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COTTAGE INDUSTRY

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OVERLOOKING A PRIVATE HARBOR DOTTED WITH STATELY COTTAGES AND FAMILY-OWNED DOCKS, THE VICTORIAN LAKE HOUSE IS AS REFRESHING AND AMERICAN AS APPLE PIE. It's a far cry from the California desert climate and architecture where a media entrepreneur, his wife and three teenage sons are based. But, longing for a summer retreat, they returned to his family's roots in Harbor Springs, Michigan, where his siblings and their families also vacation, and where they were lucky to acquire one of the area's original grand homes. Here, residents live in charming historic houses, ride exclusively on bicycles and in horse-drawn carriages, and still dress for dinner.

The homeowners hired the builder, architect and interior designer in part because of the team's familiarity with the village and its lifestyle. In fact, Chicago-based designer Tom Stringer, of Tom Stringer Design Partners, who planned all of the home's interior design and interior architecture, also owns a home in the area.

Builders arrived mid-September and embarked on a complete restoration. But, the following January, just as the builders had pulled off the bead board, a heavy storm whipped in off the lake. Architect Nick White, AIA, of N.J. White Associates in Petoskey, Michigan, recalls standing

INTERIOR DESIGN	Tom Stringer, Tom Stringer Design Partners	
ARCHITECTURE	Nicholas White, AIA, N.J. White Associates	
HOME BUILDER	Jeffrey Ford, Evening Star Joinery, Inc.	
BEDROOMS 8	BATHROOMS 12	SQUARE FEET 11,000

STYLE SELECTION

This elegant slipper chair features refined details and romantic curves, which work well in transitional settings. *Maywood Lounge*, \$4,380; nancycorzine.com



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on the third floor that day. "The house swayed with the wind," he says. "The builder and I looked at each other and said, 'Let's get everyone out and get an engineer in to analyze this!'"

The structure was deemed no longer sound. So, after salvaging as many of the home's historic elements as possible, the top three levels were removed and built anew. Craftsmen replicated lost woodwork, cut-glass windows and delicate scrollwork. Stones for the main fireplace were numbered, photographed, removed and then put back together again. "New chimneys had to match the original Michigan granite," says builder Jeffrey Ford, owner and president of Harbor Springs-based Evening Star Joinery. "It was tricky, and we had to buy stone from local farmers and vendors, then split it and match the mortar joinery in color and style."





QUIET HOURS

Bird eggs from 1900s France embellish the uncomplicated master suite sitting room. The sofa upholstered in Holly Hunt Great Plains fabric and adorned with Samuel & Sons trim, was found at Monte Allen in Los Angeles. Sky blue drapes from Laura Lienhard's Mistral line frame the windows.



BLENDED FAMILY
Custom-stained white oak floors lend a casual feel to the main living areas. Mixing new, vintage, traditional and rustic elements makes the new cottage feel as though multiple generations have added their own accoutrement through the years.



SIMPLE WELCOME

Soft colors and pleasing shapes make the master suite entry inviting. The antique alabaster pendant light was acquired from Lief in Los Angeles; the circa 1800s French jardinières are from Therien & Co., also in LA.

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Merging new floor plans and modern technology—like in-floor heating and state-of-the-art HVAC systems—with the home's original zeitgeist and footprint is precisely the sort of challenge that Stringer adores. "The cottage appears visually uncluttered, but it's anything but simple," he says. "An old house tells you what it wants to be, not what it can be. Cottages invite and require the quirky: bedrooms under eaves, funky ceilings, planes and details. There is something adventurous about an old cottage, and this new one retains those kinds of elements."

Bead board and built-ins are ubiquitous, and there isn't a speck of drywall. Ceilings retain their original heights; televisions, electronics and sound systems are concealed; and switch plates are as diminutive as possible. "My first instinct at a cottage is to pick up a book, not a remote control,



GRAND CENTRAL

Originally located on the lowest level of the home, the kitchen is now a bustling hub on the main floor. The circa 1860 chandelier was discovered in Sentimento in New York. Walker Zanger mini brick glass tiles in Serenity bring a subtle sheen to the backsplash.



STYLE SELECTION

From designer Sandy Chapman, this traditional chandelier features a rusted-iron finish and wooden accents, making it a perfect complement to classic kitchens. *Chantilly Four-Light Chandelier*, \$630; circalighting.com

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and it's nice to have that stuff go away," says Stringer, who, with his design director Becky Yager, lavished the grand dame in classic English upholstery sprinkled with formal and rustic Gustavian, French, Italian and Swedish antiques scouted in Europe with the lady of the house. Refreshing ivory, soft blues and greens, and hints of yellow declare that happy days are here again.

The homeowners are thrilled with the floor plan's flow—especially how it works for the family's younger generations. The subterranean level, with its theater, billiard and ping-pong room, bunk and guest rooms, kitchen, patio and barbecue, and laundry facility, has become the place to be for the boys and their friends. And with their bedroom suites on the top level, the kids also get the respite they need. "They get privacy up there and can sleep undisturbed until noon," says the wife. "The whole family's happy! We love being here."






DEEP BREATHS

The restful master bedroom features a forged iron frame from Dessin Fournir in Chicago. A circa 1800 Swedish armchair upholstered in Victoria Hagen's Halex in Dusk echoes the blue of an antique Gustavian trunk.



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The patriarch, who hasn't missed a single summer in Harbor Springs since he was 18, is equally thrilled at sharing the lifestyle with his family, and he's happily anticipating doing the same with future generations. With so many relatives nearby, every summer is like a months-long family reunion.

The cottage's cheerful persona doesn't even hint at its dramatic rebirth. Except for a fresh coat of yellow paint, the "lady of the lake" appears simply to have aged with amazing grace—a goal that was absolutely nonnegotiable for the owners. "The masquerade," Stringer observes, "is complete." 

IN AND OUT

Streetside, a custom mahogany door by Evening Star Joinery leads to an underground tunnel that houses boating and sports equipment. Stairs above lead to the grand entrance.



DOCK SIDER

A Westport Island settee, cocktail table and high back chairs, and an umbrella by Santa Barbara Designs, dot the harborside lawn. Landscaping on the estate is by Harbor Springs-based Litzenberger Landscape, Ltd.