

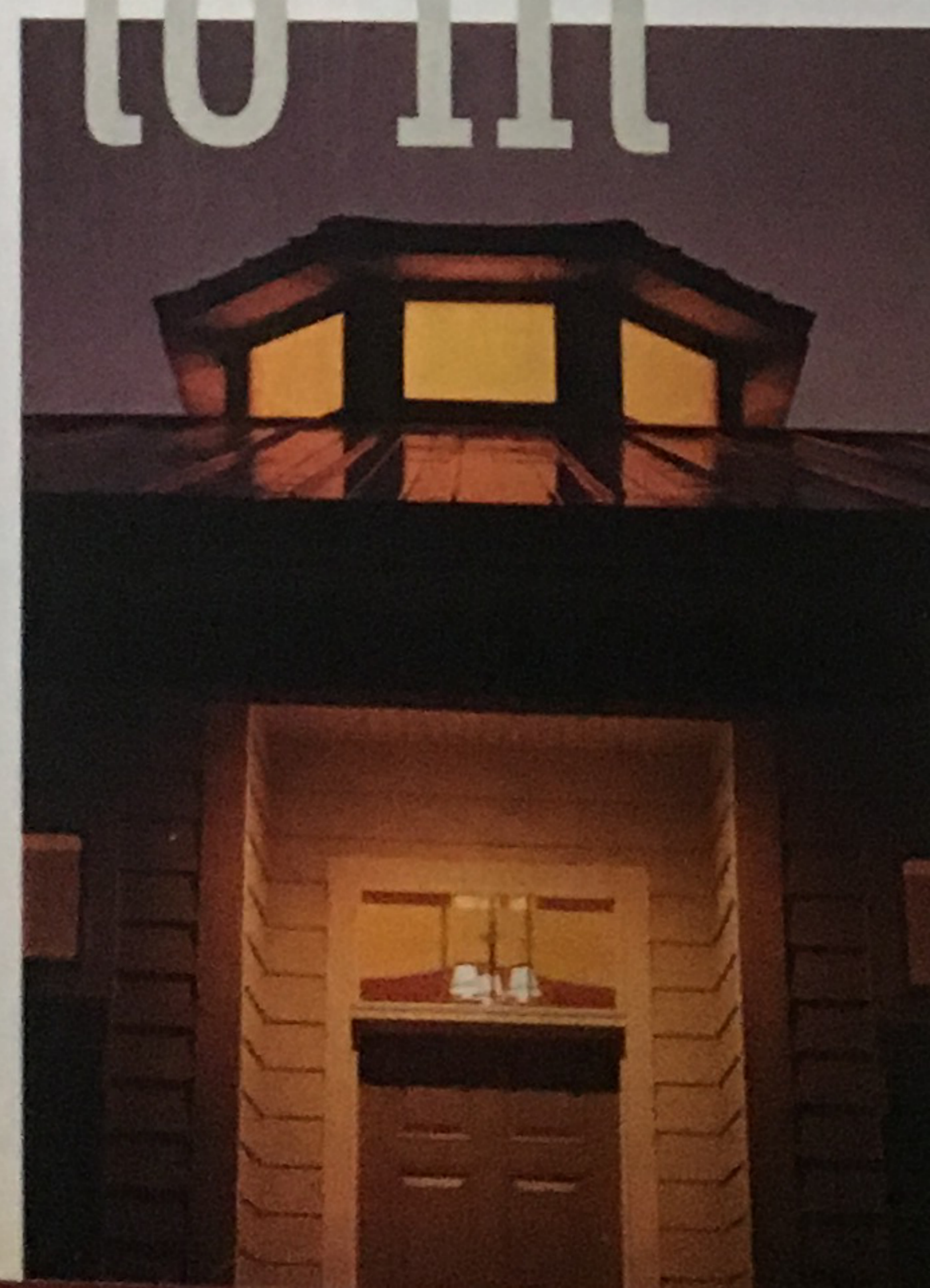


*By modifying a stock house plan to suit your needs, you can build an architect-designed home for less.*



# tailored to fit

**T**op: A highlight of the house, this deep, broad porch faces the water. The Beatys built on a concrete slab rather than piers, but they placed the porch to hide the slab and suggest the raised-platform design typical of many beach houses. The gently sloped hip roof is common in Florida architecture. Center: Hidden by a canopy of oak and palm, the home sits on a tidal creek, accessible by a pier that juts into the briny waters.



