OPPOSITE: Like most of the vintage furnishings inherited with this Lake Michigan cottage, this basic table and chair set gained new life with a coat of paint and fresh fabrics. The revived pieces establish a comfy spot for afternoon snacks or an impromptu round of Go Fish.

attitude *adjustment*

Against a backdrop of sparkling water and a sea of white, a Michigan cottage is restyled to cater to a young family's needs.

Writer: MARA BOO *Photographer:* WERNER STRAUBE *Producer:* SANDRA L. MOHLMANN

Plump sofas and chairs gather on a graphic blue-and-white-stripe rug in the living room. A local artist created the harbor scene above the painted brick fireplace. French doors open to the backyard.

The bucolic setting along the shores of Harbor Springs, Michigan, had long charmed the owners of this cottage. After several summers of renting, the family jumped at the opportunity to own one of the century-old homes that line the shore, even if it featured crooked walls, uneven floors, and gapping beaded board. On the plus side, the house was graced with a porch full of vintage wicker, a massive dining table, an assortment of worn chairs, and even a ready-made collection of antique blue and white china. "I definitely had a lot to work with when I started," interior designer Carrie Blanck says, noting the maple floors and narrow fir beaded board that climbs nearly every wall and covers most ceilings, too. The homeowners decided to refinish the floors and give all the woodwork a fresh coat of white paint, but they didn't go overboard with repairs. "It was important that the house not be too perfect," Blanck says.

The final effect may not be perfect, but it's certainly idyllic. Comfort reigns supreme, from sink-in upholstered sofas and chairs that beg for a lazy afternoon's worth of reading to painted wood furniture that stands up to icy glasses of lemonade. "Nothing in the cottage is precious," Blanck says, which is a good thing, considering the owners' brood includes five young children.

Though Harbor Springs is an active, water-oriented community where residents spend sunny days swimming, building sand castles, boating, and bicycling, Blanck eschewed common symbols of nautical kitsch. "Nothing says a house on water needs to go overboard with anchors and boats," Blanck says. "Those kinds of clichés can be overdone—just a touch is great." Case in point: the cottage's jaunty navy and white porch. "It's probably the most nautical public space in the house because of its color palette," Blanck says, "yet it's not actually nautical—navy and white is simply a classic combo. On a porch, it looks great with flags for the Fourth of July, and it looks just as great with pink and yellow flower baskets the rest of the summer."

This nonchalant approach mirrors the mood of the entire cottage. "When the house is crooked and the walls aren't straight, nothing gets taken too seriously," Blanck says, which makes it absolutely perfect.

OPPOSITE: Designer Carrie Blanck introduced a touch of green to the first floor with the dining room fabrics, including chair skirts made from kid-friendly, indoor-outdoor fabric. TOP LEFT: Blanck adorned vintage wicker furnishings with crisp new navy and white cushions. Glossy gray flooring masks sand and dirt; a blue ceiling deters birds from nesting. TOP RIGHT: The quaint community of Harbor Springs, Michigan, is a popular destination for bicyclists, boaters, sailors, fishermen, and water enthusiasts of all kinds. ABOVE: The century-old cottage's wraparound porch evokes timeless charm, beckoning friends and family to enjoy cool evening breezes while greeting passersby.

"A century-old *cottage* with original furnishings is hard to turn down."

—CARRIE BLANCK, INTERIOR DESIGNER

OPPOSITE: The cottage's previous owner left most of the guest bedroom furnishings. Apple green Roman shades lined with blackout fabric ensure guests can snooze to their heart's content. ABOVE LEFT: The children's den is the family's primary hangout space, where they enjoy spending rainy evenings watching movies or snuggling with storybooks. ABOVE RIGHT: Ruffled drapery edges and an intricately carved wooden bed romance the master bedroom. Blanck whitewashed the bed to temper its formality and upholstered it in nubby blue linen fabric.