



Green Acres
The entrance to the new farmhouse; Otis and Sandy Scarborough with their dogs Sam and Lily.

Homeward Bound

After years of visiting the same spot in rural Georgia, a family builds a dream farm among the oaks



OTIS SCARBOROUGH AND HIS WIFE, SANDY, BOUGHT THE little house as a weekend place for themselves and their two sons. “We put in the azaleas and roses, plus all sorts of flowering plants,” Scarborough says. “In the spring, we put in vegetables and eat them all summer. My wife’s and her brother’s art is here...” He pauses. “It’s like a little bit of every part of our life is in this house. I know it sounds corny, but it’s true.”

Yet the house Scarborough is talking about—a functioning horse farm on a hundred acres about thirty miles outside Columbus, Georgia—didn’t start out the way it’s ended up. Purchased about fifteen years ago, it was a modular home on a gorgeous piece of land: pastures, woods, a lake, and towering old oaks. Every weekend, the Scarborough family would drive up from their home in Columbus and settle in.

Then, a few years ago, they decided to take a huge step. “One day, my wife and I thought: We love this place so much, why don’t we live here full-time?”

At first, Scarborough adds, he was nervous about it. Maybe as a daily diet they wouldn’t like the place as much. “But then I thought: I’m always happy here on weekends,” he says. “Why *wouldn’t* I be happy here full-time?”

Still, before they decided to commit, they began thinking about how to make the place even better. And the Scarboroughs (Otis is in real estate, Sandy is a photographer) knew exactly whom to call. On a different job, they'd worked with Jim Strickland, founder and senior partner at Historical Concepts in Peachtree City, Georgia.

A company as much about planning as architecture, Historical Concepts is a "place-making" enterprise that, among other residential projects, is behind the sport-centric communities Palmetto Bluff and Spring Island in South Carolina and Ford Plantation in Georgia, developments that pay tribute to the charming architecture and traditions of the past. "So the Scarboroughs asked me up to their lake house," Strickland says, "and we began to talk about its possibilities." Together the three—plus decorator Melanie Davis, landscape designer Bill Lincicome, and project manager Terry Pylant—began to put together an idea of what the house could become.

"Originally, the old modular home was going to be the guest house," says Pylant. "But in the end it was decided that to create some kind of *place*, the best site for the new house would be on the site of the old one—nestled inside all those wonderful old oaks. The views in every direction were terrific. We all stood there and said, This is the spot. The people who sited the original house knew what they were doing."

The group set to work, and what emerged is a stunning piece of newly made vernacular architecture. As he talks about it, Terry Pylant chuckles. "Now? Today? There are probably about six studs left from the original house."

The current house is a low, somewhat linear structure with countless thoughtful touches in local Georgia style. Different views of the property and its varied topography appear from all over the house's interior windows and exterior spaces.

"Everyone worked together perfectly," says Strickland. "The Scarboroughs were creative and brave. The contractor was fantastic. Our team helped direct things. The decorator did a fantastic job. It's probably the best mix of clients, builders, architects, planners, landscape and interior designers on a project that I can recall."

Along the way, to augment the house that was rising, the team added barns and sheds. Scarborough brought parts of a delicate 1846 chapel to the property from Nova Scotia. As they began to personalize the place, the Scarboroughs also painted in their own thoughtful touches. Inside, nearly twenty pieces by Sandy's brother, the high-art painter Bo Bartlett (an Andrew Wyeth protégé), hang throughout, as do examples of her work.

"But I really have to stress," Otis Scarborough says, "*none* of this was some grand plan. It just sort of grew itself along. We just did what we did. We lived with the house, made our changes to it over time, and somehow it came out the other side reflecting our lives." —Donovan Webster

Warm Welcome
Clockwise from top left: Refurbished antique lanterns flank the mudroom entrance; the garden house and rose garden; a Bo Bartlett painting sets off a traditional red and white bedroom inside the farmhouse; a working barn on site; utilitarian masonry floors outside the mudroom play up architect Jim Strickland's eye for detail; the pool and pool house.

► To see more photographs of the Scarboroughs' farm, go to gardenandgun.com.

