After purchasing the home in early 2019, her talented team immediately got to work on the renovation. “I’m a sucker for a project,” she admits. “And this project was especially fun, because we were the client!”

The main goal for this home renovation, Ashley says, was to always acknowledge that this is an old cottage. “It’s a 1920s house, and it has to still look like that,” she explains. “We just tried to make it fresh for today. It might not be right for every person, but given the opportunity, we knew we could make this look really cute by being intentional with what we had.”



Throughout the two-bedroom, two-bath cottage, Ashley and her team thoughtfully combined the home's vintage roots with contemporary accents. Walking through the front door, guests are greeted by the sunny living room drenched in neutrals, which allow the carefully designed layers of accessories to shine. The eye can't help but be drawn to the pair of antique green mohair chairs from Belgium, the textured straw hangings on the wall, and the white leather hide underfoot. A curved archway opens into a light-filled dining room and welcomes you further inside.



In the dining room, Ashley paired an old dining table with chairs refinished in hair-on-hide fabric with contemporary artwork by Lauren Gane.



Another smart design choice in this kitchen makeover was to keep the original sink but upgrade the faucet. For modern convenience, Ashley added a dishwasher, complete with a faux three-drawer face, as well as a pull-out drawer for trash.



Just past the dining room, the cottage kitchen stays true to the home's vintage character while still enjoying some custom upgrades. Ashley made smart and budget-friendly design choices in this space, including choosing to keep the original yellow tile, repainting the cabinets, and swapping the hardware. The bamboo light fixture adds a hint of whimsy and striking juxtaposition above the antique kitchen island with casters added for maximum functionality.

Across the room, the wall that is now home to the kitchen range was originally a closet and underutilized space. So, Ashley and her team decided to reconfigure the room, all while being true to the home. They added black subway tiles and Café series appliances that captured the vintage cottage style, and they incorporated all the extra depth from the original closet space to create useful ledges beneath the range for cutting boards or cookbooks. They also creatively added another built-in shelf space and concealed it behind a hinged painting. "It's already a really small space, so we wanted to maximize any corner we could make feel larger," Ashley says.



Between the dining room and kitchen lies a charming butler's pantry. Ashley continued the same pop of vintage green found in the kitchen on the built-in cabinets and added a neutral wallpaper for a clean, playful touch. On the other side of the room, the washing machine and dryer are neatly tucked away beneath a café curtain, making this an ideal spot for both folding laundry and pouring.



TOP: The sitting room off the kitchen beckons guests to sit and stay awhile. From its painted floors to the added Dutch door that leads to the back porch, this room is packed with cottage charm.

Off the kitchen is the cozy keeping room. Ashley says it is likely that the room was originally built as a covered porch that was later enclosed. To make a smooth visual transition, the team opted to keep the wall paneling and give it a fresh coat of paint as well as paint the concrete flooring with wide neutral stripes for a pop of personality.

After three months of renovations, this nearly 100-year-old cottage got more than just a face-lift; it was filled with new life and was made ready for new memories. "It's just so fun to breathe life back into an old space. You can almost feel the house talk to you," Ashley says. "Bringing life back to something that didn't have it might not bode well for your pocketbook, but it speaks to your heart and it's a lot of fun!"

To see more of Ashley's interior designs, visit ashleygilbreath.com.

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For a behind-the-scenes look at each step of this charming cottage transformation, follow Ashley on Instagram @ashleygilbreathinteriordesign and don't miss her saved highlight, "Camellia Cottage" for all the details.

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