

A dream come true

by **SUE MAYFIELD GEIGER** on *SEPTEMBER 28, 2019, Coast Monthly*



MARK MCKIM SITS ON THE SHADED DECK OF HIS BACLIFF FARMHOUSE. MCKIM ADMIRERED THE TREE-FILLED PROPERTY FOR ABOUT 25 YEARS AND PURCHASED IT IN 2016. HE EXTENSIVELY RENOVATED THE HOME, WHICH WAS BUILT IN 1890. PHOTO BY STUART VILLANUEVA

Developer admired old property for years, and then he bought it

For 25 years, Mark McKim drove by an old farmhouse in Bacliff surrounded by 5 acres of beautiful live oak trees. Each time, his admiration grew.

“I’ve wanted this property for a long time,” McKim said. “So, when it came up for sale in 2016, I was in a position to make an offer. Since then, I’ve been remodeling the house, adding to the ambience of the grounds and admiring the nature that surrounds me.”

The house, built in 1890 by J.W. Derrick, was originally on 10 acres, but 5 acres were eventually sold to a family next door. Two years before the house was built, Derrick took his steam-powered boat from Galveston Bay to Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana, dug up 250 oak trees that were 7 feet tall, brought them back, and planted them in rows around the Bacliff property. Today, 37 remain with massive spreading limbs, diameters up to 18 feet and heights up to 60 feet.

The beauty and peacefulness of the trees inspired McKim to call his place Sleepy Oaks, he said.



THE 30-PLUS OAK TREES ON MARK MCKIM'S BACLIFF PROPERTY INSPIRED HIM TO CALL HIS PLACE SLEEPY OAKS. PHOTO BY STUART VILLANUEVA

McKim has spent many hours bringing the farmhouse up to speed, while keeping as much of the 1890 footprint as possible.

The original house consisted of two bedrooms, living room, small kitchen and an outhouse. Subsequent owners made improvements over the years, including the previous one who, in the early 1980s, added a skylight, master bedroom, ceiling beams and

various updates. McKim's renovations were a lot more extensive and took 22 months.

"You can see where dividing walls were once located by looking at the lines in the ceiling," he said. "The front door was where the dining room is now." The house's sturdiness is what impressed McKim the most when he started renovations, he said.



THE KITCHEN IS A FOCAL POINT OF MARK MCKIM'S BACLIFF FARMHOUSE. IT FEATURES FLOOR-TO-CEILING BIRCH CABINETS, STAINLESS DCS APPLIANCES, GRANITE COUNTERTOPS AND A 5-BY-8-FOOT ISLAND. PHOTO BY STUART VILLANUEVA

"The house rests on giant timbers, was framed with 3-by-5 inch wood covered with 3-inch spruce shiplap, all hiding under vinyl siding," he said. "It has survived The Great Storm of 1900 and every hurricane since then with no damage."

McKim realized exposing the shiplap would be a daunting task, he said.

"I looked at that shiplap every night, trying to figure out how to save it, but it was impossible, so had to rip it out and install HardiePlank," he said.



AQUA AND RED CHAIRS ADD A SPLASH OF COLOR TO THE EARTHY TONES IN THE DEN.
PHOTO BY STUART VILLANUEVA

Now that McKim has moved into the remodeled 3,000-square-foot home with four bedrooms, two baths, roomy den, elaborate dining room, stylish kitchen and cozy screened-in back porch, he's living his dream.

Because he likes to cook and entertain, he spends a lot of time in the kitchen, he said.

Floor-to-ceiling birch cabinets painted white, stainless DCS by Fisher & Paykel appliances, stainless subway backsplash, bronze light fixtures, granite countertops and a 5-by-8-foot island make an impressive statement for guests entering the home through the new front door.



THE DEN, OR BIG ROOM, AS MARK MCKIM CALLS IT, FEATURES MASSIVE BEAMS AND A RECESSED SKYLIGHT CEILING. PHOTO BY STUART VILLANUEVA

A pedestal table abutting the island is actually part of an industrial lathe McKim found at a machine shop in Chicago.

The den or big room — as McKim prefers to call it — is spacious and masculine, with neutrals and pops of color in every direction. A brown leather sofa, two matching, wildly patterned wing chairs and a distressed antique trunk are pulled together by a threadbare area rug — all purchased from Old World Antieks in La Grange, Texas. Across the room, a large entertainment center is filled with books, photos and various collectibles.

A floor-to-ceiling mica slate fireplace occupies a corner across from a seating arrangement of four cozy chairs upholstered in aqua and red.

The dining room is an exquisite sight to behold with its retro glass-fringed rectangular chandelier hanging dramatically atop the dining table that seats 10.

Each side of the dining room is flanked by chests belonging to McKim's mother and his grandmother. Hanging pendant lamps of crystal and bronze add warmth to what McKim calls a "European, ballroom, palace" ambience.

Look out the wall of windows and the view of the oak trees is breathtaking. A door to the right takes you to a small screened-in porch where McKim enjoys his morning coffee and a panoramic view of the outdoors.



THE DINING ROOM IS HIGHLIGHTED BY A DINING TABLE THAT SEATS 10 UNDER A RETRO GLASS-FRINGED CHANDELIER. PHOTO BY STUART VILLANUEVA

The master bedroom boasts colors of rusts, browns and blacks, an Asian screen and over-sized lounge chair. The master bath with Jacuzzi and a 13-by-30 foot closet are two of his favorite rooms, he said.

A long hallway off the big room takes you to a guest room, guest bath, office and exercise room. A stained glass-transom window with address numbers is noticeable in the guest room, and most likely came from a turn-of-the century home. Guest bathroom mirrors were made from the original farmhouse window frames.

A front deck with raised gardens, two picnic tables and jasmine growing up a wire fence are part of the outdoor space for now as McKim ponders more outside possibilities.

As a busy commercial real estate developer, he divides his time between Bacliff and Colorado, where he enjoys hiking, mountain climbing and sleeping under the stars. But when the farmhouse calls to him, he returns.

"Five days after I bought his property, a man came by and offered me \$150,000 above what I'd paid for it in order to build an RV park," McKim said. "I asked him what he intended to do with the trees and he said, 'Cut them all down.' Making \$150,000 in five days is not an offer one gets every day, but without hesitation, I told him, 'No deal.'"