Clint Beaty was still smarting from an architectural affair gone bad when he and his wife, M.K., started looking for a stock plan for a vacation home in New Smyrna Beach, Florida. "We renovated our main house in 1999 and spent thousands with an architect who couldn't get us close to budget," Clint says. He swore this time would be different.

It was. Clint started with an appealing *Coastal Living* plan and hired a designer with drafting skills to tailor it to his family's needs. "We skipped the first steps of back-and-forth with an architect and spent our money on fine-tuning," he says.

While plenty of people have terrific experiences working with architects on custom designs, some—especially those who are stretching budgets—save thousands of dollars by choosing a stock plan. But rarely

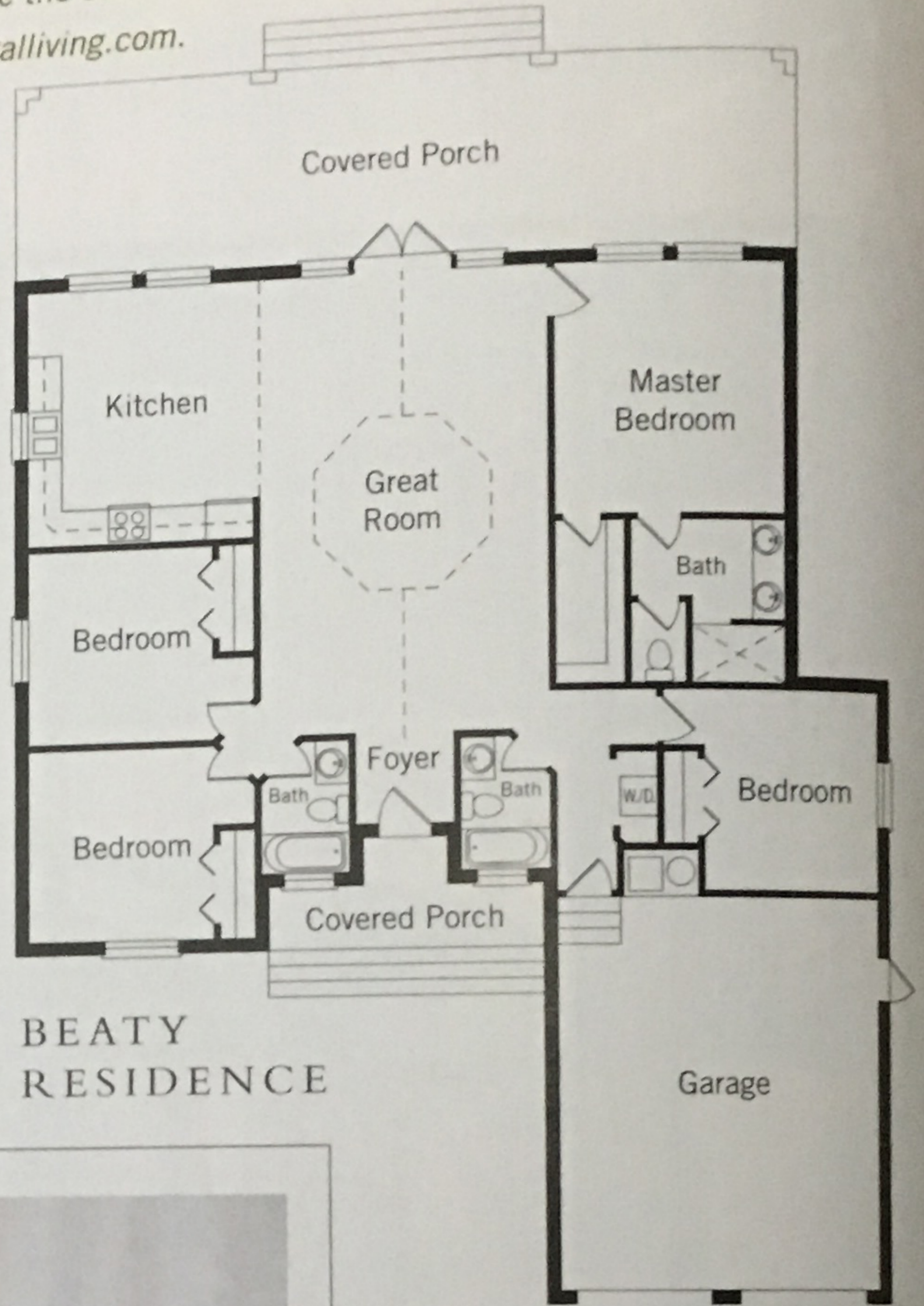
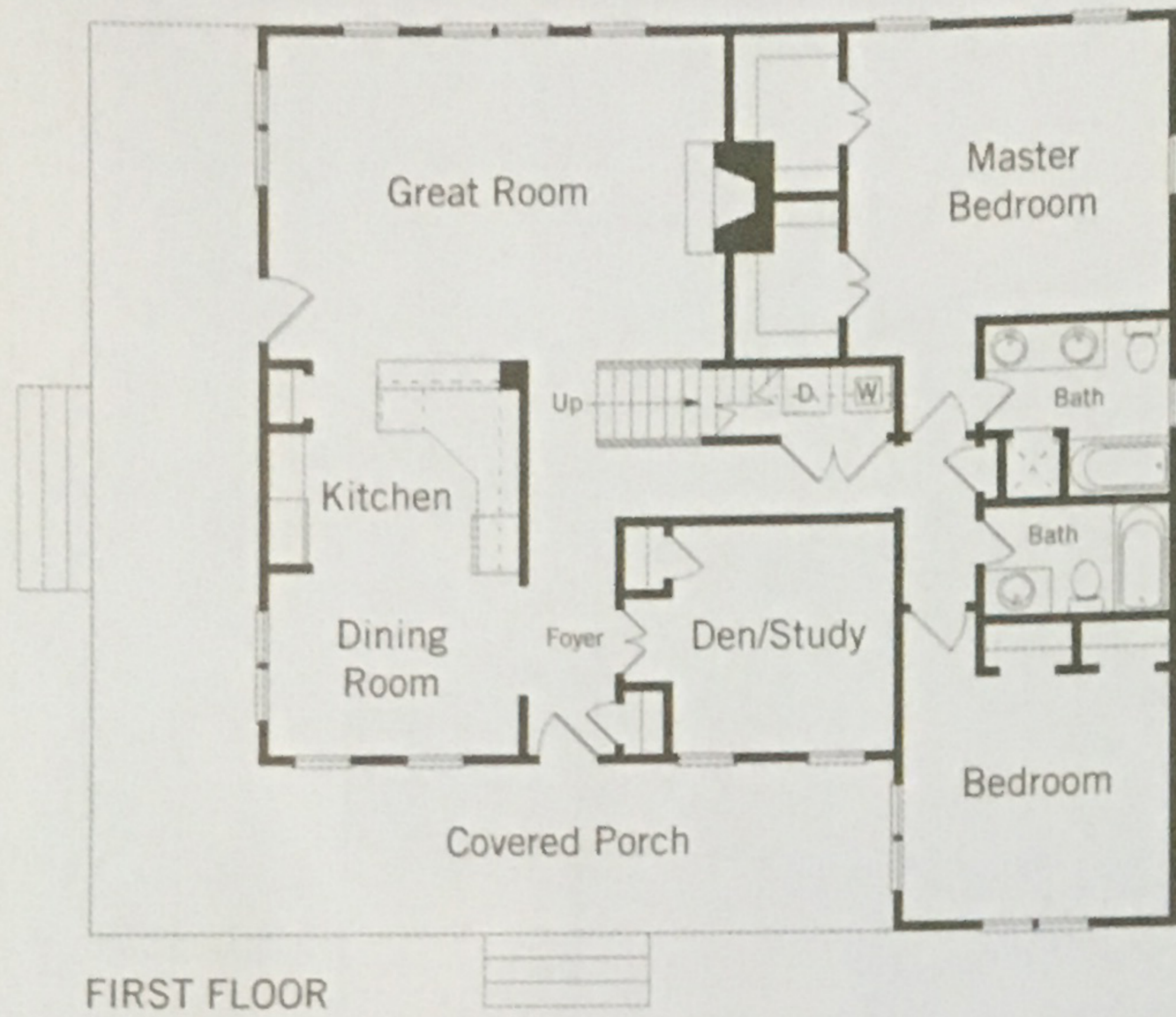
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The basic geometry and square foundation make redesigning [the plan] easy," says Inlet Retreat architect Bill Allison. Here's how Pam changed it to suit the Beatys: • With no need for a fireplace in the Florida climate, Pam removed it, along with the master bedroom closets, to reconfigure the great room. • A vaulted ceiling and cupola replaced the second story. • Consolidating the kitchen and dining room and moving the space to the back of the

house allowed for an extra bedroom up front. • Shifting the entry a few feet eliminated the study, redefined a bedroom, made space for an extra bath, and gave the garage addition a more natural extension. • To suit the site, Pam moved the porch to the rear. To see the second floor and a rendering of Inlet Retreat, visit [coastalliving.com](http://coastalliving.com).

