

1920 Grove Cottage

108 Esther Street, Coronado Historic District

Recent renovations: 2011, 12, 15 & 17

Current Owners: W. Randolph (Randy) Herman and Angeline (Angie) Barretta Herman

Shaded by two large, rambling oaks, graced with hibiscus, palms, bromeliads, orchids, and many fern varieties, the property at 108 Esther is a hidden gem.



A delightfully large deck to the north, and a smaller, screened porch to the east augment the cottage interior. At just under 850 square feet, not every couple could easily live within its spatial limitations.



aving traveled a good deal of the world, and renovated a number of the two-dozen homes they've shared, Angie and Randy brought extensive experience to designing changes for this Coronado Historic District home. During the first few years of ownership, while still teaching in Minnesota, the cottage (as it had been) continued to serve as a wonderful get away space, especially as a break from the snowy north. But as they approached retirement, it was clear that living there year-round would require changes.

Influenced by the writings of architect Sarah Susanka, of the "not so big house" books, they deeply considered what sorts of spaces would support the way they live now: kids grown; no longer working. They examined how the spaces could sustain both individual and shared home activities, and do so in ways that would not impede when their interests diverge. Other factors that were integral to design decisions included: the desire to live a less materially encumbered life; enjoyment of the outdoors and gardening, and historic district restrictions. The process of shaping the cottage into effective living space became one of opening up more than adding on, though there was a small bit of that, too.

Angie and Randy wanted fluid movement through their home. They also needed purposeful flexibility: most spaces suit multiple purposes as needed. Visitors easily follow the flow on entering through the screen porch, with nearly the entire house visible (when the bedroom door is open). Uncluttered, warm and inviting, several expanses of windows offer river views and bring the outside in, while skylights further light every room.

The path from the entry corner passes between the living room's two contiguous seating areas. In their daily lives these "face" different directions: one can watch videos or TV (with audio headset) without disturbing the other's reading. When entertaining, the seating can be easily shifted, opening the area for a larger group to comfortably interact.



Just beyond the living room space is the dining area that doubles as Angie's handcraft work place. An entry that was expanded to French doors (2017) joins the deck (updated 2011). Rivaling the full living room in size, the deck greatly extends the overall cottage living area: perfect for out door dining and relaxing.



To the right of dining area a window-lined kitchen draws us in. This final renovation (finished as 2017 turned to 2018) doubled spatial usefulness from the original. Below new north facing windows on the left side, light spills onto a sink flanked by expanses of counter space with dishwasher and cabinet storage below. On the right, extending toward the refrigerator at the far end, cabinets sit below and above another expanse of countertop that also holds the stove. Further features include a raised ceiling, skylights and a storage nook (with a secreted space behind it for baking tools) where the fridge used to stand. The cabinetry design harmonizes beautifully with the cottage's early 20th century heritage.

Going back into the living room area, the bedroom and full bath area are off to the left. A small addition transformed the formerly tight room into one with more daylight, open floor space and built-in home office and closet areas. Since Florida weather rarely inspires long hot baths, the claw-foot tub was traded out to accommodate a roomy walk in shower and the laundry machines.

108 Esther Street Time Line

- 1886 First recorded property description. Includes right of way on the lane (Esther) both east to N. Peninsula, and west to the river, and with rights to dock a rowboat.
- 1911 Mortgage recorded
- 1914 Parcel valued at \$10,000.
- 1920 Cottage constructed
- 1923 Recorded efforts to “clear title and remove clouds”
- 1924 Mortgage recorded
- 1986 Qualified Sale
- 1989 Qualified Sale to Randy’s mother, Lucy; cottage becomes central to family gatherings.
- 1999 Lucy Herman dies passing the cottage on to her children.
- 2001 Randy and Angie buy out his sibling’s shares.

Related Coronado Beach History

Records on this property date to 1886 (one year prior to the incorporation of New Smyrna: population 150) when the Esther Street dock hosted shallow bottom boats, including those of Indian Riverboat Steamboat Company. In the 1890s Coronado Island already had “beach cottages” (some quite large) standing along its ocean shore, with at least one hotel thriving soon after. Along the river, citrus groves flourished for quite a while, including around the island’s first settlement, Eldora, in the 1870s, located 11 miles south of Coronado. Three hard freezes over six seasons, culminating in 1899, pushed most of that industry further south. By the turn of the 20th century, trains had efficiently replaced boats for moving people and products amongst Florida’s east coast communities.

By 1920, when 108 Esther was built, mainland New Smyrna boasted nearly 2500 residents. Residents and visitors alike would cross to Coronado Island by the first bridge built in 1894, or using private skiffs and public ferries. Walking eastward to reach the beach they’d pass number 108, possibly located within a lemon grove and serving as a house for grove workers.

New Smyrna annexed Coronado Beach in 1947, becoming New Smyrna Beach. In 1995, the city determined the Coronado Historic District with these general boundaries: from the river to Peninsula between Columbus and Florida Avenues; along Peninsula from Columbus to one house shy of Due East; along the north side of Flagler to #316 and on the south side to Pine plus #309 in the center of the next block; along Florida and Esther eastward to Pine, excluding the river frontage properties. Not every building contributes to the district, but most do.

Randy and Angie generously offered their lovely and historic home to the New Smyrna Beach Coalition for their first fundraiser, A Charming Home Tour, that showcases five unique NSB homes through the years. We cannot thank them enough for their commitment to maintaining this historical gem and also for opening it to the public to support the work of the Coalition. If you are planning to see this home on March 22, please be careful about where you park your car. Esther Street is VERY NARROW and there is no public parking on the street.