



Runway

Google earth

Imagery Date: 1/14/2014 29°42'48.36" N 107°56'29.52" W Elev: 646 ft View Alt: 2557 ft

1999

Preface

In 2007, my wife and I were living on Lake McQueeney near Seguin, TX. At the time, our oldest girl was a toddler and my wife was expecting our second girl by the following spring.

After much discussion, we decided we needed a bigger house and more property so I could have more space. We also wanted to reduce the danger of having children next to open water. So we began our search for land on which to build a house.

Since I work in Seguin we wanted our house to be close enough for an easy commute to work. However, most of our family outings were in New Braunfels, so we didn't want to be too far away from there either. We weren't looking to be farmers but wanted enough land to have a few cows, maybe a horse or two and a good view with a breeze.

The house was finished in December 2008 and was exactly how we wanted it. Our small family grew to six daughters, turning a big house into a small one.

Planning

As luck would have it, my uncle is a retired homebuilder from Dallas, TX, specifically the Highland Park and Preston Hollow areas. His name is Robert Rhoads, and over the past 35 years, he built some of the most magnificent homes in these areas you could find, ranging in price from 1 to 5 million dollars. Fortunately for us, he was willing and able to oversee the construction of our house from start to finish, and over the course of the nearly 18 months it took to build the house, he flew in from Dallas monthly to check on the progress of our home. I am grateful for his oversight and direction.

Our contracted builder was Kevin Butschek of Shandera Custom Homes in New Braunfels, TX. Kevin is a local builder who came to us highly recommended from our friends around Lake McQueeney. After looking at other houses he had built and impressed by his friendly and professional demeanor, we chose Kevin to construct our home.

The architect we used was a gentleman out of Dallas who worked with and designed houses for my uncle for many years. His name was Jeffery Bowers (now deceased), and after a short visit, he drew the exact house we wanted from just the minimal descriptions we gave him. His experience was quite apparent in his ability to instantly make adjustments to the plans yet make it flow together properly.

The house is a classic Southern Colonial home, modeled after 18th century Colonial American homes from that period. The Classical-Georgian style has long been favored in the South, with a penchant for classical proportions and symmetry. It has approximately 4850 square feet of air-conditioned living space, a covered back porch and a two-car garage.

Notes About the House

The Foundation

After completing a soil study to 30 feet by a firm from San Antonio, it was determined the soil content in this area is unstable and has high amounts of clay. This obviated the need for a pier and beam house. The foundation of this house has seventy piers drilled twenty-four feet deep with “bells” at the bottom to resist any upward movement of the soil.

If you research other houses in the area, you will find that most houses built on this type of soil have cracked walls and foundations from settling and soil movement. This house was built to last a hundred years on this soil with little or no movement.

In the crawl space under the house, the ground has been graded so that it is slightly tapered to one corner where there is an emergency water pump. The reason for this is that in the unlikely event a broken water pipe, the water would flow to the low corner to be pumped out, relieving the crawl space of moisture.

Bricks / Masonry

Most brick houses built today use what is commonly called wire-cut bricks. Another, elegant but more costly brick is called a wood-mould brick. The bricks are easily differentiated by the sharp corners found on the wire-cut bricks, versus the wood-mould bricks that have more of a hand-made look. The wood-mould bricks on this house are of a colonial style size and color and were shipped in from Virginia exclusively for this house.

The stone on the front porch and lining the front walk are Pennsylvania bluestone. The difficult thing about installing this type of stone is they are often of different thickness, so getting them even and looking right takes an experienced hand. We took great care ensuring this was done properly.

Air Conditioning

When dealing with the amount of cubic-footage in this house, as well as the many windows and the fact that 100-plus degree days are not uncommon in this area, properly air-conditioning this house was of paramount importance.

When standard air-conditioning load applications were used, this house was determined to need a total of 9 tons of air-conditioning, split between three units: downstairs, upstairs and master bedroom. However, my uncle insisted that with his experience he believed the house should have a total of 12 tons, utilizing variable speed units.

I cannot tell you how thankful I am that I took his advice. After enduring some of the hottest summers and listening to many of my friends tell me how their air-conditioners could not “keep up”, the record-hot days have been hardly noticeable in this house.

A few other details about the air-conditioning system I think are worth mentioning:

There is no flexible ducting anywhere in the house. Flex ducting loses its shape over time, and pinches airways so all ducts use fiber-board (hard-ducting), including the return ducts.

Nearly every room in the house has a return air vent of some kind. This is necessary to keep the house quiet when the A/C comes on, and equalizes the temperature of the house, eliminating “hot spots”. Also, many of these returns are located close to the floor, further facilitating proper heating and cooling.

Most of the downstairs registers are located in the floors and by windows. Many of them are hidden under built-ins, which not only help keep the house cool, but also give the house a more traditional Southern look and feel.

Woodwork

The woodwork in the house is exceptional. We varied the types of woods used throughout the house to make it more architecturally pleasing and interesting to visitors. We used mahogany, oak, cherry, maple and alder throughout the house.

The crown moulding is also specifically constructed to be classic yet differentiated from other houses. It is a wide double-crown colonial with a concave upper piece. We tried three different looks before settling on this one.

You will also see the baseboards are tall with PM5 trim on the top with shoe moulds on the bottom.

The floors are hand-scraped oak, giving the look of wear, yet staying within the architectural boundaries of the house.

