

french country

IN THE LOWCOUNTRY

RETIREES JIM AND JOYCE LEACH WANTED TO CREATE AND ENJOY A FRENCH-COUNTRY LIFESTYLE IN THE LOWCOUNTRY — SO THEY BUILT IT ON HAWTHORNE ROAD AT COLLETON RIVER PLANTATION IN BLUFFTON.

BY DEAN ROWLAND
PHOTOS BY CLAYTON GIRARD

Technically, Cameron & Cameron Custom Homes of Bluffton did the building, but the three-year-old company brought to life the vision that the Pennsylvania couple had in their creative minds after buying the 0.8-acre “pie-shaped” lot 12 years ago. Dreams do come true when a client and a builder of dreams join forces.

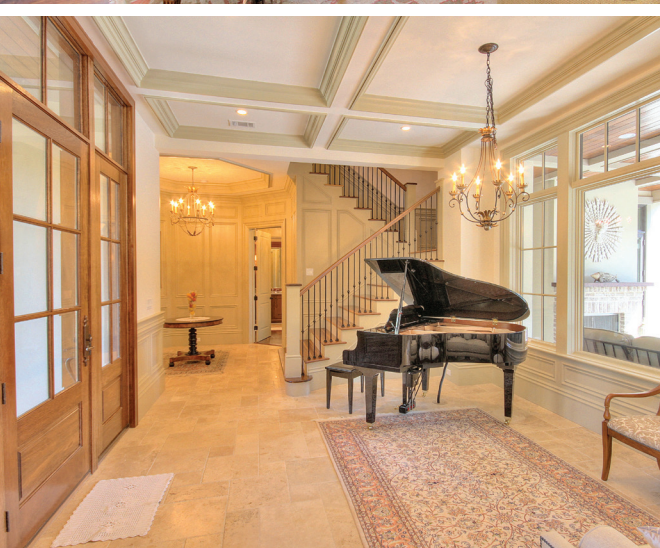
“Nathan (founder and owner of Cameron & Cameron) did a great job,” said Joyce, whose husband recently retired as an executive with Colgate-Palmolive Co. “It exceeded our expectations, and we are really happy with everything ... It’s exactly what we wanted.”

What the Leaches wanted – and what Cameron & Cameron spent nearly a year delivering – was an “edgy, clean, updated French-country look,” Cameron said.

The lavish residence boasts 5,378 square feet of living space, 1,672 square feet of exterior porches, five bedrooms including an expansive master suite on the first floor, five full bathrooms and two half-baths. Atop the detached three-car garage is a “living media area and cool bunk room,” noted Cameron, an upstate New York native who moved to the area 12 years ago.

Retired couple made their dream home a reality.





The uniquely shaped lot features an expansive front yard that slims in width from front to back amidst towering trees.

"This home is molded to the lot, that's what makes it special," said Cameron, 37, who prides himself not only on his craftsmanship but also the valued relationships he develops with his clients. "It's custom and will never be duplicated as is again because it's a true customized home for the needs of the client and the lot."

The striking architectural design, done by Court Atkins Architects of Bluffton, features a bold entranceway and gallery, which separates the two-story private quarters on one side and the one-story living space on the other.

"It's almost two houses in one," Joyce said, adding that she and her husband plan on returning to their new vacation home this month to spend the winter. Now that their two children have graduated from college, they also expect to be hosting family and friends throughout the year.

The interior showpiece of the home is downstairs in the grand great room, which is 21 feet high with cypress wood beams that stretch high and wide into the dining room and state-of-the-art kitchen. The open-floor plan throughout those rooms presents gorgeous views outside of the patio, in-ground swimming pool, lagoon and golf course.

"All of the main rooms have awesome views of the water...and privacy of the pool," Cameron said.

From ceiling to floor and from room to room, every eye-popping detail is custom-made.



