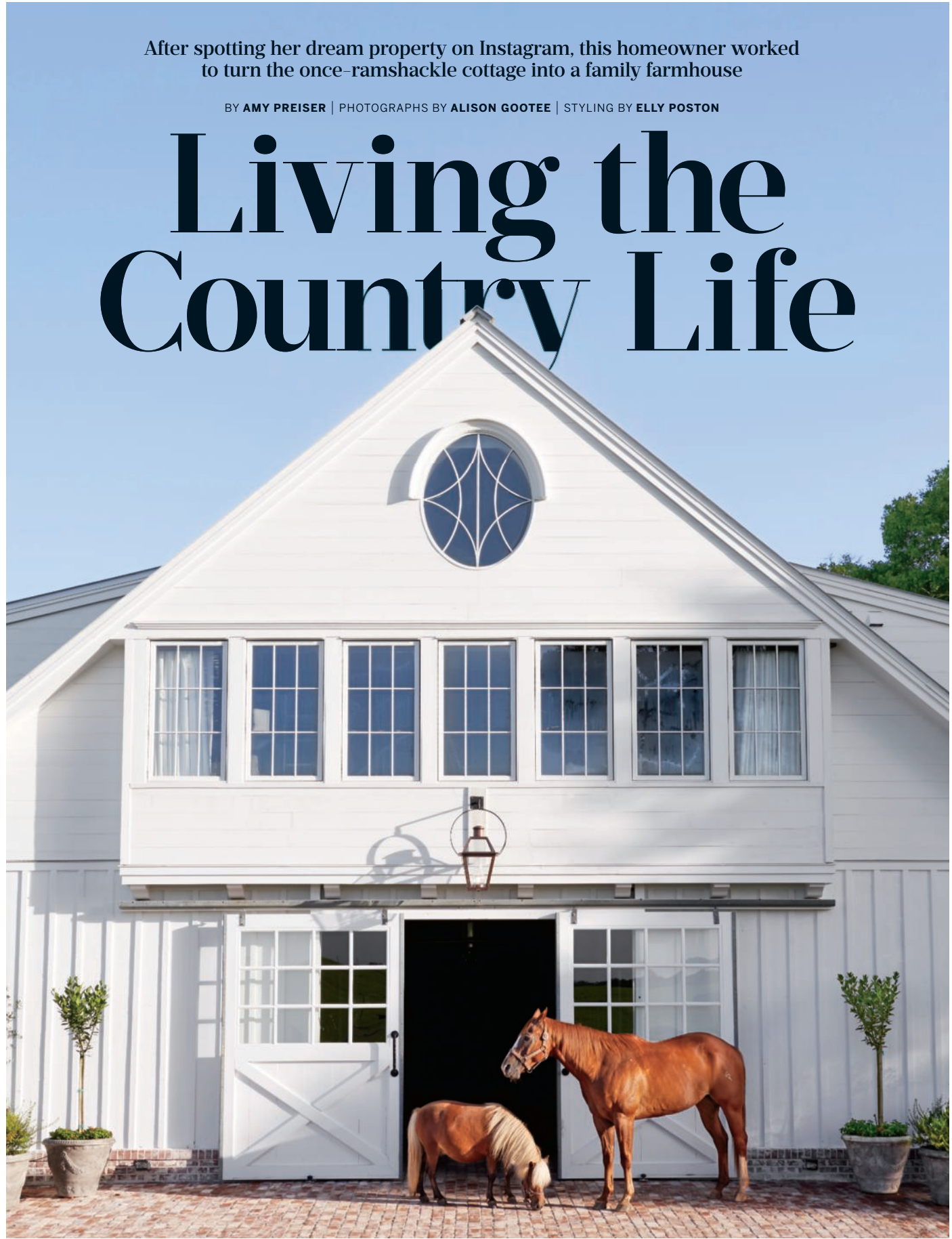




Barnlike, soaring wood ceilings mixed with light walls and fabrics epitomize the home's fresh farmhouse look.

DESIGN LESSON
Get Even

"I'm probably a symmetry fanatic to a fault," designer Ashley Gilbreath says, and the visually pleasing pairs throughout the home confirm it. "A little symmetry is awesome, but there is also a need for an unmatched piece to shake things up," she says. Here, it's the antique wood coffee table between CR Laine wing chairs.



After spotting her dream property on Instagram, this homeowner worked to turn the once-ramshackle cottage into a family farmhouse

BY AMY PREISER | PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALISON GOOTEE | STYLING BY ELLY POSTON

Living the Country Life

Kitchen

The backsplash (Mahlia; cementtileshop.com) is such a showstopper that Gilbreath used it only once. "Extending it to other areas would have pulled emphasis from the kitchen's other great features," she says.