Appliances

Refrigerator – Sub-Zero 48” with wood covers on doors
Range/Oven – DCS 48” propane range with doublewide griddle
Dishwasher – 4 DCS dishwasher drawer-style units
Warming Oven – DCS 30” warming drawer
Microwave – GE Monogram Speedcook Oven/Microwave
Ice Maker – Hoshizaki brand that makes clear ice cubes
Wine Cooler – Avanti

Foyer/Entrance

When approaching the house you'll notice the Classical columns and raised front porch, keeping the look of the era. The front door is solid mahogany. Inside you will see the decorative tile and high ceiling which give the feeling of spaciousness. The sweeping staircase directs your eyes up the stairs to the double French doors of the upstairs living room.

The Library

All the cabinetry was hand made from mahogany by a local craftsman from New Braunfels. The intricate hand-worked detail is evident throughout the room, from the desk area to the crown moulding. The lighting hidden within the bookshelves accentuate the formal luxury throughout the room.

Formal Dining Room

This room is sized perfectly for get-togethers and holiday feasts. When touring the house, take a moment to notice the accent lighting directly above the ends of the dining room table, focusing on the food to be served. Between the dining room and the kitchen is the butlery which also houses the wine cooler.

Living Room

The large windows of the living room allow guests to take in the scenery of the outside area yet stay warm and comfortable by the stone fireplace. The mantel is solid mahogany as well as the decorative shelving surrounding the fireplace.

Kitchen

The kitchen utilizes an open floor plan with a large island in the center. The island houses the ice machine and a slide-out dual trashcan container. An air-conditioning register under the island offsets any warm air generated by the ice machine.

The pantry is a large walk-in style with ample shelves and lighting. Close by is the pool bathroom with an exterior door.

Master Bedroom and Bath

The master bedroom is elegantly designed with a sitting area in front of a spacious bay window overlooking the expansive view outside. As you enter the bathroom you'll notice the large one-piece 14' mirror crowned by elegant light fixtures and surrounded by marble tile. The house was designed to have his and her potties, however the first potty and cabinetry can be removed for a bathtub built in its place. We had the contractor run hot water there to facilitate this arrangement should someone desire it.

The large walk-in closet is spacious and practical with built-in shelving throughout. You'll see that all the closets throughout the house use fluorescent lighting to better see your wardrobe.

The marble tile throughout the bathroom and the shower has subtle accents for distinction and elegance. The shower is large and well lit with a misted glass door as opposed to clear, so you are not on display when showering.

Exercise Room

We built the house with a dedicated exercise room. The floor is a rubber compound and there is one wall with mirrors to facilitate your workout. Dual air-conditioning registers keep you cool during your workout, and a television is mounted to the wall for entertainment.

Laundry Room

The laundry room is well lit, with fluorescent lamps as well as under cabinet lighting. The granite counters give an elegant look, and the cabinetry is consciously made to be as practical as possible. There is a utility sink and an extra refrigerator here as well.

Upstairs Living Area/Game Room

French doors open into the large upstairs living room. This room was made for comfort with thick carpeting, built-in cabinetry for family photos and large drawers for children's toys. The large windows allow ample lighting for a feeling of spaciousness and a spectacular view.

Upstairs Bedrooms

The four upstairs bedrooms are identical in size, each with large windows making the rooms bright and airy. Each room also has its own full bathroom with shower, bath and walk-in closet. Every bathroom is decorated differently with tile, paint and wood stain, giving each a unique personality.

Back Porch

The back porch covers the expanse of the center section of the house and is made for entertaining as well as relaxing and taking in the view of the surrounding countryside. The house was set at a 15-degree angle off true north to take advantage of the predominant southern breeze yet still have adequate shade for the back porch in the summertime.

Windows

All the windows in the house are JELD-WEN, with aluminum exteriors for long-life and wood interiors to keep with the classic design. The windows open both from the top and the bottom, and hinge inward to facilitate cleaning.

The 4" plantation-style composite blinds are molded in the exact color of the window trim paint so there will never be a need to repaint the blinds.

Hot Water System

In a house of this size, hot water from the water heater can take a while to reach a given faucet. To alleviate this delay the house has an "open-center" hot water system. The hot water is continuously circulated in a loop throughout the house back to the water heater. This results in near-instant hot water for baths and showers.

Other Items Worth Mentioning:

- Hand-troweled texture on walls and ceilings in living areas
- Upstairs washer and dryer
- Video monitoring system for upstairs bedrooms
- Sound system throughout the downstairs, back porch and garage
- Central vacuum system
- Alarm system
- Solid interior doors throughout the house
- Granite countertops throughout the house
- Ceiling fans in all rooms
- Commercial 6-inch gutters
- French drain around foundation
- Water softener
- Sixteen lightning rods on roof
- Multi-station sprinkler system

Workshop and Guest House

In about 2011 we decided it was time for a live-in nanny/housekeeper so we decided to build a dual purpose building with a workshop/garage on the bottom and an apartment-style house upstairs. They are both 800 square feet and have served us well.

Pool

In 2016 I contracted with Fossil Creek Pools to build a swimming pool. The difficult thing about pools in our area is the substantial soil movement which can cause a cracked pool.

The pool we built has a double-steel wire cage with overlapped sides. Another potential pitfall is cracking in the deck. To overcome this, we poured a concrete slab for the deck, then overlaid it with brick pavers. Now if the deck concrete cracks you won't see it.

The pool and hot tub have a built-in cleaning system that uses in-floor jets that force all debris to a main drain in the lowest point of the pool, reducing the need for constant cleaning.

Hangar

Obviously I'm a pilot and I like airplanes, however I know most people don't like them as much as I do. The hangar 30'x 50' and can easily be re-purposed as a stable for horses, storage for hay or just a barn for tractors and equipment.