Custom built: This Colleton River Plantation home was molded to the lot it is built on. The interior showpiece of the home is downstairs in the great room, which is 21 feet high with cypress wood beams that stretch high and wide into the dining room and state-of-the-art kitchen.

"This house is something that started off as definitely a custom project and grew into a more custom project," Cameron said. Intricate molding, trims and wainscot paneling, among other features, prove his point.

"Everything is custom-ordered for this job," said Arlene Williams, principal designer for Palmetto Cabinet Studio in Bluffton, who supervised the design, ordering and installation of all cabinetry provided by Brenttown Fine Custom Cabinetry Inc. in Indiana. Her imprint can be found in the kitchen, pantry, office, master bathroom, guest baths, powder room, wet bar and elsewhere. The cabinetry features beaded inset styling and a painted glazed finish to add more "visual depth and an extra layer of interest."

Williams also enlisted the Charlotte office of Atlanta-based Francois & Co. to craft a cast range hood with special framing for the kitchen stove.

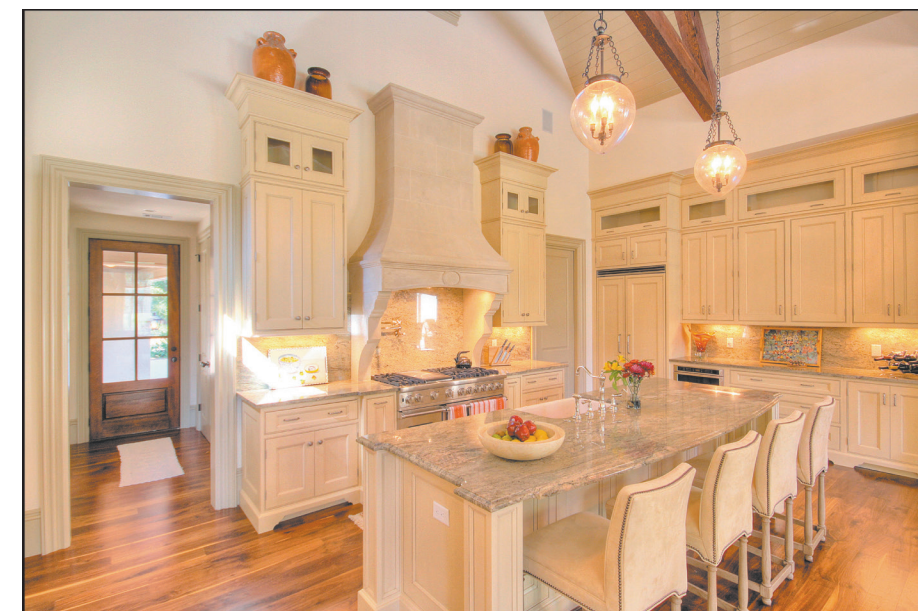
"Not all homes are this grand," Williams said.

Granite imported from India, Brazil and Italy graces the kitchen counters, bathrooms, gallery and other room surfaces. Grayco of Bluffton provided millwork for the window and door casings and crown moldings.

"It was like 'wow', the 'wow' factor," Joyce said upon entering her elegant new home for the first time early this summer. "This was the dream we conceived of 12 years ago...I was in awe looking around."

The homeowners' journey began about 20 months ago when a Colleton River Club acquaintance introduced them to Cameron, whose company is one of the preferred builders at the plantation, where he has lived with his family for six years and whose own home – that he built, of course – won a recent "Best Overall Million Dollar Home" LightHouse award by the local Home Builders Association. Cameron spends many of his work days within the gated 1,500-acre golf community building three to six homes annually among his larger new-construction portfolio.

One of the homes he constructed there, a French country design, initially caught the attention of the couple. Over the next four months, the homeowners, Cameron, Court Atkins Architects, interior designer and decorator Christina Scharf of the Court Atkins team, and Williams shaped the client's dream into a \$1.3 million showcase of Lowcountry craftsmanship on a \$200,000 lot. **M**



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