

A PLACE IN THE SUN

CHARLESTON'S BEST COLLABORATE ON A LUXURY HOME
ON THE ISLAND OF ST. KITTS

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Every so often in architecture, you will find a *pièce de résistance*, a confluence of skills, styles and visions made possible by the coordination of true experts. Such was the case with the second home of a Houston-based family. Constructed by Charleston-based Bennett Hofford Construction, the house is located on the idyllic island of St. Kitts.

Colonized in the mid-1600s by an alternating procession of French and English settlers, the history-steeped island transitioned to a tourist destination only a decade ago. Its relative youthfulness, along with a low crime rate and educated locals, helped increase the interest of developers initially enticed by its untouched beauty.

One of the most enthusiastic investors to date has been Kiawah Island's famous founding

father, Buddy Darby, whose burgeoning luxury community, Christophe Harbour, won the affection of this Houston couple, who fell in love with the region during a 2007 visit.

Once their desires were matched with a compelling bid from Darby's go-to construction company, Bennett Hofford, the plans for the ultimate family escape on Sandy Bank Bay (where the couple's two college-aged kids could also come to vacation) were set in motion.

"We had a wonderful experience working with this family. They couldn't have been better clients. They were delightful, accommodating and helpful, which is always great for us," says Hank Hofford, co-owner of Bennett Hofford Construction.

To keep the quality of construction top-notch, the resourceful team at Bennett



In the tropics, the line between indoors and outdoors is blurred. Here, an enormous bank of mahogany doors fold open to reveal the coral stone-clad loggia and infinity pool. Ceiling fans make the most of Caribbean breezes.

Left: Charleston's Fox Home Solutions installed the home's entertainment, data and surveillance systems.



Hofford brought in a number of Charleston subcontractors—masons, carpenters, trim specialists (interior and exterior)—who worked with and trained local craftspeople in the advanced building techniques required for a home of this level.

The Bennett Hofford team also looked to the expertise of Chris Findlay of Mount Pleasant-based Source Consulting LLC, whose company sourced and shipped building materials to St. Kitts from multiple locations around the world. Findlay sourced key materials, such as coral stone (from the Dominican Republic), hurricane-grade mahogany windows and doors (from Guatemala) and Wallaba roof shingles (from Guyana).

Yet the most important Holy City import was, without a doubt, Herlong & Associates. The homeowners were impressed by the company's full-service capabilities, which include interior design services. All it took was a personal tour of Herlong's most impressive Charleston residences to clinch the deal.

Herlong's team did not take its entrée into St. Kitts lightly. They exhaustively researched the island's lifestyle, then worked closely with Christophe Harbour's design review board to ensure that every project adhered to complex community

Opposite: A one-room-deep corridor connects the house's two volumes and provides a sight line to pristine Sandy Bank Bay. **This page (from top):** A convivial bar area off the loggia is the perfect place for a late-afternoon drink. Shimmering glass tiles and an eye-catching glass countertop fit the tropical setting; a poolside cabana provides a spot for the family to dine outdoors throughout the year.



The kitchen's curved banquette was custom designed by Layne Nelson of Herlong & Associates to catch the eye and cradle a round breakfast table. The tailored-to-a-"T" cooking space features glass tiles, pendant lights and a semicircular transom window framed in dark wood. White countertops are cut from easy-to-clean quartz (Whitehall by Cambria). Cabinet hardware by Foxworth Decorative Hardware of Mount Pleasant.



Opposite: Multiple dining zones make the most of the spacious entertaining area.

This page (from top): A colorful upstairs den is flanked by French doors, which open to a charming top-level veranda; an upstairs wet bar offers stunning views of Christophe Harbour's breathtaking terrain.

guidelines. That meant building the home without obstructing the neighbors' views to the beach. The effort required extensive excavation and a complex foundation that conceals the family's 20,000-gallon water treatment cistern, generator and mechanical systems.

