

# MODERN ENGLISH

*Thoughtful details make  
this new English Tudor-style home  
in the heart of Spring Hill  
look like it's always been there.*

TEXT BY **Michelle Matthews** PHOTOS BY **Stephen Savage**





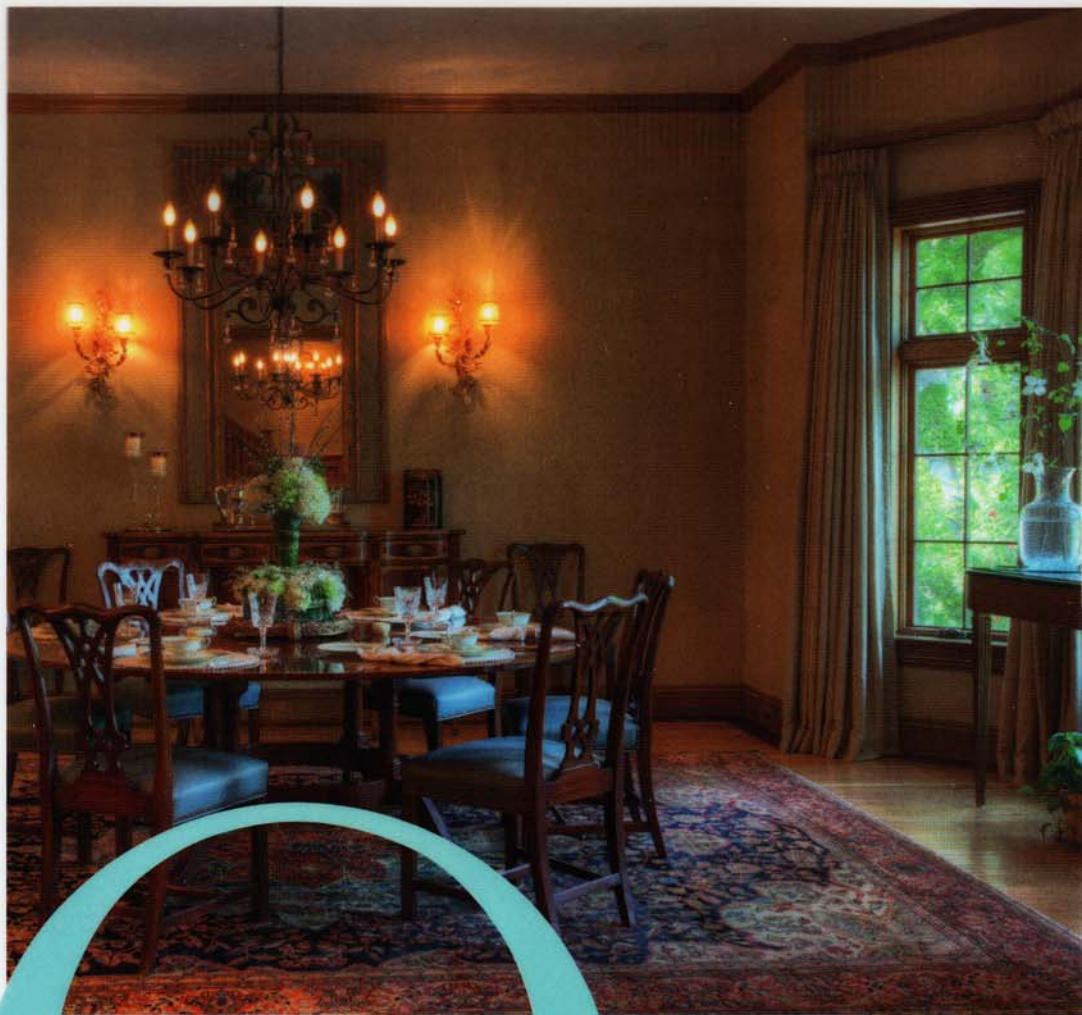
**{ BY DESIGN }**

Architect Craig Roberts (left) painstakingly researched English Tudor style before designing this home.



{ GRAND ENTRANCE }

To design the arched front doors, the architect was inspired by a photo the homeowner showed him of the entrance to an English castle. Just off the foyer, the dining room is awash in light from the bay window.



