



up on whaleback

A HOME SET ON ONE OF LEELANAU PENINSULA'S MOST BELOVED BLUFFS
FUSES A VINTAGE NARRATIVE WITH CLEAN, INDUSTRIAL STYLE.

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The Leelanau Peninsula bluff known as Whaleback rises 300 feet above Lake Michigan, serving up an awe-inspiring view of North Manitou Island in the foreground with its sibling island South Manitou trailing behind. The islands are separated from the Leelanau Peninsula by a dramatic channel known as the Manitou Passage.

The Leelanau Conservancy owns and preserves a large chunk of Whaleback (and has outfitted it with a trail and viewing platform), but there are a handful of private lots on the preserve's southern edge that share the view. When Leland Realtor Perry Penttiuk drove his clients, Cindy and Bruce Hagen, up to one of the lots, the couple couldn't believe their eyes. "It was pretty magical," Cindy recalls. "It took our breath away. We couldn't even believe that there was a lot available on Lake Michigan that we'd lived long enough to buy."

Buy they did—and then they adjusted their life to their purchase of a lifetime, selling their home in Columbus, Ohio, and downsizing to a condo there. When it came time to hire an architect and a builder, the decision was as easy as purchasing the property had been, thanks to friends from Columbus who invited them to dinner at their new home near Northport. The Hagens were blown away by the beauty of the home. Their friends' home was designed by architect Ken Richmond of Richmond Architects. "I don't want to research this," Cindy told her friends. "I just want your architect."

In turn, Richmond recommended Bob Biggs of Biggs Construction as the contractor. After interviewing him, the Hagens knew they had rounded out their team.

In thinking about her new home, Cindy had stuffed a folder with pictures of homes and various home elements that she liked. She brought the folder to her first meeting with Richmond, but never ended up showing it to him. "I felt like he got me right away," she says. Her short want-list included black window casings and whitewashed wood floors upstairs. But her biggest request: She wanted the home to look like it had been there a while (please, nothing shiny). Cindy also asked that Richmond design a special place to hang her mother's circa 1941 black Raleigh bike that she'd ridden when she'd toured post-war England and Italy.

Richmond couldn't have been happier to accommodate. The architect has based his career on designing homes that fit into rather than overpower a site, and that echo the region's vernacular. In the case of designing the home for this site, all he had to do for inspiration was look out at all that water and the weathered, shingled fishing shanties of nearby Fishtown, whose style informed many homesteads in Leelanau County. ➤



That inspiration is seen in the low, wood-shingled (exterior walls and the roof) two-car garage that leads to a breezeway that connects in an L-shape to the home. A barn door attached to the garage can be pulled over to seal off the breezeway—upping the rustic factor and also sealing off the breezeway from inclement weather. An outdoor fireplace set on the other open side of the breezeway effectively turns the area into an outdoor room. (Learn more about outdoor fire elements in *Collections*, page 10.)

From the breezeway, the home rises to two levels—shingle on the upper level and white board and batten below, all topped with a metal roof. The interior follows this harmonious mix of rustic-industrial materials and seems to float over the water-island landscape view like a vintage ship. The foyer is clad in crisp, white shiplap, a sentiment that is carried into the great room with simple white batten paneling. The floors and kitchen cabinets are white oak and the perimeter countertops are limestone. A separate dining-bar, outfitted with a zinc countertop, is framed by twin white-oak beams braced to a black-steel header beam. The beam, along with another across the room and black doors and window casings, nail the home's vintage industrial feel.

The home is punctuated with custom features, from an old-fashioned-style sleeping porch to a sophisticated wine cellar. Paintbox-colored tile in an upstairs bathroom feels Art Deco—and fun. Six crisp white bedroom bunks, accessed by black utility handrails mounted on the side like a ship ladder, parlay the home's subtle nautical feel. In the master bedroom, black lacquered barn doors pull over the doorways and frame a lovely painting of trees in fall light by artist Betsy DeFusco. That 1941 Raleigh? It hangs proudly above the stairwell.

Finally, back in the kitchen, in an almost impossibly perfect move, the range hood is mounted unobtrusively in front of a window that frames the forest beyond.

It takes a dream team to build a home worthy of a site like Whaleback, and the Hagens agree—they found one in Richmond Architects and Biggs Construction. “Bob is such a pro and a great partner with Ken,” Cindy says, adding that they balance each other out perfectly. “Bob is practical, and Ken is creative. So, if there was something Bruce and I really wanted, they worked together to make it happen.” 🏡

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