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# STORYBOOK

A COTTAGE INDUSTRY

PRECEDING PAGES: Wiggle and Mark Bitter's cottage living room required plenty of seating, so designer Jeff Lincoln gathered roomy pieces and child-scaled chairs, an ottoman to double as a coffee table, then added a window seat. Naturally he selected Scalamandré fabrics, upholstery, trimmings and wallpapers throughout the house, since the firm is the Bitters' business. He chose "Palladio" for the sofa, "Tiki" for club chairs, "Diamante" chenille for ottoman and "Ann Bolyn" crewel for slipper chairs, then lavished "Decatur Plaid" around the windows. "Bellegrade" wallpaper mimics scored stonework. BELOW AND OPPOSITE: Blue and white porcelain and a balloon shade of "Decatur Plaid" silk taffeta continue the color palette. FOLLOWING PAGES: A summerhouse atmosphere glows in the dining room with walls adorned in "Calanques" striped wallpaper and billowy panels of "Constellation" sheer linen. "Gertrude's Rose" cotton blossoms at windows; "Jour de Juin" silk dresses the table. Chairs display "Candy" silk on backs, "Deauville" cotton on seats. Light fixture from Mrs MacDougall. Herend's "Queen Victoria" china. Vintage flatware and fluted glasses are Wiggle Bitter's flea-market finds. All bouquets by Little Flower House.



Tales are inspired by unusual charms—glass slippers, swans, mermaids who sing. Or a quaint cottage.

Once, long ago, the cottage was the gatehouse of a grand summer estate built on an emerald-green point of land overlooking Long Island Sound. After many years the palatial main house was torn down; the cottage stood alone, its rooms empty, its diamond-pane windows bare.

Then one day along came a New York City couple named Wiggle and Mark Bitter. They had searched everywhere for a weekend house to rent. The cottage's undecorated state didn't bother them at all: It was ideal.

And a real-life decorating adventure began.

The Bitters have a family business, the famous house of Scalamandré, which makes fabrics, wallpapers, trimmings and a new collection of plush upholstery. With an array of wares as colorful and splendid as those in Ali Baba's storehouse at their fingertips, the couple enlisted Manhattan designer Jeff Lincoln to create magic. "Since

they rent the cottage, they didn't want to do things that would be hard to leave behind," he says, "but at the same time, they wanted to have fun with the project."

Using some of Scalamandré's wittiest fresh papers, a handful of vivid checks and florals, and one gossamer voile, Lincoln presented inventive design solutions, all tied with yards of colorful trim. Fabric and paper choices were kept in shades of yellow and blue, creating a continuity of hue that enlarges and brightens the house.

In the living room, which functions as the main gathering place, there's plenty of Scalamandré upholstery: that the Bitters' children—Andrea, 16; Mark Jr., 16; Margot, 14; Callie, 8; and one-year-old daughter Carter—have a cushy place to read or watch television. In the children's bedrooms Lincoln applied patterns with amusing designs, full-rigged sailboats and wallpaper that mimics a memory board crisscrossed with ribbons, turning quirky spaces into cozy nests.

The designer's masterpiece is the dining room, a boxy space he rescued by installing striped wallpaper and draping over it full-length panels of sheer linen voile scattered with tiny embroidered stars. He finished the room with curtains of huge roses blooming on enormous checks, then centered a round table encircled with a set of oval-back chairs. The result conjures up a pavilion in a Swedish folly. At least, the room looks that serene when it is empty. Which is almost never.

Indeed, storybook photographs give no clue of the hum of activity occurring on weekends once the family settles in. Everyone collapses in the living room for conversation, crowds into the dining room for festive dinners and, at night, seeks blissful rest in bedrooms adorned with charming wallpapers and twin beds for the children. Amazingly, says Wiggle, the cottage has room for everyone. Making the little house that could. □