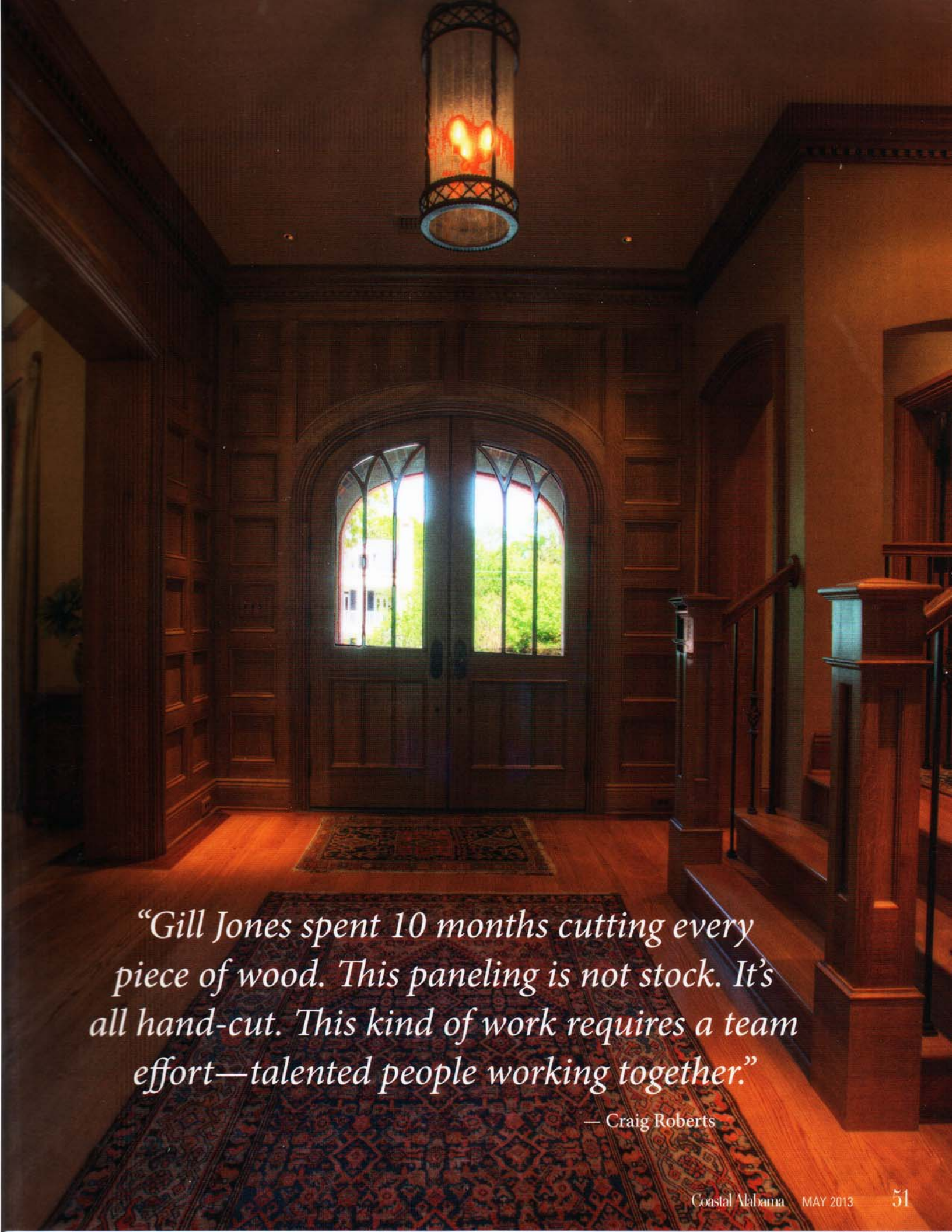
Of all the houses he has designed over the years, Mobile architect Craig Roberts says the English Tudor in Spring Hill is the most detailed. He researched the architectural style that has long been a favorite of the homeowner—her grandparents lived in a wonderful old Tudor home in Ashland Place—and paid attention to every minute detail to give the couple exactly what they wanted. “The thing that sticks with people is all the details,” the homeowner says. “I love everything he did.”

In fact, it’s the second home Roberts has designed for the couple. The first one, right around the corner from their present home nestled deep in Spring Hill, was a French Colonial/Greek Revival raised cottage, where they lived while raising their four children. “He designed the house for our growing family, and we stayed there for 20 years,” the homeowner says. “When we bought this piece of property, we wanted him to do it again. Craig is enormously talented. He aims to please his clients and always does just that!”

The new home “was supposed to be an ‘empty nester,’ she says, but as plans progressed and grandchildren were born (five in three years), they ended up turning walk-in attic space into a combination playroom/bedroom. “There’s not an inch of space in this house that I don’t use,” the homeowner says.