Surrounded by lush tropical plants, the sprawling stucco and coral stone homestead makes an artful display of pleasing geometric shapes, matched only by stunning views to Sandy Bank Bay. Upon approaching the home, one immediately notices the channel-like foyer, a one-room-deep entry that serves as the connecting point of the home's two main areas and extends all the way to the back pool deck in a single, uninterrupted sight line.

In a community where outdoor space takes center stage, the home's poolside pleasures do not disappoint. An Aqua Blue saline infinity pool (designed in Charleston, but assembled on site) is further enhanced by a high-tech TV system (by Charleston's Fox Home Solutions) that ensures the family will never miss a favorite sporting event. There's also an outdoor "office" that allows the gentleman of the house to work while soaking up the rays.

"In the Caribbean, people are really happy. I like to express that with the architecture by adding graphic elements that break things up and by having fun with the design," firm principal Steve Herlong explains of the exterior. "People see a circle or curve where it's unexpected, and it makes them smile."

Modern yet cozy interiors



Above: The foyer sets the stage for the home's high-end décor, offering the ideal drop-off zone for guests. A pretty scalloped console is complemented by a pair of alabaster lamps and chic upholstered stools. **Right:** Curved lounges allow guests to luxuriate in a few inches of cool water on hot days.

feature plaster wall treatments, wood floors from Charleston One Source and endless slabs of beautifully striated coral stone sourced from the Dominican Republic. These large stones help unify the open living and dining space, which spills out into a lovely loggia via a 21-foot expanse of stacked sliding doors and drop-down mosquito screens.

Hofford's favorite room in the home, the bright and breezy kitchen, features custom cabinetry provided by Signature Kitchens & Baths of Charleston. Shipped to St. Kitts in pieces, the components were carefully reassembled on site. The room's crowning conversation piece is an unusual curved island, which features a breakfast banquette on one side and glass-flecked

countertops on the other. On the backsplash beyond, fish scale-inspired tiles add luster to the room.

Herlong's interiors team, led by Layne Nelson, worked closely with the lady of the house to achieve an island-appropriate look that's a world away from her house in Houston. The team praises her great taste and her willingness to pay homage to the architecture as conceived by Herlong and his project architect, Rodd Heinlen. They say their first priority was the view, which "captures the light and nature."

Decorating selections were made almost exclusively stateside, in Charleston and Houston, and through major showrooms in Atlanta and New York. Eco-conscious upholstery





Opposite: The master bedroom is a dynamic mix of vibrant persimmon and cool blue. Custom silk bedding bears a panel of Fortuny-inspired silk. Bedside lamps and natural-fiber rugs complement dark walnut floors provided by Charleston One Source. **Above:** The master bath is awash in coral stone, while an accent wall displays rows upon rows of tiny, stacked pebbles. A door leads to the family's favorite indulgence: an outdoor shower.

from Vanguard and Lee Industries abound, and fabrics from brands like Manuel Canovas and Schumacher & Co. take their color cues from the island's bold sunsets and crystalline waters.

The color story is perhaps best told in the home's five spacious bedrooms. The bead-board-adorned guest bedroom echoes the blue of the bay, while the tangerine-tinged master suite boasts custom curtains in an exotic print that references fiery evening skies. The stone-clad master bath features an outdoor shower. Hidden behind a thick hedge of native vegetation, it provides privacy and the uncanny sensation of being in a rain forest.

Amenities like these are topped only by the entertainment options: a basement game room (equipped with Ping-Pong and foosball tables) and an outdoor bocce court where the family passes entire afternoons. All told, it's exactly the property they wanted—a place where they can frequently host family and friends.

"Many experts worked together on this home, but we all had one goal in mind," Hofford explains. "Our objective was to create a haven that perfectly captures the Christophe Harbour lifestyle." For a family seeking a peaceful respite, this Caribbean retreat feels just like home, if not better! ➤

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