



the timeless cottage

A SEASONED NORTHERN MICHIGAN DESIGN-AND-BUILD TEAM
CREATES A NEW HOME THAT FITS PERFECTLY INTO
A VENERABLE OLD RESORT COMMUNITY.

TEXT BY ELIZABETH EDWARDS // PHOTOS BY JASON HULET

The owners of this gracious home had been bringing their family for summer vacations to Harbor Springs for years, eventually purchasing a condominium in town where they were happy. Happy, that is, until friends told them about one of the last undeveloped lots in nearby Roaring Brook, one of Harbor Springs' oldest resort communities. The opportunity to summer in this enclave of Victorian cottages that line Little Traverse Bay seemed almost unimaginably idyllic. It took a bit, but once the idea took root, "We pulled the trigger—bought the land and then moved quickly," says the homeowner.

The couple knew from the get-go that they wanted their home to fit into the community. With that in mind, they hired Nick White, of NJ White Associates in Petoskey. Nick is renowned for designs that preserve the local Victorian vernacular on the exterior while ensuring the home is tailored to modern family living on the interior. "When designing a new lakefront home in a community of traditional, Victorian or Shingle Style homes, we are always torn between the exterior look and the interior floor plan," Nick says. "The old-fashioned floor plan of a separate entryway, parlor, living room and dining room doesn't fit with today's resort living style." >



The solution, Nick says, is to give careful thought to the exterior. “We try to give each of our homes a timeless feel with the use of traditional siding and trim—shingle, clapboard, tasteful brackets and columns,” he says. “We utilize several different window patterns to avoid the cookie-cutter look of a suburban home. Our goal is to have a home that appears to have adapted itself over the years. We speak the local language when it comes to exterior material selection; we don’t want a home that sticks out. To aid in this timelessness, stonework should not be too tailored and landscaping should not be too structured. The home should fit the neighborhood like an old shoe. When the home has aged several years, it will be hard to tell in what era it was actually built.”

In this Roaring Brook rendition of the Nick White philosophy, those elements are articulated in vintage green shake on the upper story where a small round window contrasts with larger, mullioned rectangle windows. White clapboard on the ground level is complemented by handsome (though not ostentatiously ornate) columns planted in stone pedestals that pair with a stone foundation fabricated by local craftsman Giovanni Longo, who also happens to be a third-generation Italian stonemason—and consequently well-versed in creating timeless-looking stonework.

A generous porch graces the waterside of the home. “We are a summer resort area and warm weather living in Northern Michigan requires a porch,” Nick says. “The porch should have a high ceiling to avoid darkening the interior. The porch should be large enough to allow a group to sit and converse or eat without the ‘birds on a wire’ effect. No porch is ever too big.”

After seeing the work of Scott Kennard of Wentworth Builders in a friend’s home, the homeowners hired him. “We were blown away when we saw his work,” the homeowner says. “Scott is very precise and detail-oriented.”

From the scraped-and-fumed white oak floors and Giovanni Longo-built stone fireplace to the shiplap walls, coffered ceilings and custom cabinetry, the home’s interior exudes classic cottage style. A distressed walnut wet bar with antique glass doors, custom-built by Harbor Springs Cabinet Shop, is a particular standout.

Thanks to its open floor plan, the home feels relaxed and spacious. “Vacations are a time for togetherness and the concept of a great room (living/dining/kitchen) gives that togetherness,” Nick explains. “The dining table is not only for eating but for laptops, iPads, puzzles and projects. The living area is not the traditional ‘still life’ where pretty things are off-limits to the grandkids; it’s for living and gathering.” ➤





Harbor Springs-based interior designer Carrie Blanck of Tres Belle Interior Design worked with the homeowners to accentuate that casual, life-on-the-lake feeling. “The inspiration for the home was the view, and bringing the colors outdoors inside,” she says. “We took our colors from a gorgeous hand-knotted wool rug in the living room and then threaded the shades throughout the home.” Those blues shine in a cluster of hand-blown glass pendant lights over the dining room table and floor-to-ceiling glass tiles in the soaking tub nook.

Right down to the outdoor shower that his wife wanted (but he wasn’t too sure about initially!), the homeowner can’t say enough about his new home and the team who designed and built it. “There’s just a super-solid feel to the house,” he says. “It feels as though it’s been there for a while—very established.” 🏡

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 resources**

ARCHITECT
 The Timeless Cottage, page 32
 White and Liebler, Nick White
 and Nick Liebler, nickwhite.com

BUILDER
 Wentworth Builders, Scott Kennard,
 wentworthbuilders.com

INTERIOR DESIGN
 Tres Belle Interior Design, Carrie Blanck,
 carrie@tresbelleinteriors.com

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
 Common Ground
 Landscapes, Maureen Parker,
 mo@commongroundlandscapes.com

SMART HOME
 American Home Technology,
 ahtech.com