When he first started designing the home in 2007, Roberts looked at Old English homes and had to decide, he says, which of the decorative appointments fit in best with this home’s





*“Gill Jones spent 10 months cutting every piece of wood. This paneling is not stock. It’s all hand-cut. This kind of work requires a team effort—talented people working together.”*

— Craig Roberts









**{ MOUNTAIN MEMORIES }**

The family room, with its oak beams and massive limestone fireplace, is reminiscent of the Eseeola Lodge in Linville, N.C. At right, oak paneling lines the cozy study.



proportions. “I played with patterns to get the gables to match” on the front of the house and over the garage. The homeowner couldn’t be happier with the result. “He took every picture I gave him, every idea, and honored it,” she says.

Construction began in 2008, and the home, which was built by Randy Broadway, was finished in 2010. The homeowner also raves about Broadway’s work. “Randy is a diplomatic communicator and leader,” she says. “He works alongside employees diligently until each construction detail meets his high standards. We also appreciated his humble nature and quick wit.”

And while there’s about 4,000 square feet of living space inside, “The scale qualifies as an English Tudor cottage,” says Roberts. “It’s not pretending to be a ‘Downton Abbey’ grand house. It has the charm of a cottage.”

Adding to its authenticity, the home is built of antique brick from North Carolina using “interesting old-timey English brick treatments,” Roberts says. The brick is topped with stucco in a post-and-beam style that he says is typically Old English. “We also used copper downspouts and leader boxes, as well as limestone appointments surrounding the door and over the bay window.” The chimney is topped with a chimney pot. “When designing ‘new old’ architecture, the trick is that the architect has to know where to get this stuff!” Roberts jokes.

The windows look old but are new and energy-efficient. “In an authentic English home, the metal would be painted black,” says Roberts, who had the frames painted brown and the sashes black to achieve the same effect.

Roberts designed the arched front door from a photograph Janet showed him of the entrance to an English castle. Two niches flank the doorway, giving a hint of the little nooks and crannies that await inside.

In the English Tudor style, the foyer and library have paneled-oak walls, and the staircase features a delicate iron railing. All of the doors in the home are custom made of solid oak. The floors are oak framed in darker walnut. Roberts credits master carpenter Gill Jones for carrying out his design. “He spent 10 months cutting every piece of wood,” he says. “This paneling is not stock. It’s all hand-cut. This kind of work requires a team







**{ WELL PREPARED }**

The kitchen, which opens to the living room, is thoroughly modern but blends perfectly with the home's decor. The homeowners wanted an outside room, seen through two of the brick arches on the back of the house.



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As the entryway leads into the living room, visitors pass through the spot that's one of the architect's favorites in the whole house, an alcove with a paneled ceiling that comes to a point at a striking light fixture from Steven Handelman Studios in Santa Barbara, Calif.

The living room has a beamed ceiling reminiscent of one of the homeowner's favorite places, the century-old Eseeola Lodge in Linville, N.C., at the base of Grandfather Mountain. Her mother has a house across from the lodge. Double doors topped with a traditional English cross lead onto the covered porch. Another alcove leads to the master suite, and at a large, spacious kitchen overlooks the living room and another space that was meant to be a breakfast room but is used as a sitting room.

It was important for the kitchen to blend in with the rest of the home's architecture

because it's so open to the family room. "It's a big gathering place, and we have a big family," the homeowner says. "We wanted it to be pretty but also functional." She credits Grace Rockett of Southern Bath and Kitchen, who "worked so hard to make everything right" with the cabinet design and hardware.

In another little alcove between the kitchen and dining room, two built-in china cabinets face one another. In one corner of the kitchen, a recessed area holds a Welsh dresser made in North Carolina for that very spot. Interior designer Mary Jo Matranga of Feather Your Nest Interiors helped choose colors throughout the house. "She is especially gifted with paint color and fabric selections, as well as furniture placement," the homeowner says. "Her ideas are clever and creative and make so much sense!"

The living room leads out onto a covered porch surrounded by five large brick arches. Skylights let plenty of light shine on the space. Bricks are arranged in a herringbone pattern above the sofa that repeats the pattern on the chimney out front. Roberts chose bluestone for the floor of the porch and the patio that extends beyond it. "Bluestone was popular for sidewalks and courtyards in Mobile and New Orleans," Roberts explains. "It's a very traditional surface, and you can see the blue color in it."

Upstairs, the couple's grown children and five grandchildren have plenty of comfortable space for overnight visits. The playroom is lined with bunks for sleepy little visitors. For their grandmother, whose nest is never really empty, "home" now reflects her love for a North Carolina resort and nostalgia for her grandparents' lovely English Tudor home in Mobile. 🌿

