



HIGH POND

By Randolph Stewart

This is the third article in our series showcasing Neo-Classical Architecture and its influence on Southern Plantations and homes throughout the South to this day. The essence of Neo-Classical Architecture is scale, proportion and balance. It began in the 1550s with Vignola's "Canons of the Five Orders of Architecture" which is considered one of the most influential architectural textbooks ever written, even though it had very few words, only notes and instructions accompanying the many illustrations.



High Pond is a magnificent home on eight pristine acres embracing the Colleton River. The architect, Dean Winesett of Hilton Head, closely followed the “Order,” using the Tuscan and Ionic appropriately on the two-story, three-bay porticoes. Even though it varies in size and roof design, High Pond is reminiscent of Drayton Hall on the Ashley River, considered one of the finest examples of Palladian Architecture in America and one of the few homes that survived both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars.

This Colleton River Plantation home is a true masterpiece, not only from its form, and interior detailing craftsmanship, but also from its siting, use of nature and landscaping. This is due to the vision of Robert Marvin (1920-2001), father of Southern landscape architecture. Marvin received numerous accolades and international recognition for his work in and philosophy of modern design within landscape architecture and High Pond is certainly one of his legacies.

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As one enters the property, the picturesque High Pond sets the stage for what is to come. Marvin purposely left this pastoral place in its natural state, with the exception of the freshwater fishing dock.

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The brick facade of High Pond, and two-story, three-bay portico with pedimented gable roof and oval window follows the Tuscan and Ionic Order. Here one can see the simplicity of the lawn and landscaping, with a peek of the river beyond.

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The expansive lawn finishes at water's edge with wide panoramic river views and Spring Island beyond. The covered pavilion deep water dock is ideal for relaxing and enjoying the water, with easy access to Port Royal Sound and the Atlantic Ocean. Consider the Native Americans, Spanish, British, Settlers and Federal Troops who have all passed by and become part of the history of this place.

Marvin's design philosophy was centered on the human-scale. He thought the site should be subordinate to human sensitivities and that every opportunity should be taken to put the individual in touch with the natural elements.

He is renowned for creating designs that celebrate the unique regionalism of the South Carolina Lowcountry and his work includes the South Carolina Governor's Mansion in Columbia. Author and fellow South Carolina resident Pat Conroy wrote, "No landscape on earth is as beautiful to me as the South Carolina lowcountry. I would not let God alter a single detail of this master design unless He bid out the job to Robert Marvin."

As one enters the High Pond property, Marvin's genius is revealed. A winding driveway where new vistas open at each turn and the pond revealed, is awe-inspiring in its tranquility and magnificence of surrounding ancient oaks. Another turn in the path, and the carriage house is discovered, maintained in natural surroundings. As one approaches the house, the landscaping becomes more organized and, since expansive views of the river were intentionally obstructed during the approach with just small

glimpses, there is a point where you become awed as the vastness of the river is unveiled.

My host was Johnny Ussery, whom I have known for close to 20 years. His enthusiasm and knowledge about this home was truly remarkable and it was a pleasure to listen to him and enjoy the many spaces. It is not often you find a Realtor with both 35 years of experience and insight and expertise of the design, detailing, interiors and landscaping of a home of this stature and significance.

The Master Builder, Dan Lawrence, executed the formal classical detail elements of Winesett's design, inspired by Asher Benjamin's (1773-1845) work, "American Builders Companion." This work is seen in almost all Southern Plantation-era homes and is still followed to this day.

This home was built in 1997, and is in immaculate condition. This is a testament to the quality of the material and craftsmanship that went into its construction. There are many rooms with careful details, but not enough space in this article to examine them all. Let's take a walk around to see a truly special home and enjoy some of the features.





(Top) The River Elevation with two-story portico and Tuscan and Ionic columns is elegant, yet simple. The balance and symmetry provides the Neo-Classical Greek Revival styling. Marvin designed the large un-landscaped lawn that allows for long, unobstructed views to the water's edge

(Middle) The spacious Entry Hall welcomes visitors with its monumental staircase and pair of carved ball and claw Chippendale chairs. The dado raised panel walls below the dado rails and above the skirt board is typical of the antebellum period and is completed with masterful scenic panoramic wall murals after Zuber & Cie, a French woodblock paper manufacturer founded in 1797. Fine examples of the company's wall murals are found in Europe, as well as mansions in both the North and the South, and in The White House.

(Bottom) The large Salon, with multiple gathering areas, features neutral fabrics and a palatial carpet with faux finished walls. Notice how the large windows with transoms allow light to flood into the room and provide an unobstructed, 180-degree view across the lawn to the Colleton River.



(Above) The richly wood paneled Library and Billiard Room features one of the home's six fireplaces with Adam-style mantel, a Persian Rug and a rare refitted beer dispenser.



(Above) The elegant Dining Room continues the paneled dado walls, with Georgian casing and crown moldings, a fireplace with Adam Brothers mantel, corniced windows with full drapes, a lovely Venetian mirror, richly finished, random width pine floors, a crystal chandelier with shades and bobeches candle wax catchers, a fine Persian rug and a beautiful bowfront inlaid Sheraton sideboard. Note the wine cooler on the side.

For more information or a personal tour of High Pond, contact Johnny Ussery at johnny@usserygroup.com.

Thanks to Wayne Moore, Back River Photography. waynecmoore.com • email: wcmoore@mac.com