

A little piece of HEAVEN

Couple builds luxurious, sprawling
new home, keeps integrity of
historic Hemingway cottage onsite

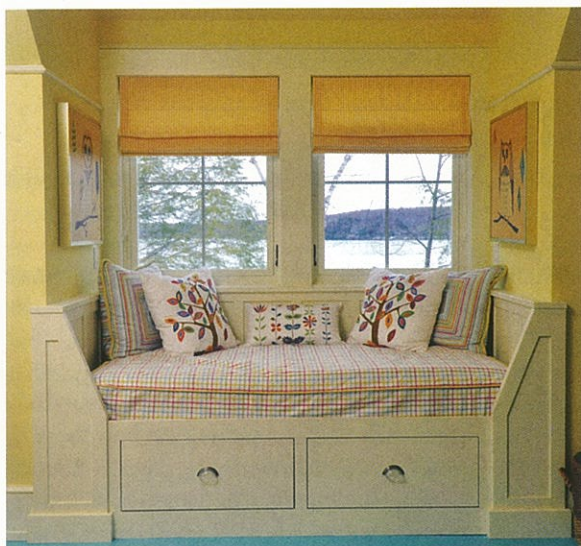




The spacious 100-foot-long porch offers unrivaled views of Walloon Lake.



A work space off the master bedroom offers a view of the trees.



A cozy built-in bed with drawers and a view of the lake is for young visitors in the upstairs area.



A custom dining room table, just off the kitchen, lines a wall of windows with a view of the lake and the porch.

By Glen Young

Steve and Joanne Virostek knew they had a good story to tell. They knew, too, their story would be better, however, with the right collaborators, so the longtime Walloon Lake visitors set about rewriting a piece of local history. In 2013, the Maryland couple purchased the waterfront lot that houses Grace Cottage. One time described as “a little piece of heaven with four walls and a roof,” the modest cottage on the hill, built in 1919, once belonged to Ernest Hemingway’s mother, Grace. Windermere, where a young Hemingway spent his summers, sits directly across the lake.

Joanne’s love affair with Walloon Lake extends back more than a half century, written in family history. Her mother, originally from East Lansing, in fact still lives just down the lake from the couple.

Steve is a relative newcomer with a mere 35 years exploring the lake. Steve says he spied the property while waterskiing, adding, “We had some ideas of what we wanted” as plans developed to write their own history in the historic spot. He also said, “We wanted a local architect and a local builder.”

A little more than a year later, the home was finished, thanks to collaboration between architect Ken Richmond, Matt Stuck and Stuck Family

Construction, landscape architect Maureen Parker of Common Grounds Landscaping and many others. Both Steve and Joanne appreciate the resulting blend of old with new.

“The key to a good design is that it’s comfortable for two people,” Steve said, pointing to the rambling but strategic layout of the new cottage.

Traverse City-based Richmond said the home’s dark shingles and white trim “picks up on Northern Michigan cottage vocabulary,” as, “It was important to respect the old Hemingway house,” but also important the new home “fit in here and look like it has been here for a long time.”



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Inside, these classic design elements begin on the main floor, where the dual granite islands and hardwood floors help warm the large kitchen.

"Everybody always hangs out in the kitchen," Joanne laughs.

