

In 1942, Nutting purchased the tiny gray cottage. During his lengthy tenure, minor changes were made, but the house remained much like it was when first built.

Three years ago, it was one of the oldest structures still standing in the area, albeit in a sad state of disrepair. When others had determined it too expensive to refurbish, and friends thought he was 'absolutely nuts' to consider moving it to salvage the dying structure, Busk was inspired to work his creative magic. "I knew there was enough to save because someone important once lived there," explains Busk.

"Essentially, I get handed the guts and the frame," says Busk, who has seemingly evolved as the point person for Southwest Florida historic homes that others have given up on.

This is his fifth such project, and Busk has established a 'retirement village' of sorts in Bonita Springs — in the vicinity of Tennessee Street and Pennsylvania Avenue — just off Old 41, for the dying homes he restores. It was one of the few neighborhoods Busk could find that still reflected something of Old Florida.

Uneven floors, moving the decrepit house to a new location less than a mile away, termites and the relentless round of permits were among the many challenges Busk faced with the remodel. Immediately after he purchased the home, there were more trials: Hurricane Wilma, rain damage and missing floors, windows and doors — pilfered by those who thought the home was surely on its way to a landfill.



renovated exterior



before renovation



porch

"I never dreamed of such happiness as this, while I was an ugly duckling."

From the classic children's fairytale by Hans Christian Andersen, 1844

Busk admits these projects, although providing little financial reward, are fulfilling quests for him. "They are not for the mild and meek. There is plenty of aggravation; I have a love/hate relationship with every project, and they seem to last forever," he explains.

The first questions Busk asks when faced with the daunting task of revitalizing an old home are: how was it and how do I want it? And: what can it be today?

In this case, the Nutting home was a simple tin-roof structure, around 1,000 square feet in size, constructed mostly of wood.

Along with the help of his builder, Terry Schmidt, and an architect's advice, Busk began tackling how best to raise the

ceilings — a second story was not an option. He wanted to leave as many items intact (in this case, the fireplace and some pine hardwood floors). He also wanted to deal with the visibly sloping roof of the 'scabbed on' porch.

For answers, Busk traveled to New England (Maine, in particular) to study how architects addressed remodeling vacation cottages and how they dealt with the challenges of secondary roofs and rooms added on over the years. His final solution was to dismantle the original porch and create a completely new one along the back of the home.

Busk had the ceilings vaulted — raising them to nine feet in height; he added a bedroom, laundry room and bathroom, taking the home to a total of 1,700 square feet. The salvaged



living room



a work in progress



dining room

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