

REPRINTED FROM FALL 2010 Charleston STYLE & DESIGN

With help from a team of experts, a couple builds a plantation-style home that's totally up to date

Old South Goes MODERN

By M.S. Lawrence | Photography by Chris Smith, Chris and Cami Photography

Jay Sifly and Barbara Tribble talk and chuckle together, sharing the kind of easy give-and-take in their conversation that's almost mother-and-son-like in its flow.

It's no wonder: some of the special touches Sifly added to Tribble and her husband Frank's custom Kiawah Island home are the kind that only a doting son might take the time to do.

"I did everything from clearing the lot to setting the barometer on their clock the night before an important event," jokes Sifly, a builder and owner of Sifly Homes, Inc., which specializes in high-end residential projects.

Who else but a son would painstakingly add inserts to an antique china cabinet to make room for the couple's extensive collection of sterling silver? Or design a closet to accommodate the owner's love of shoes?

"Jay had lots of suggestions, refining the details to work for us," says Tribble.

Sifly, who has been building homes and turning dream plans into reality since 1993, says he "...just executed it all. My job was

to translate and interpret the Tribbles' and architect Samuel Furr's plan. The homeowners knew exactly what they wanted—I just had to plan it on a micro level and pull it off.

"It's just another day of work," he says modestly, with a smile.

Without a doubt, the attention to details is what makes this house sing.

It started with the lot: The owners were insistent about not taking out any old trees, which made it harder on the process, says Sifly, but contributed to much of the Old South feel of the setting.

Designed in the style of a turn-of-the-century plantation house, the home has all the welcome and charm of what's best about the South.

"Gracious hosts that they are, the Tribbles are aware of the power of architecture to make their guests feel comfortable," says architect Furr. "From the clearly delineated guest parking area, to the generous front door, to the bright and open layout of the house—these architectural components are subconsciously understood by visitors. The Tribbles carefully considered them all







in the design of this home.”

Lead-coated copper roofing, a brick foundation and wraparound porches, including a large screened-in family room with fireplace—are all classic elements borrowed from historic Lowcountry plantations.

A luxuriously wide foyer seems ready-made for “receiving” guests in gracious plantation style; just off it, the elegant library is the perfect spot to usher them into, perhaps for a cup of tea or drop of sherry. Dark stained oak floors and custom mahogany doors, here and throughout the house, and double French doors, which open onto the wraparound porch, immediately evoke the old South.

The 3,900-square-foot house is “an honest, simple house done well,” says Sifly.

Designer Carolyn Griffith of Carolyn Griffith Designs has expertly mixed the Tribbles’ personal collection of art and pieces acquired during their travels—including Barbara’s signature affinity for blue and white—freshening up and adding modern spark to traditional Southern style. Heavy silk curtains are modern in color; a cheeky wide stripe perks up dining room chairs; bold paisley makes a statement in the office; blue and white toile brightens the living room.

“It’s Charleston mixed with British Colonial island influences,” says Tribble, who has strategically displayed her impressive collection of local artists including John Carroll Doyle, Mary Whyte, Mark Kelvin Horton, Jill Hooper and Wes Fraser. A series of sketches by Alfred Hutton

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enchantingly climbs along the stairway.

“Barbara and Frank knew where they wanted the furniture—and even the artwork—before the house was built,” recalls Sifly. “That made it easy to get the light right, to get a lot of the details right.”

Coffered ceilings, custom fireplace mantels and paneling, transom windows, shiplap ceilings, handsome molding and elegant hardware lend an historic Lowcountry vibe. “It fits on the site as if had been here 200 years, yet it houses modern conveniences and special sensibilities,” says Furr. “Using traditional materials, as well as traditional detailing, is so important in creating a house that will stand the test of time.”

The kitchen is timeless yet clean and modern, with white custom cabinetry, subway tiles, marble countertops and a coal-burning fireplace. It could be transported from a Georgetown or Edisto plantation.

“I tweaked the design of the island so it could be made from one piece of marble instead of two, since the Tribbles preferred the look of just one piece,” says Sifly.

In the guest room downstairs, as well as in several other rooms in the house, Griffith and Tribble sought the subtle opulence of a high-gloss finish on the ceilings. “It was pretty difficult to achieve,” says Sifly. “But we worked and worked until we got it right.”

Upstairs, Sifly fine-tuned closet and storage spaces in the master bedroom. “Jay put the closet





together, laid it out,” notes Tribble. The builder’s input also led to the addition of an upstairs laundry room, something Tribble says turned out to be a much more convenient choice.

Tribble credits Sifly and Furr with important landscaping suggestions and details, too. “Jay suggested that we would enjoy an enclosed terrace area where we could include plants that the deer can’t get to,” she explains. “It was also his idea to design the sidewalk to meander along through the grass for a more natural look.”

A formal garden is an important component in Lowcountry homes, says Furr, and was definitely on the Tribbles’ must-have list. With Sifly and Furr’s help, they were able to make it fit naturally into the Kiawah landscape, and yet also accommodate strict design guidelines for that part of the island. “It was important to transition this formal space into the surrounding wildness of their neighborhood in the Preserve section of Kiawah Island,” says Furr.

“We had a definite idea about what we wanted,” says

Tribble. “Sam and Jay picked up on it immediately. Jay’s attention to detail—to understanding what we wanted and then carrying it through—is a testament to why things went so smoothly.

“We wanted a comfortable, modern version of an old-South plantation,” she continues. “And we got it—we’re not going anywhere!” ➤

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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