

The striking slate roof—which homeowner Cheryl refers to as “artwork”—was created by Roofing Associates, Inc. using slate the Hancocks had shipped from Vermont.

# *the importance of* COMMUNITY

Drawn to the Briar’s Creek development for its scenic beauty and focus on community, Cheryl and Woody Hancock looked to local companies to help them build a home which invites family, friends, and fellowship

*by* JULIE SPRANKLES  
*photography by* MICHAEL COSTA

**B**efore retiring in 2003, Woody Hancock experienced a successful career as a custom home builder in Maryland for nearly three decades. He and his wife Cheryl enjoyed life in the Severna Park area during that time, but were looking for a sunny locale to spend summer vacations when Woody met a developer who introduced him to Kiawah Island, South Carolina. “Woody and I came to Kiawah for the first time in the spring of 1983,” says Cheryl, “and I remember walking in the water in late April and marveling at how warm it was and how expansive the stretches of beach were. From that point on, we spent every summer in Kiawah, and our daughters just adored it!” Having fallen in love with the Lowcountry, the busy couple invested in several properties in the area before settling on building a home in Kiawah on Terrapin Island. Unbeknownst to them at the time, building their Terrapin house would become the catalyst for building their dream home in the Briar’s Creek community on John’s Island.

Shortly after deciding to make the move to Terrapin Island, the Hancocks met with esteemed local contractor Steve Koenig—co-developer and sole builder of the Terrapin Island area. During more than 15 months of construction, the couple came to respect Steve and was intrigued when he told them about a vision he had



(left) Knotty pine wood planks from Liberty Cedar and a cupola designed by architect Sam Furr contribute to the dramatic effect of a guest bedroom's vaulted ceiling. (right) Designed and installed by Aqua Blue Pools, an infinity edge pool—complete with adjacent spa, spillway, and baby pool—overlooks the marsh.



for a future development on Johns Island; soon thereafter, Steve joined in partnership with Ed Myrick, the owner of the property consisting of 900 acres on Johns Island, to develop a private golf course community. The Hancocks became investors based on their belief in the vision and the ultimate success of the project. In June of 2007, several years into their life on Kiawah, Woody took Cheryl by surprise when he proposed a project of great proportion, saying, "What if we build on the lot we own in Briar's Creek instead of selling it?" Facing a difficult decision, Cheryl turned to prayer for guidance before discussing the idea with her children.

"I think what convinced me, knowing how long and difficult the process would be, was the idea that my grandchildren would be able to form so many memories on the

water that surrounds the home," Cheryl explains. "Our children had been brought up on the Severn River in Maryland, and they crabbed and fished off of our pier all the time. I could see them bringing their kids to Briar's Creek to do the same thing, and they have." With Cheryl and Woody now on the same page, construction began on their home—including a guest house—that would sit on the Briar's Creek lot they had originally invested in years prior. To collaborate on the design of their new house, the couple called on local architect Sam Furr of Samuel Furr Architects.

Sam welcomed a project of such large scope, as his firm typically only does three to four large, high-end projects per year to ensure each project is devoted maximum attention. "We spent a lot of time designing Cheryl and Woody's Briar's Creek home,"

he says, "and in some cases redesigned. As always, we did thorough sets of drawings to make sure the home would be built the way we envisioned it." Sam, much like the Hancocks, was immediately impressed with the natural beauty of the lot, and so set out to incorporate those surroundings into his design. "Anywhere you are on that site, there is something beautiful to look at," says Sam, "and the best way to make a house look nestled into a site is to bring the site to the house. So, the first thing Woody did was bring in fill dirt so the house would sit on a rise that looked natural to the lot. We then carefully aligned views, and decided which view would work with all the tree canopies. I do a thorough site analysis that shows the major branch analysis of all the tree canopies; that way we know where we need to prune, where you can't see through, etc." Sam then created computer



Vertical grain Western red cedar from Liberty Cedar covers the home's exterior; Marvin-brand windows and doors from Buck Lumber & Building Supply allow natural light to fill the home's interior.

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modeling for the house to help Cheryl and Woody envision the finished result.

Throughout the project, Sam and the Hancocks bounced ideas off of each other, resulting in a few welcome revisions. “Although we stayed pretty close to the original plan, there was a little bit of evolution as the process moved along, and we just rolled with the changes,” explains Sam. “It was a good team effort, which is what it always takes to make any house a success.” Having years of experience in the construction field, Woody and Cheryl could offer insight unique to most homeowners. “With Woody’s career and my background in art, we both really enjoy being hands-on with a project, and we enjoy working on those projects together,” says Cheryl. “You have to be very future vision-minded to imagine how a home is going to look when it is done,

*“It is so refreshing to see a house done by local suppliers and local talent,” iterates Sam.*

and God has really given Woody that gift.” The couple’s future vision-minded mentality enabled them to keep their minds open to Sam’s suggestions, one of which was converting extra attic into usable living space. “I told Cheryl and Woody there was a lot of room in the attic to play with,” states Sam. “Once they realized just how much, they decided to roll with it and create bonus rooms at my suggestion. We really got underneath the home’s complex roof and squeezed out every bit of space we could.” Cheryl and Woody gave Sam the freedom to incorporate other ideas as well—a barrel ceiling in a guest room and transom windows throughout the home—which they now couldn’t imagine the home without.