INLET RETREAT



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is a stock plan perfectly suited for any one person. That's where alterations can help.

"Modification is a large part of my business," says Alan Mascord, president of stock-plan company Alan Mascord Design Associates in Portland, Oregon. People who buy his plans often ask him to reverse the layout of a house, add a third bay to a two-car garage, extend a house by a few feet, or shrink it to fit a particular site. In addition to his stock plan fees, which range from \$450 to \$1,000, his hourly fees to modify might add \$1,500 to \$4,000. Compare





*"It's best if you can get a plan modified locally, because you can sit down with the designer face-to-face."* —architect John Tee



that to an architect's fees, which are often 5 to 10 percent of the total construction cost. "Modifying is cheaper than starting from scratch," he says. To change a plan you've bought, you'll need to hire someone. The obvious choice is the person who designed the plan. But sometimes that person isn't available. It could be they're too busy with custom designs, or that their fees are prohibitively high. Or maybe they live too far away.

"It's best if you can get a plan modified locally, because you can sit down with the designer face-to-face," says John Tee, an Atlanta-based architect and stock house-plan



designer. Not only does that make communicating your wants and needs easier, but also a local person is more likely to know about local things, such as the frost line—necessary for determining foundation footing depth—or the building codes that relate to energy efficiency, wind, and earthquakes.

Four French doors lead from the great room to the 600-square-foot porch, a minor but important customization. The biggest change to the original plan was eliminating the second story. In its place, the Beatys raised the ceiling and added an octagonal cupola.

You don't have to hire a full-fledged architect at all. In fact, some architects prefer not to work on another architect's plan. John recommends hiring a draftsman. Larger architecture firms frequently have in-house draftsmen who work with clients to make such changes. Freelance draftsmen are another





Working with interior designer Pam Niemann, Clint and M.K. modified the *Coastal Living* plan to suit their family's needs. They devoted their attention—and money—to the water side of the house. On the land side, they replaced the plan's entry porch with this simple, clean-lined, step-up entrance.

possibility. And in some cases, builders will alter plans, either doing the drafting themselves or hiring someone.

Clint Beaty got lucky. He hired Pam Niemann, an interior designer with experience in drafting, renovation, and construction design. The stock plan Clint and M.K. chose was for a 2,188-square-foot house called Inlet Retreat, designed by Allison Ramsey Architects. Its simple layout and cottage feel seemed ideal for their oak- and palm-covered waterfront lot. However, to save money and make the house fit their needs, they made some changes.

For starters, they got rid of the side porch, which would have been wasted on a wall of trees, and added a two-bay garage. They removed the dormered second story, adding instead an octagonal cupola, and used the stairwell space to enlarge the great room. The

dining room became a fourth bedroom. Finally, they added fiber-cement siding and converted the pier-and-beam frame house to cinder block on a concrete slab. But they kept the long front porch on piers to hide the slab and give the house a more beachy look.

Before they ever hired Pam, the Beatys did their homework. "We had a file folder 2 inches thick with design ideas," he says. Knowing what you want is key whenever you modify a stock plan, especially if you hire someone with more drafting than design experience.

But their hard work paid off. A house that could have cost \$25,000 to design instead cost about \$2,000. And even if he had started entirely from scratch, Clint's not sure the result would have suited his family any better. "This house is just so 'us,'" he says. More info: page 188

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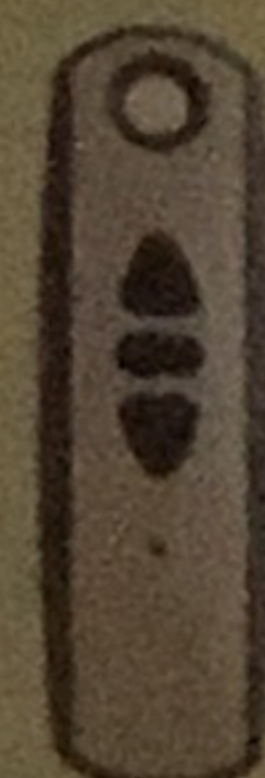
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