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(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.



PHOTO: MICHAEL COSTA

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

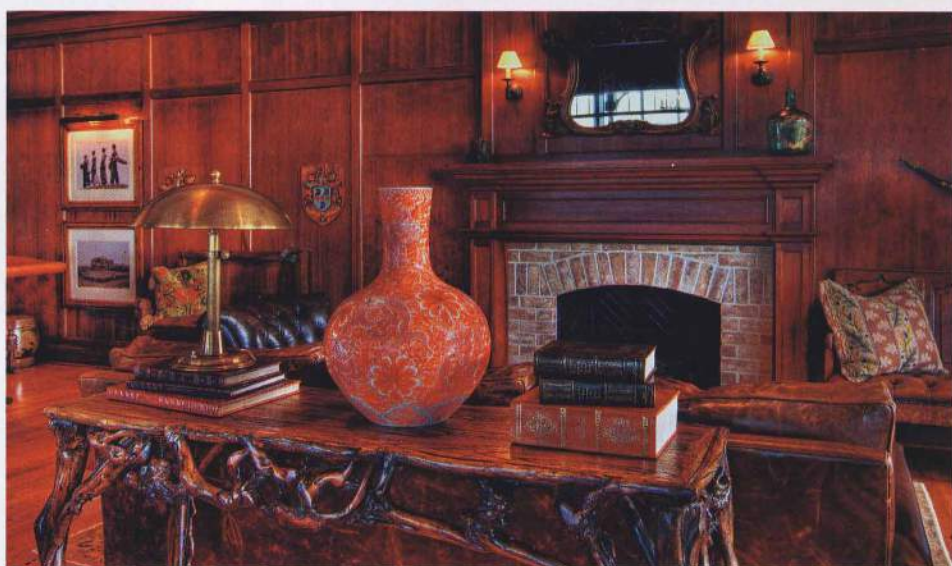
don't impact the experience of a private golf retreat." Steve's vision for the community was to have large lots averaging in size from two to four acres, all heavily wooded and with homes showcasing period-style, turn of the century architecture. Contributing to the eclectic but cohesive set of architecture 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.