Sam began working with the Hancocks in late summer 2007, and completed the drawings for the project in late summer of



Collaborating closely with Cheryl, Signature Kitchens & Baths of Charleston designed the home's kitchen to be warm and inviting as well as chic.

2008. As construction progressed once the plans were in place, Sam phased himself out as the Hancocks took over with the finishing touches. “The more the project progressed, the less they needed me because they were hands-on with the final selections,” says Sam. “I would get them started, and then they would wrap it up.” For the task of finishing touches, the couple relied

on their past experience building for high-end custom clients. As Sam’s work on the project drew to a close, he couldn’t help but be impressed by the Hancocks’ motivation for building the Briar’s Creek house. “The neat thing about this house is that part of the reason they created it so big and really wanted to make it so wonderful is because they weren’t really doing it for themselves,”

smiles Sam. “They want to use it for friends, family, and community outreach. It’s a very selfless thing to do.”

Although the Hancocks realized from the start they didn’t need such a large house, they enjoyed the idea of having the space for their children and grandchildren. They also saw an opportunity for Christian

outreach so, deciding the house was big enough, built the guesthouse to serve that purpose. "Two of our daughters are in full-time ministry, and another daughter works for a Christian fundraising company for elementary schools," says Cheryl. "That being said, they all have staff and the two in full-time ministry have college students they mentor. We thought it would be nice for them to have a place they could visit and bring their friends." Actively involved in their church, Cheryl and Woody often come across deserving people who simply can't afford to visit areas like Briar's Creek. "We just want to offer our home to these people in some way," says Cheryl, "either by themselves or for their ministry. I think God will just put on our hearts who to offer it to, and that's our prayer...for Him to make it clear to us who needs it most. The natu-

*What convinced me [to build the home] was the idea that my grandchildren would be able to form so many memories on the water that surrounds the home," Cheryl explains.*

ral beauty here is so good for the soul; you just can't outdo God's creation!" To help create the home they would use to foster fellowship, the Hancocks felt compelled to turn to local companies to supply the various products and services they needed to complete their vision.

"It is so refreshing to see a house done by local suppliers and local talent," iterates Sam. "Everybody was just working hard to get it done right." For the Hancocks, part of the appeal of Briar's Creek was the sense of community in the development, which they felt they could honor by working with companies from Johns Island and the surrounding areas. "This is really a house

*We love that the Hancocks' stunning home was created by local companies! Love the look as much as we do? Call on the companies listed in the resource guide below for your next project.*

**Appliances**

Signature Appliance Center

**Architect**

Samuel Furr Architects

**Carpet**

Designer Carpets

**Cedar Products**

Liberty Cedar

**Ceramic Tile**

Palmetto Tile Distributors, Inc.

**Closed Cell Insulation**

AirTight SprayFoam

**Custom Heart Pine Flooring**

Charleston One Source

**Custom Millwork**

Woodshapes Inc.

**Decorative Light Fixtures**

Lowcountry Lighting Center

**Electrical**

Haddigan Electrical Contractors

**Elevator**

Colson Elevator Company

**Exterior Painting**

Wet Paint

**Flagstone**

Fieldstone Center of Charleston

**Foundation and Concrete**

Carriage Hill Farm

**Framing and Exterior Trim**

Blue Moon, Inc.

**Garage Doors**

Overhead Door Company

**Geothermal Wells**

Edge Solutions, Inc.

**Granite Tops and Ceramic**

Emerson & Hyatt

**Granite**

AGM, A & S Marble & Granite

**Hardwood Floor Finishing**

Bay Pointe Hardwood Flooring

**Interior Doors**

Charleston Wood Components

**Interior Painting**

Strauchon Painters, Inc.

**Interior Trim**

P.L.C. Inc.

**Kitchen Cabinets**

Signature Kitchens & Baths of Charleston

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Summers Landscaping

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The Roofing Associates, Inc.

**Sound System**

Structured Wire Design

**Stone and Brick Mason**

Gilcrest Enterprises

**Swimming Pool**

Aqua Blue Pools

about community, and we wanted to reflect that not only in our personal outreach when the house was complete, but during construction of the house as well," says Cheryl. In total, over 30 local companies contributed to the completion of the Hancock home...and the entire family couldn't be happier with the results. "Everyone is

so excited," exclaims Cheryl. "As much as they enjoyed Kiawah and Terrapin, they all feel that this house just invites walking through the door and exhaling. This piece of property—and all of the natural beauty and wildlife of Briar's Creek—just begs you to take off your shoes, sit down, and feel soothed."



