

by ANN KAISER photographs AMY VISCHIO

# SOUTHPORT STYLE

*A charming coastal cape is just right for its new owner.*

Virginia loves being so close to everything in town. "It's nice being on the main street," she says. "It's really a fun place to be."

opposite: Silvia Erskine suggested lowering the stone wall out front.



For homeowner Virginia Cargill, this old, historic Southport cape was a fresh, new start. Over her thirty years of living in the town, she had made homes in several types of houses, most recently a much larger one on the harbor, where she lived with her two sons for about fifteen years. With the boys graduated from college, she took a second look at her place and decided it was time for a change. "It was an opportune time to downsize," says Virginia, who has a deep appreciation for the history of the town and decided to continue creating her personal history there with this move.

When Southport was a big onion-shipping harbor, the captains of the ships lived in the Victorian homes on Westway Road (one of which Virginia lived in at one time), and the tradesman lived in the capes on Main Street (where she currently resides). "I enjoyed the historical element of it," says Virginia. But going to a home half the size







*this spread: The front living room has style from the past and present, with a Lucite coffee table, and an antique Chinoiserie chair and vintage sconces. A Bunny Williams sofa upholstered in a fabric from Brunschwig & Fils, and draperies in a Schumacher fabric add neutral texture. The bright lamps are Christopher Spitzmiller, and the wallpaper is a Phillip Jeffries grass cloth.*



"One of the directions we were trying to go in was to make it **SIMPLE, PRETTY,** and very **HAPPY.**"

—PARKER ROGERS



The patterned chair is the basis of the rest of the design. "That chair was the starting point for the house," says Parker. The coral pulled from the motif carries throughout the rest of the home.







*The kitchen is perfectly positioned to serve dinner with ease on the terrace and has a clear view straight into the family room. opposite: The banquette makes great use of a tight space—just right for cozying up with a book or providing extra seating at a party.*

of her previous one called for some serious purging of her inherited furniture collection—pieces of history she had to part with in order to make the move.

The house itself saw some renovations as well, to make it more open and better suited to entertaining. Virginia credits landscape architect Silvia Erskine (who is also an architect and interior designer) with the idea to lower the stone wall out front to better show off the home, and to extend the patio back forty feet, instead of the initially proposed twenty. A side entrance opens up the house without altering the historic front façade.



The guest bedroom features Phillip Jeffries paper and Quadrille drapes.





*The guest bedroom is calm and comfortable; the Quadrille fabric used on a chair in the library is also used on the dining room drapes; Virginia's desk belonged to her father. His portrait hangs above.*

For the interiors, she called on Parker Rogers and Katie Holmberg of Parker & Company, who have worked with her on other projects over the last ten years and know her well enough to push her to try some new pieces in her older home.

"It's fun to work with people you know, and that frankly are honest enough to say, 'Virginia, this is the right thing, live with it for a while'...I think you need that, you need to have the back and forth," says the homeowner.

Her new home was an opportunity to embrace a new look—and in doing so, to let go of some pieces that just didn't work. "It was that moment when you realize you don't have to live with all of your mother's stuff," laughs Virginia. But she did keep the pieces in the family, sending many to her niece and nephews for their own homes, including an "old-school" mahogany dining table and needle-point chairs whose sentimental value was priceless—but whose stylistic value could be quantified.

Katie describes this project as a clean slate: "It was an opportunity to take the things that she really liked and that were important to her and build a new aesthetic around those pieces."

But that's not to say all of her family heirlooms went to the next generation—keeping some special pieces for herself is what makes this home truly personal. The designers blended many of her antiques with new fabrics and pieces to create a very fresh, modern interior. "One of the directions we were trying to go in was to make it simple, pretty, and very happy," says Parker. They brought in some brighter,

more feminine fabrics than Virginia maybe would have gravitated toward herself, and incorporated key family pieces like her father's desk (his portrait also hangs over it), and the antique bureau in the living room that belonged to her mother.

Parker kept continuity in the design by using the same rug in both the front and rear rooms, and using the color coral throughout. Though used more predominately in the back dining room/family room, and sprinkled throughout the front living space, it creates a visual continuity in the small cape. In the living room, the colorful fabric on the chair was originally going to be used for the drapes (on a shopping trip to New York, it was Virginia who landed on the metallic open-weave fabric that ended up being used), and the colors of the room were pulled from there.

The small home feels both cozy and spacious, thanks to a well-planned design and layout. Inspired by a trip to a friend's home in Nice, Virginia had also asked the designers to create many different seating areas to give her lots of options and make the house feel larger. The designers mapped it all out, dividing up the rear of the home into distinct kitchen, family room, dining room, and library spaces, and giving her different areas to sit and relax in the living room, too. The outdoor space is a major part of the house as well. For three seasons a year, the patio is in heavy use. "It feels like a whole other room," says Virginia. French doors off the rear of the house open onto the outdoor terrace, making it feel like an extension of the home.

With a great design and strict editing, this home proves that down-



sizing can make a person feel lighter, more vibrant, and more at home. “It feels very complete,” says Holmberg. “Fresh, modern, and happy are the words that come to mind,” says Parker.

Their firm always strives to make spaces that both look good and feel good to their clients: “Beautiful spaces that are very personal are kind of the golden ticket, if you will,” says Parker. For Virginia, they hit the nail right on the head. “This house is very reflective of who she is today,” says Katie. And who she is, is a woman who loves to share her beautiful spaces, even establishing an annual open house for Southport’s Blessing of the Fleet (the parade marches right by her front door), and inviting friends and neighbors in each Halloween—and in doing so, she continues to create her own history in a town and a home that she loves. [ah](#)

#### RESOURCES

*J. P. Franzen Associates Architects, Southport, [franzearchitects.com](http://franzearchitects.com)  
Erskine Associates, LLC, Georgetown, [erskineassoc.com](http://erskineassoc.com)  
Parker & Company, Southport, [parkerrogersinteriors.com](http://parkerrogersinteriors.com)*



The patio is a major entertaining space that Virginia and her guests enjoy almost year-round. The dining furniture is from Restoration Hardware, and the tablecloth is in a Quadrille fabric. **opposite:** In the dining area, an antique chest from Virginia's own collection looks great with new dining chairs from Bungalow 5.