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The Face of Tomorrow's Wrightsville

by Pat Lowe Photography by Allison Breiner



The Wrightsville landscape is changing. Where once low one-story cottages with wraparound porches dotted the sandy landscape, now it seems that every few weeks, a new, often imposing, residential structure is started.

The men who design these homes are the silent ones — mostly hidden behind the scenes. However, the part they play in changing the look of the town is plainly visible. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to see just who is designing the face of tomorrow's Wrightsville.

It's a fairly short list, although there are a number of well-known architects and designers who do not currently have homes of their design under construction.

Of the men, and they are all men, several are veterans who have drawn 50 and 60 homes on Wrightsville and Harbor Island. Others, new to the area, have drawn just a few homes.

All felt the design and drawing stage of creating a new home could be done in six months or less, although at least one designer said it can take just a few weeks.

The primary difference between an architect and designer has to do with educational requirements. To be an architect, a five-year

degree is required, as is a three-year internship and national test, although the laws on this changed recently, so some architects are working without these new requirements.

Designers aren't required to have as strict of an education or sit for the exam and receive licensing. They are limited to doing houses and/or very small commercial work.

Architects are not restricted in what they can design. Architects will oftentimes draw much more structural detail than a designer will. If there's a seal on the drawing, the architect's liability is always higher, even higher than that of the contractor. Architects meet with people like CAMA, zoning, the health department, etc., while designers usually don't. A registered architect is a person who has sat for the exam and is licensed by the state to practice architecture.

Sometimes architects do the design, and give the work to a draftsman to draw. Drafting is drawing; architects, engineers, designers and contractors all can do it.

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) is a professional association not unlike any other professional association — the American Medical Association for doctors or the National Association of Realtor Association for real estate agents.

Who's Who in Architecture and Design

Cothran Harris

Cothran Harris Architecture

In our business you have to have patience and a good sense of humor," Cothran Harris says.

Harris says as an architect, he needs to understand what people want to use a beach house for. If you have somebody who wants to live on Wrightsville Beach full time, you're designing a completely different house than if you're designing a house for somebody who wants to use it as a vacation house."

"You tend to think of Wrightsville Beach as a haven for vacation homes, rental homes and beach cottages. But you have a lot of people who do live at Wrightsville Beach full time," he says, "a lot more than when I was growing up."

He tells his clients, there are three kinds of houses to choose from. First, a vacation house meant for 5-10 day visits, where everything is geared for living out of a suitcase. Size of bedrooms, amount of storage and accessory spaces are kept small and great rooms are large. The second category is the second home, which is a house for someone who wants to live on Wrightsville Beach for three to six months. It has a better kitchen, a larger pantry and nice closets. It has room for people to accumulate stuff. The third kind is where someone is living in the house year-round. That changes a lot if it's for retirement, a couple or an active family. "A full-time house for an active family is the most challenging home to design, bar none," he says.

Number of Employees: Four

Years in Business: 15

Career Launch: Working with Henry Johnston
on Figure Eight houses

First Time to WB: June 1955

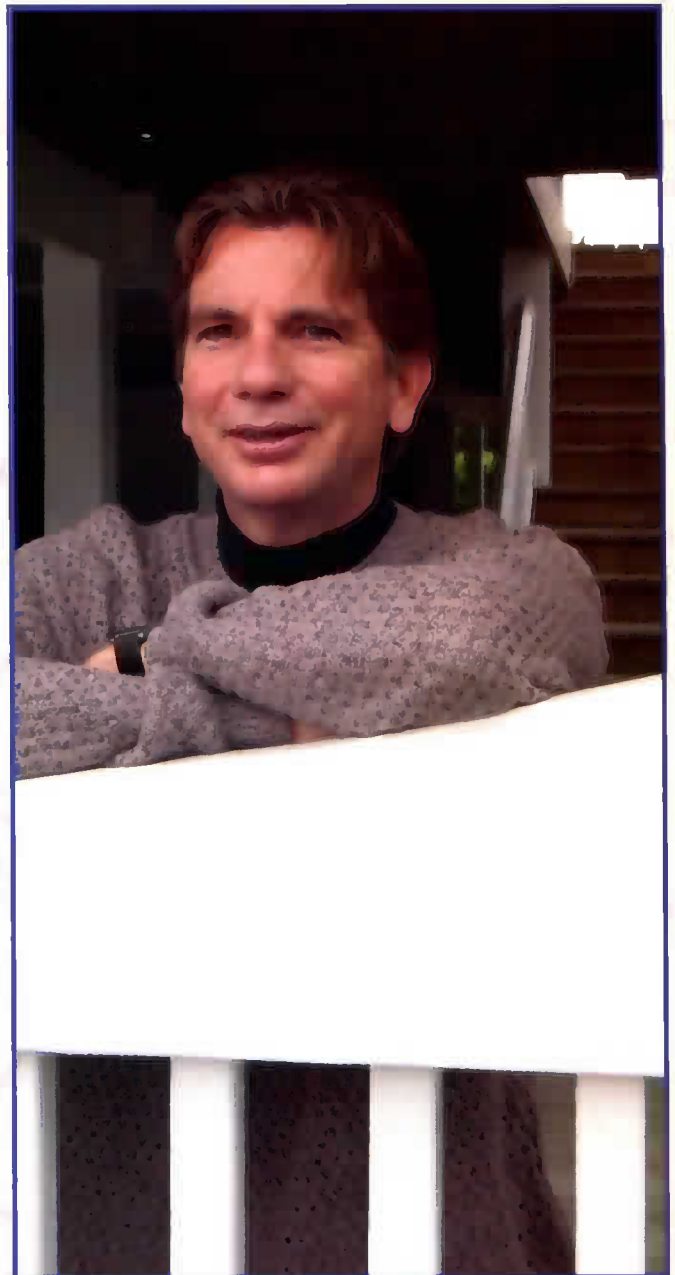
Grew Up: Wilmington

License or Designations: North Carolina, South Carolina, AIA

Graduated: N.C. State, Syracuse University with a BIED-Architecture, BARCH

Organization Membership(s): American Institute of Architects

Homes Designed and Built On The Beach (WB/HI):
20+



Cothran Harris

Most Popular Type of Home: Nostalgia

Favorite Type of Home: Homes with happy clients inside

Average Time to Design a Home: Six months

Favorite Home of all Time: Low House by McKim, Mead and White

Worst Nightmare: Waking up as Sponge Bob

Little Known Fact: Airlie Road is the only state road in North Carolina without a shoulder right-of way

What Is the Hottest Trend in Architecture Right Now?

Private rooms to get away from the great room concept