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DIVINE SPIRITS

FOR THOSE WHO APPROACH THE ALTAR AT BURNT CHURCH DISTILLERY,
SALVATION IS NEVER MORE THAN A GLASS AWAY.

THERE ARE CONVERSATIONS THAT ONLY HAPPEN AROUND A FIRE.

For brothers **Billy and Sean Watterson**, it was a campfire somewhere in the vast verdant wilds of the Midwest, and the conversation turned to what would come next for the serial entrepreneurs. Perhaps fueled by the spirits in their glass, that conversation would find the pair embarking on a journey to open a distillery. Before the logs had burned down to their embers, that expedition was underway.

Next stop: Bluffton, South Carolina, and their first inkling that maybe the lofty heights of their ambition were more than they'd anticipated. "When we first visited the construction site and saw these great steel beams . . . the architectural drawings don't really prepare you for that," Billy said. "That was our first, 'Oh my God. What have we done?' moment."

Those steel beams now rise over a chic, metropolitan-meets-historical cocktail lounge set in the nave of Burnt Church Distillery. For a town that just a few decades ago was graced with adjectives such as sleepy, bucolic, and rustic, it seems impossible that such a structure exists. So, you can forgive the brothers for possibly having a moment of panic seeing it rise up.

But even as awe-inspiring as this \$13 million building is, it represents just the chief cornerstone of an entire gospel built around the Burnt Church brand.





THE BUILDING IS BEAUTIFUL,
BUT THE ATMOSPHERE IS

EVERYTHING



“The building is beautiful, but the atmosphere is everything,” Billy said.

And that atmosphere celebrates Bluffton, past and present. That means taking the unusual step of hiring historian Melanie Marks, who dug deep into personal letters and official records to help tell Bluffton’s story in a way it hadn’t been before. It also means acknowledging some of Bluffton’s darker days, neatly symbolized by the piece of Secession Oak in the narthex.

“The tree split in two on Freedom Day, and the irony of that was not lost on me,” Billy said. “I had to get a piece of that, and people had to know the story. . . . For better or worse,

it’s such an important part of our history. It needs to be talked about.”

But it’s more than just history. Whether it’s ensuring that the distillery will fund the Black community through the Lowcountry Legacy Fund or simply giving blue-collar Bluffton a place to grab a sophisticated cocktail, Burnt Church Distillery has already written its own chapter in the story of this once sleepy town.

“The truth is, everything here is what Bluffton was and is. We just painted it like an artist painting what they saw,” Billy said. “It’s not that we did anything great or amazing; it’s just y’all. This is what we experienced—the greatness and the potential of this place. And that’s what we created.” ❧



TASTE

THE SPIRIT

EACH OF BURNT CHURCH DISTILLERY'S BRANDS REPRESENTS
A COMPLEX BLEND OF GRAINS, FLORALS, AND HISTORY.

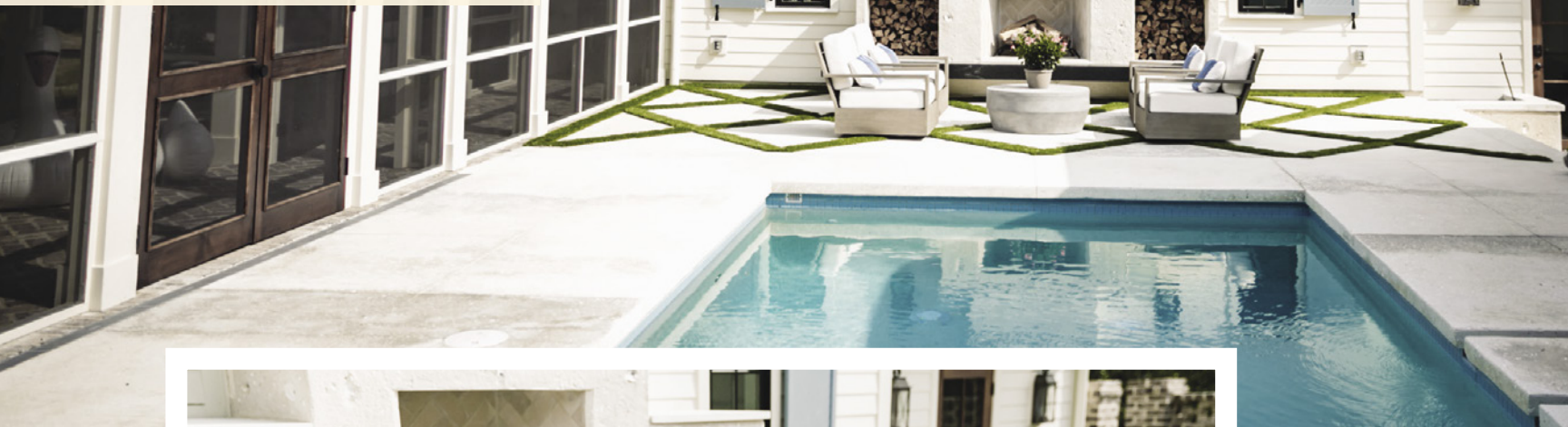
VINSON ROAD

NEIGHBORHOOD: Moreland Village

ARCHITECT: Pearce Scott Architects

BUILDER: Shoreline Construction

DESIGN NOTES: A contemporary take on traditional tabby, this outdoor fireplace and surrounding space were designed to connect the main residence and carriage house on an alley-loaded homesite. The shoulders of the fireplace are concrete forms designed to match the stucco in the tabby. The hearth is absolute black granite that's been honed for a dramatic look.



PHOTOS: *Provided by
Shoreline Construction*



THE TABBY PROCESS

- After the chimney is wrapped in an ice/water shield, the builder applied metal lathe and a scratch coat of mortar.
- Then, a very heavy one-and-a-half-inch coat of Ivory Buff mortar mix is added.
- Next, they placed large oyster shells and #3 size shells in the mortar mix.
- Those shells are then covered with another layer of Ivory Buff mortar.
- When it is almost dry (same day), the entire chimney is lightly pressure washed to expose the shells but leave them encased in mortar.
- Finally, the builder cut level and even expansion joints with a saw to give it a half-inch “grout line.”

OLD LANDING ROAD

NEIGHBORHOOD: Moreland

ARCHITECT: Pearce Scott Architects

BUILDER: Luxury Simplified

DESIGN NOTES: The home was largely inspired by the historic Seven Oaks house in Old Town Bluffton. The rear porch was designed for fun and entertainment within a classic Southern porch. It's large enough for comfortable living and dining and flows out to the small pool at the porch level.





PHOTOS: *Ellis Creek Photography*

GAMELAND ROAD

NEIGHBORHOOD: River Road

ARCHITECT: Pearce Scott Architects

BUILDER: On-Site Development

DESIGN NOTES: The contemporary design of the black-and-white carriage house plays backdrop for this picture-perfect firepit. She is small, but the modern touches are mighty.