(top left) Architectural elements including coffered ceilings and transom windows provide visual interest in the living room. (top right) In the second floor living area, a towering stone fireplace serves as a focal point while also drawing the eye upward to the striking ceiling. (bottom left) Modern conveniences, such as professional grade appliances and a recessed television nook, make the Hancock kitchen ideal for both cooking and entertaining. (bottom right) The brainchild of architect Sam Furr, the unique barrel ceiling in this guest bedroom lends the space an elegant air.



(above) A state-of-the-art, 13,000 square foot clubhouse sits at the heart of the Briar's Creek development. (right) Steve Koenig of Koenig Construction, Inc. is the codeveloper of Briar's Creek.

## About Briar's Creek

photography by HOLGER M. OBENAU

The Hancocks became investors in Briar's Creek when they met Steve Koenig, but what led Steve Koenig to dream up the scenic development? Apparently, Steve can't refuse a good challenge. "A number of years ago, a friend of mine—who also happened to be a client—challenged me to find a piece of property to build a private golf retreat on. His opinion was that, although he loved it, the Kiawah Island club was more real estate driven and a bit bigger than he wanted. So I took up the challenge!" Steve found the future site of Briar's Creek and, realizing its potential, struck up a partnership with Ed Myrick, who owned the property. Upon finding 20 investors, they began construction on the course in November of 2000. One year later, Briar's Creek opened its doors.

Minutes from the hustle and bustle of downtown Charleston, Briar's Creek sits on over 900 acres filled with an abundance of natural beauty and wildlife. The private golf course, built by legendary golf course architect Rees Jones, boasts zero tee times and was selected by *Golf Digest* as the Best New Private Club the year it opened. "Even though we have over 900 acres, we only have 113 home sites—most of them off of the golf course—so the homes

don't impact the experience of a private golf retreat." Steve's vision for the community was to have large lots averaging in size from two to four acres, all heavily wooded and with homes showcasing period-style, turn of the century architecture. Contributing to the eclectic but cohesive set of architecture in the development are well-known local names such as Sam Furr (the architect on the Hancock home), Christopher Rose, Jimmy Thomas, Marc Camens, and Wayne Windham, as well as nationally renowned architect Mark Finlay out of Connecticut.

At the heart of Briar's Creek—overlooking the Kiawah River—sits the state-of-the-art 13,000 square foot clubhouse. Designed by Mark Finlay to pay homage to the incredible surrounding views, the clubhouse was created to serve as a comfortable gathering place for the people of the Briar's Creek community. "My job was to make it look like a home away from home, and not too stuffy," explains interior designer Peggy Norris, whom Steve hired for the project. "All of the furnishings evolved around that idea." In the close-knit community, families often gather at the clubhouse for dinner, a glass of wine, or simply good conversation. Holiday

parties are also held at the spacious venue, evidenced by scrolling picture frames filled with images of residents posing with Santa or toasting each other with glasses of champagne. "Neighbors are important here," says Steve, "I'm excited we are building something unique here...a place about community, where people love to integrate and engage with their neighbors."

Residents of Briar's Creek also tout the natural beauty of the area as a motivating factor for moving there. On any given day, one may see a plethora of wildlife: deer, birds, alligators, turtles, bobcats. A prime scouting area for wildlife is the large lake on the property. "We dug the lake, which will be 75 acres when it is done, to provide material for the golf course," explains Steve, "and the lake is just teeming with large mouth bass, bream, and tilapia. In front of the lake on the northeastern end of the property, we've dedicated a very large bird sanctuary with wetlands and rookeries. We have two neighboring eagle nests in the area as well, so I've seen as many as seven eagles feeding on the lake." In addition, Briar's Creek was the first Audubon Signature Certified Golf Course in the state, and only one of 39 in the country—a feat that requires extensive consultation with Audubon representatives to ensure the course meets rigid standards of environmental friendliness.

Although Steve and his wife were the sole residents of the development in the beginning, Briar's Creek is beginning to build major momentum. Of the 113 home sites, 84 lots have been developed and 75 of those lots having already been sold. At some point, it is Steve's dream for the development that property at Briar's Creek is simply sold by word of mouth because people realize it the kind of place they want to live. "Most people who find Briar's Creek love it," smiles Steve, "It's not for everybody, but those that are here are just the right people to be here. If I had to best describe the life and people at Briar's Creek, I guess I would just have to say that this community is full of love." ♦



To create a cozy yet elegant atmosphere in the Briar's Creek Clubhouse, interior designer Peggy Norris infused Lowcountry-style furnishings with authentic artifacts and antiques from Europe.