All Michelle

Colbert wanted was a house where she could host all her grandchildren—not that she has any at the moment, mind you. But Michelle is the sort of forward-thinking type who has a knack for spotting potential...which is exactly what she did with this house.

Like a lot of stories these days, this one began while she was scrolling through social media. The mother of five (ages 6 through 23) living in Dothan, Alabama, came across a friend's Instagram post and was smitten by a square image of a property complete with a pond and a hayfield. Under her breath, she whispered, "Where in the world is this?" and on her phone, she swiftly typed, "This place is gorgeous! Let me know if it's ever for sale."

As it turns out, it was located just 15 minutes away. Better yet, it was for sale.

Michelle's first in-person visit to check out the property left her even more lovestruck, despite the fact that the state of the living quarters was sad. The run-down cottage had no upstairs windows, and a green metal roof rattled overhead. Yet she was enamored. "The way the sun shone on the pond—it took my breath away," she says.

Exterior

This is technically the home's front, but architect Andy Smith says, "The house is so evolved that it's beautiful from every angle." The stable, which connects to the home via the kitchen, is shown on the previous page.

She quickly got husband Kelly on board, swaying him with all the potential that she envisioned for the 80 acres. Just like that, the plan was set in motion. With notions of a grand antebellum-style house in their minds, they decided



Rugs upon rugs are not only a Gilbreath trademark but a budget-friendly move to boot. "Start with a more affordable rug (such as a seagrass one) below, and then bring in a smaller, more expensive topper rug," she advises. That way, your money is going where the impact is (here, an antique Oushak from Parviz Oriental Rugs), and you don't lose the comfort of having a warm, cozy floor covering beneath.



Living Room

Behold, the official Colbert home intercom: a landing on the second floor where family members can shout from up above. Below, Kindel Furniture's round Penelope Coffee Table holds court among curvy CR Laine tub chairs.



Master Bedroom

Blush and emerald make an unlikely color combination. You can attribute the pair's success to the opposite positions of red and green on the color wheel, making them easy complements. Rich wood tones help pull together the shades.



Master Bath

Nearly all the bathtubs and sinks in the house came from South Front Antiques during the Colberts' trip to Kelly's hometown of Memphis. A Visual Comfort & Co. lantern above adds scale that's worthy of the vintage find.



to purchase the lot and make the cottage a temporary home while they built the bigger main house several yards away.

The couple brought in Andy Smith, an Auburn University-trained architect. However, Smith's real education started on his grandparents' farm in Houston County, where he worked as a carpenter's apprentice. Through his expert drawings, the Colberts started to wonder: What if their dream house didn't need to be built from the ground up? Could this teardown cottage become their dream house instead?

Smith suggested calling Ashley Gilbreath, the Montgomery, Alabama-based interior designer and proprietor of Parish Shoppe. With three young children of her own, Gilbreath knew to bring in only furniture and fabrics that would withstand family life. And

Girl's Bedroom

In spaces with high or unconventional ceilings (6-year-old Mary Alan's A-frame bedroom has both), try a large light fixture to add a warm, full feeling. "It helps draw your eye upward and balances the empty space up top," says Gilbreath. Brilliant!



Upstairs Lounge

This space tucked off the stair landing is a favorite of Christian, 21, and Annabeth, 23, when they visit home. Gilbreath outfitted it simply with a few pops of flair like the durable hide rug and punchy beanbag.



because the Colbert house quickly transformed into the Colbert farmhouse—complete with 8 horses, 11 goats, and 30 chickens—it was even more important that the white sofas be covered in easy-to-clean Sunbrella fabric. Cowhides and leathers were chosen for their graceful aging qualities. This durability is vital because, as Gilbreath puts it, when it comes to mess-making abilities, little children and goats are “about neck and neck.”

It all came together in this clean-lined, airy home packed with meaningful details, just as Michelle had hoped. And while there aren't yet grandchildren to run alongside the pond and jump on the furniture, one of the couple's older daughters, Ivy, hosted nine sorority sisters for a pre-finals retreat, and the youngest, Mary Alan, recently invited her kindergarten class to the farm for a field trip.

“As we evolved the structure from a tired weekend cottage to a bustling family home, we tried to have fun and take advantage of every part and parcel of this house,” Smith says. Fittingly, that's exactly how the Colberts live in it. Smart design elements helped bring it all together in style. **SL**

DESIGN LESSON

In Good Company

One break in the all-white paint scheme came in the room of 16-year-old Hunter, who instead preferred to leave the natural wood that drove much of the room's design. It also served as an ideal spot to display hunting mounts. Gilbreath's key to incorporating taxidermy: Think of these pieces as a collection arranged in tandem for an artlike display.



This carved bed, which has been in the family for years, keeps the room from veering too country or juvenile.

