

DIARY OF A HOME

Exploring that forever question: "What makes a house a home?"

From where I stand, there is simply no way to overstate the importance home has taken on in our lives. For many of us, the last three to five years has seen the ink dry on first mortgages, apartments turn into houses (or shoebox apartments turn into larger apartments); we've brought babies home, hosted holidays, and marked milestones. Then, of course, the pandemic erupted and homes turned into offices and gyms and schools. The walls around us had to flex and bend and accommodate. In 2021, a house is a home is a fill-in-the-blank.

With all of the above in mind, I've found myself considering homes and rooms and the way spaces are designed. My feed is peppered more with interior accounts, and I have realized how truly talented some of the women in my world are at making their houses comfortable and approachable, yet elegant and thoughtful.

One such friend is Emily Sanford, a publicist turned interior designer behind the Sanford Collective—and a new resident of Charleston, South Carolina. Emily and her family left their historic New Jersey home for warmer shores right before the pandemic erupted, and while I think the decision has been filled with wonder, I know even from the outside looking in my heart hurt a bit. While there have been plenty of pros for them since the beginning (like the opportunity to construct their dream house), the move meant leaving the home they'd lovingly rehabbed and created.

To celebrate what she did—and inspire us all with her pitch-perfect eye—I asked Emily if she'd share a diary of her New Jersey house. On the pages that follow, peek inside the house they left (and promptly sold in a record-breaking few days).



THE DINING ROOM

It's often said that the kitchen is the heart of the home, but some of my fondest memories are of family and friends gathered around this oversized dining table. The antique hutch is very traditional and special as it was a gift from my parents' neighbor—it had been in her family for 80 years. I updated it by adding new hardware and painted the backing the same color as our kitchen cabinets. It held all of our entertaining pieces—wine glasses, serving dishes, etc.—and was such a sentimental piece but also very pragmatic.

I splurged at Restoration Hardware on the dining table, chandelier, and console table. The chairs were a bargain find meant to be placeholders until we could afford nicer ones—12 chairs is a lot to buy!—but we ended up loving them. I especially like the way the black pops against the subtle wall color and wood tones.



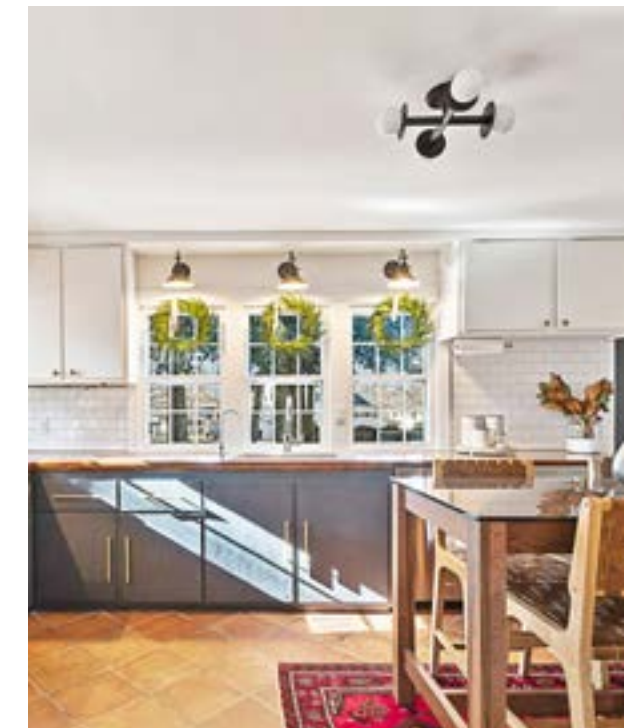
I wanted to balance out the heaviness by keeping the other side very simple. When we had guests, this console table was the overflow area for wine and food; when not in use, I usually kept a fresh floral or branch arrangement on it.



THE KITCHEN

Modern living calls for open-concept spaces, but the double-sided fireplace between the kitchen and the living room meant opening it up wasn't an option and started me on a long search for in-kitchen seating. I loved the look of the fireplace, however, and this cozy kitchen ended up being one of my favorite rooms in the house.

The plaster and brick walls in our 1740 house presented a lot of challenges when trying to add lighting—we were the first owners to tackle this issue. The three windows that frame the window sink and look out into the driveway got a functional update with the addition of three goose-neck sconces.





THE FRONT DOOR

One of my favourite features was the downstairs hallway which was bookended by a set of original Dutch doors at either end. They were a pragmatic solution to the early settlers of colonial New England, allowing sunlight and fresh air in while preventing children and animals from leaving or entering (having a toddler and two dogs, I can attest to their superb functionality).

Depending on which door you opened, they spilled out to the front yard or screened-in back porch. I love the style so much, I'm putting in a Dutch door in the mudroom at our new house.

THE LIVING ROOM

Just beyond the mudroom was one of two living rooms and the crossroads of multiple spaces: mudroom, kitchen, dining room, and hallway. As such, it was the landing pad for a lot of life's daily nuances and heavily trafficked by dogs and a toddler. Like most rooms in historic homes, it also had an odd layout, so furnishing it was tricky. It took me about two and a half years to finally get the proportions and positioning right (and it saw many iterations in-between).



THE MASTER BEDROOM

My husband likes to joke that the day I moved into his New York City apartment, I put everything up for sale on Craigslist. He's not wrong, but I did keep this vintage coffee table that he found at the Rose Bowl flea market when he lived in LA. Our suburban bedroom was probably the size of our NYC apartment and we created a cozy seating nook in front of the room's fireplace. The white floors and overstuffed chair, big enough to seat two, were neutral and serene while the dark coffee table, made from thick planks of wood, added a touch of masculinity and popped against the neutral backdrop.



THE NURSERY

Dormered ceilings made for some awkward spaces in our daughter's nursery, but we used the opportunity to create some cozy play nooks—the perfect height for little-people! Baskets are my go-to solution for stylish baby-proofing, and there are plenty here.



Onward & southward...

My sweet friend is building her (sure-to-be-dreamy) dream home in Charleston as we speak. Follow along, and be inspired, at @emilyhanford.