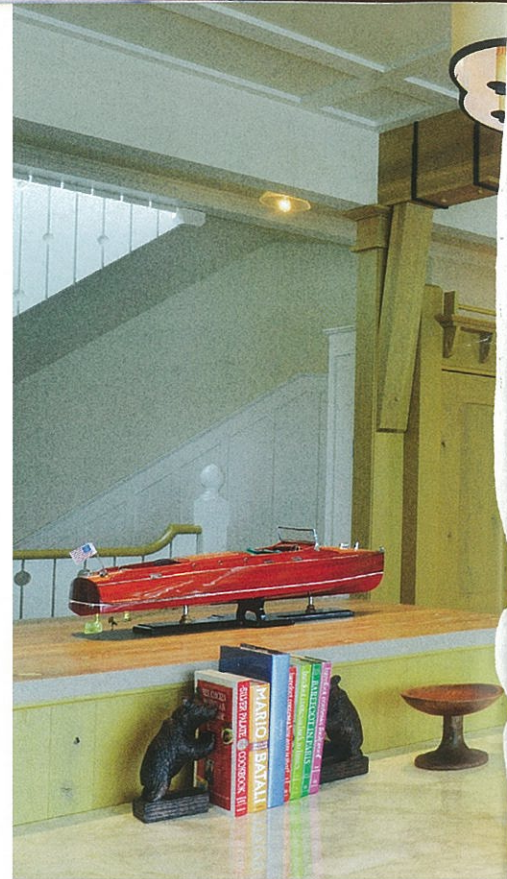
Beyond the kitchen, a large fieldstone fireplace in the family room provides a focal point while in the other direction, a coffee nook designed to accommodate only one chair offers privacy along with comfort, and of course, a view of the lake.

Upstairs there are seven bedrooms so the cottage is large enough for family or company, including the couple's two children and three grandchildren, though the rambling design still provides pockets of privacy. Steve said the arrangement means family or friends "can get together or get away" under the same roof.

"We wanted it to ramble a little bit," Richmond said of the floor plan, offering as an example the covered bridge on the second floor leading from the main house to a roomy apartment above the garage. He says that while the cottage sprawls, it "maintains the integrity of the old Hemingway house."

One notable bedroom, outfitted for Steve and Joanne's grandchildren, comes complete with a compact climbing wall. A second-floor laundry provides additional utility and ease when the house is full.

Another sweet spot for Steve is the "owner's box" balcony off the master bedroom, afford-



ing a full view from above of the family whiffle ball field in the yard below.

As impressive as these details are, the feature perhaps most appreciated is the massive front porch.

"The whole thing was designed around the porch," Steve said, pointing out how the 100-foot length provides a sitting area at one end as well as a dining area at the opposite end. Rich-



A second master bedroom on the ground floor features wrap-around windows.



The large custom kitchen features two island areas and stonework around the stove area.

mond says the success of the porch is “that it catches all those lakeside rooms” on both the main floor and the upper story. Builder Matt Stuck says one challenge his crew managed is the many radiuses of the rambling rooflines as well as the flared lower portion of the porch as it descends to the ground.

“You don’t typically see a porch that large,” Stuck said, explaining how a smaller porch or a smaller home typically requires fewer radiuses as well as less flare.

Stuck, who says he appreciates the opportunity for his young company to take on this signature project, also points to the intricate banister along the main indoor stairway as a focal point.

“You have to piece it together bit by bit,” he said of the “big rolling white oak” feature, winding from the kitchen area to the second floor. Stuck says overall, the result is “a legacy home” the family might enjoy for many years to come.

Other special spaces, both up and down, include a lower level wine room, a generous workshop off the garage and many other custom features inside and out. Landscape designer Parker says she also faced some challenges before construction could commence, noting the need for “extensive grading.” But she adds, “when we started peeling into the hill it was

all sand dune,” so Native American dune grass now stabilizes the slope between the Hemingway original and the new construction. Parker said the landscaping, mostly installed by Richard Hoffman of Petoskey, is subdued, though “we planted more trees for the next 100 years.” She said architect Richmond intended “the cottage tell the story itself.”

Everyone involved says the story is better through contributions from other local specialty contractors as well, including Napont Stone Masonry of Boyne City and Stillwater Woodworking of Petoskey. Napont’s handiwork is etched in the impressive stonework on the large fireplaces and elsewhere, while Stillwater’s signature is evident in the millwork throughout the cottage.

Relaxing in matching easy chairs near the large main floor fireplace, Steve concludes, “The good Lord did all the heavy lifting, and our job is not to screw it up.” Joanne is more direct. “Walloon is such a special place, and being up here means being with family,” she said.

Both Virosteks know they continue to tell a good story, the combination of both history and opportunity working together as they now happily write new chapters from this classic location. **HL**



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