



Photos by Stephen Clarke

# A labor of love

By Catherine MacGillivray

**M**orning Glory is a tiny cottage with a huge amount of charm which has been restored by its current owners as a labor of love.

Bought by American couple Susan and Al Goetze 14 years ago, this traditional island home dates back to the 19th century.

"I was smitten on sight when I saw the little yellow Cayman cottage on the seaside surrounded by almond, sea grape and palm trees," says Susan. "I remember the shutters had blue trim, with pale pink slats, and a blue sign hung to the right of the Dutch door proclaiming the house to be Morning Glory cottage, built in 1876."

Susan is behind the remodeling project, which has transformed the cottage into a sweet seaside residence with modern conveniences and interior design but all the aesthetic appeal of yesteryear.

Located by the beach on Manse Road in Bodden Town, Morning Gory is a fine example of a rebuilt historic home which has survived more than a hundred years to stand as a proud example of Cayman's heritage.

Susan and Al purchased the cottage from Dan Peek and his wife Catherine. Dan was a member of the U.S. folk rock group, America, which became prominent in the 1970s, with the song "A Horse with No Name" being one of their best-known hits.

"I renovated the house and built a guest cottage for children and friends," says Susan. "The idea of living in Bodden Town appealed to me on so many levels; the thought of owning

a home with a story to tell, the opportunity to explore and investigate an historic town, and my interest in getting to know the local community."

However, no sooner had the couple settled into their idyllic new residence when Hurricane Ivan hit Grand Cayman in 2004, a Category 5 storm which devastated many homes on Manse Road and across the island.

Although not in residence at the time, they were told that two 30 to 50-foot rogue waves hit the shoreline on the back of a 20-foot surge, with the wall of water smashing into Morning Glory.

The modern addition was destroyed but the original part of the building was left intact apart from roof damage.

The waves also forced open the French doors on the sea side of the guest cottage then blasted out the front door, taking most of the furniture as the water passed through.

It took Susan and Al three years to revisit the idea of repairing the property but finally rebuilt the guest cottage in 2007, moved in, and began work on the main house. Architect John Doak gave guidance to ensure the rebuild was historically authentic.

"Sadly, we could not save the house; it couldn't support the new standards required for roofs after the hurricane," says Susan.

In the aftermath of the storm, Susan became involved with the National Trust for the Cayman Islands, forming the Bodden Town District Committee with Denise Bodden who is the organization's historic, education and development manager.



“The National Trust was involved in an historic rebuild project of the Mission House in Bodden Town,” recalls Susan. “I thought, why couldn’t I do the same thing with Morning Glory? So, our house is essentially the same dimensions, the same placement of windows and doors, and has an interior ceiling that looks much like the original one.

“The only thing we did differently was to change the angle of the house just a bit to better align it with the guest cottage. As to the new part of the house which is on the seaside, we opted for a double-peaked roof with a small roof in between. I added a few feet to the new part of the house to enable us to have a larger space.

“Much of the design was a paean to Caymanian architecture: an inverted boat ceiling in the addition, a tray ceiling in the bedroom, details on the gingerbread fretwork that invoke earlier examples of railings and recreate the pattern of the Union Jack.”

Even the ironwood beams from the original framework were dug out of the ground and used in the rebuild.

The result is a charming one-bedroom cottage which has stuck to the property’s true architectural heritage but with the advantage of contemporary comforts.

It has also been decorated with favorite pieces of artwork as well as trinkets from around the world which Al has brought from his travels in his capacity as a spice buyer – he’s the managing director of McCormick Global Ingredients, Ltd, which is based in Cayman.

“In the old days, Caymanian men went to sea and brought back things for their families,” says Susan. “I have tried to replicate this by displaying artifacts that Al has collected from around the globe.”

Following Hurricane Ivan, Susan and other members of the Bodden Town District Committee created a map featuring the locations and photographs of all the historic structures in Bodden Town, from Guard House Hill to Webster Memorial United Church and cemetery on the other side of town.

“In the process, I interviewed Neevil McCoy, whose mother Nora lived in the wattle-and-daub house across the street from us on Manse Road,” she says. “Nora died a few years ago in her early nineties. She was the granddaughter of Jack Carter, a former slave to the Carter family who lived on the land where our house now stands.



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“They had given Jack Carter the land across the street from them after emancipation in 1835. Jack would probably have taken his name from the family who owned him; there are many examples of this in slave history. He built the house in which Nora lived in 1864.

“Much of the information I have discovered about our house’s history came from the Bodden Town heritage ladies.”

The wattle-and-daub construction of the original Morning Glory structure was replaced at some point with four-inch wide concrete slabs, affixed to the ironwood beams with hand-carved ironwood pegs.

When Susan and Al purchased Morning Glory, the original part of the house still had a beamed ceiling with lathes.

“This was typical of roofs to which either silver thatch or cedar shingles were affixed.” Susan points out. “So the ironwood framework of the house could easily be original, but much was replaced over time. In the mid-1950s, Spellman Carter - a descendent of the earlier owners - put up the addition to the back of the house with a shed roof. The Peeks added a seaside porch.”

Susan and Al hope that their cottage, which has been lovingly restored with Cayman’s history in mind, can be an inspiration for others to save the island’s heritage properties.

“I am deeply happy to be living in Morning Glory,” says Susan. “I love this home all the more because it meant so much to me to preserve a bit of Cayman culture and to share it with others.”



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