



Carolina Cottage: A Personal History of the Piazza House

Margaret Ruth Little

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Margaret Ruth Little's new book is a celebration and a history of one of the most recognizable vernacular house types in the Upper South, the Carolina cottage. The one-and-one-half-story side-gabled cottage?with its most distinctive feature, an integral front porch known as a piazza?offers not only beauty and hospitality, but a rich history. Intertwined with this history is the author's own account of rescuing and living in a 1775 cottage near Raleigh, an experience that inspired and helps shape this charming book.

The Carolina cottage appears by the mid-1700s in the eastern Carolinas. Substantial landowners and merchants favored the cottage type because of its sophisticated plan of one or two main rooms, rear and attic bedchambers, and piazza, as well as its adaptation to the hot and humid climate. Little explores, and refutes, the long-held assumption that the cottage's origins are Caribbean. She chronicles the cottage's parallel existence in South Carolina as a summer retreat built along the coast or in the pine barrens, where plantation families lived during summer months to escape malaria and yellow fever.

The cottage remained popular as a small farmhouse or tenant house until the 1900s, but has reappeared in recent years as a nostalgic Carolina reincarnation. Little explores the cottage revival not just for the aesthetic appeal of its compact form but for its humble efficiency, breezy open-air living room, hospitable corner bedrooms, and the happiness that comes from simple, healthy living.



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