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# Soulful renovation

BY R.J. WEICK





"I take my cues from clients and the dreams that they come to me with, but I always try to ground it in northern Michigan," said Kenneth Richmond, AIA, founder and partner at Ken Richmond, Architect in Traverse City, Michigan. "Sometimes it is more subtle than others, sometimes it really looks like an old Glen Lake cottage, and sometimes it is remnants of a farm-stead or barn—there are those more modern things I do—but they always have a foot right on the ground of where they belong."

Ken Richmond, Architect is a full-service architectural firm providing architectural and planning services throughout the Traverse City and greater northern Michigan region. While the firm has worked on a number of project types since its establishment in 1999—urban planning, civic, and commercial—Ken Richmond, Architect specializes in single-family, custom residential work and historic restoration and renovation.

"It is a big part of what we do," Richmond said. "Sometimes it is literally a historic cottage that we are very sensitively modifying or sometimes it is the remnants of an old cottage or a house that we are really changing a lot, but keeping the soul."

When the clients of the Glen Lake White House project approached Richmond to renovate their existing cottage on Glen Lake in Michigan, maintaining the character and essence of the structure was an integral part of their program. The waterfront green-and-white cottage, while historic in its architectural integrity, also had a history with the homeowners prior to ownership: the cottage was used for wedding day preparations and

then later purchased by the couple.

"They were really respectful of the old building. It was always modest and I think one of the things that attracted me to the [White House] project was the fact they liked the modesty of it. They didn't want to change that even though they needed to add rooms and a kitchen," Richmond said. "It had a really nice old-time, Glen Lake feel to it. It was really classic in that sense, and we needed to change a lot of it, but we didn't want to ruin that feeling."

Presented with a more functionally motivated program, the renovation tasked the design team with accommodating additional bedrooms, a master bedroom and bathroom, improved layout for the kitchen, better use of the living room, and enhancing access and views of the water. Richmond noted to reconcile the need for more space to accommodate an extended family for another 100 years with the existing layout, the team started by identifying and focusing on the character of the cottage.

"The basic layout of the cottage was already there and we did not change it func-





tionally. You still enter from the street and go past or through the kitchen, the living room is still in the center, and there is a sunroom beyond that with views of the lake. There are still bedrooms on the left-hand wing and bedrooms on the right-hand wing," Richmond said. "We really respected the basic bones of the cottage, because it was good. We loved it."

Additional bedrooms were intentionally designed small like the existing rooms to integrate the new and old seamlessly; and a master suite and office were added to the upstairs on one end of the cottage, while the children's bunkroom and playroom were placed at the opposite end. Richmond noted the idea for separating the suite from the bunkroom had less to do with the structure of the old cottage, but rather an interest in being intentional in creating a memorable aspect of the home in line with its original character.

"We work for that here. The funny little attic stairway at one end that wraps up around the fireplace and leads up to a bunkroom that has a dormer looking out over the







lake is a pretty cool thing and people remember it," Richmond said. "The idea that we split the upstairs into two also gives privacy for the master suite, privacy for the kids' hang out room, and makes the profile of the house not as big."

The renovation also called for shifting the garage and by maintaining the same layout and old window, the team was able to recreate the unique elevation as its historical counterpart. Its white and green exterior is complemented by large stonework on the chimneys, and a series of paned windows enriches the Glen Lake-facing façade.

On the interior, rich woodwork creates a welcoming, warm environment as knotted cedar and pine stretch across floor, climb walls, and adorn ceilings to reach vaulted heights in the Englenook room. Existing cedar and pine was restored and reused, and blend seamlessly with additional new wood that was carefully distressed and finished to match. The effect is akin to the interior of wooden-wrapped jewel box.

"The wood interior glows from the outside," Richmond said. "I think we also reg-





ister somewhere in our past, at least up here, old and comfortable cottage spaces like that. It is what we wanted to do, so the design work was already done in a sense that the palette was set both inside and outside. The trick was to continue it further in all directions to accommodate the new uses.”

To the casual onlooker, the renovated Glen Lake cottage appears as if it has always been there, a familiar outline standing amid trees and shoreline. The preservation of that inherent aspect, of the cottage’s character was an intentional one, and the end result reflects who the owners are and how they live as a family, according to Richmond.

“It is a very warm place; it is very welcoming. It has that really nice, old, comfortable, familiar feel to it. We like to say that the design should not try too hard, which is not easy to do. We work pretty hard around here to make that kind of comfortable familiarity happen,” Richmond said.

“[Design] is really problem-solving on many levels and it is creating spaces and places that reflect the people who are going to live there. We like to get to know a family, the way they live—their histories and their past—and even wrestle with their future. It is really important to the work we do here and it is what gets me up in the morning,” Richmond added.



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