

By Suzanna Logan | Photography by Ryan Hainey, Courtesy of Deep River Partners

COASTAL COTTAGE *CONVERSION*

With a shared commitment to preservation architecture and a love for modern comforts, a couple transforms their family's tired, 1950s-era cabin into a fresh lakeside cottage.

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The homeowners traded their traditional blue siding (*inset*) for a fresh coat of creamy white paint, creating a seamless transition between the old cabin and new additions. The updated take on lake living includes Douglas fir timbers, black-framed Marvin windows and plenty of outdoor gathering areas. Great care was taken to match the added great room chimney with the existing one. To help the house feel settled into the property, the homeowners replenished the landscape immediately after construction. "We've planted about 30 trees since we moved back in," says Bill.



For years, homeowners Bill and Christine spent summers and weekends squeezing into their lake-side cottage with friends and family. At best, it was cozy; at worst, claustrophobic. Most of the time, the waterside dwelling landed somewhere in between. “The house felt crowded, especially on rainy days,” says Christine. The structure offered little in the way of modern comforts, with no central heating or cooling. “It was often cold and drafty,” adds Bill.

Craving more for themselves and their guests, the couple envisioned a fresh start for the outdated cabin. They wanted a place for large and lively gatherings — a house that kept views front and center and felt comfortable and inviting from the moment you stepped through the door. The couple shared this wish list with custom home design company Deep River Partners, along with one more request: the charm of the original cabin had to be integrated into the new design.

“Their overall goal with the renovation was to make the house feel like it had always been there in this form,” explains Deep River Partners architect Nicholas Mather. “Keeping the character of the property was essential.”

But before the team could move forward crafting their perfect getaway, there were several hurdles to clear. For starters, sections of the current house lacked a proper foundation. “It was just set up on blocks,” explains Nicholas. Over the years, a number of additions had left the structure feeling disjointed, inside and out. And, despite these add-ons, the cottage



“All of the different stones in the fireplace set the palette for the whole remodel,” explains interior designer Natalie Erickson. The quiet collection of cream, taupe and gray keeps the room’s views front and center. The walls are washed in Benjamin Moore’s “Balboa Mist.” It’s Bill’s favorite space in the new home. “It has these beautiful high ceilings, but still feels very cozy,” he says.





ABOVE More than double the size of the original 8-by-8-foot galley kitchen, the new space, with dual islands, is made for entertaining. The food prep island features a sink with a dishwasher, while the other includes a built-in ice maker and a beverage refrigerator for easy access. Amish-made red oak cabinetry with a whitewash finish is topped with "Blue Dunes" granite and "Crestola" quartz countertops. "We didn't do this bright white kitchen," explains the home's interior designer Natalie Erickson. "Instead, we went with a warmer neutral that feels inviting."

OPPOSITE With seating for 10, the unassuming dining room is open to the great room on one end, connected to the lake room via a large, cased opening and features sliding glass doors that open to a grill patio and rain garden on the other.



only offered two bedrooms and one and a half bathrooms, plus a bunk room in the loft, accessible via a precarious spiral staircase.

Despite its drawbacks, the cabin had plenty of perks. Located on the edge of Lake Michigan, it offered easy water access and postcard views. For

the couple, who grew up in the area, weekends at the lake “always felt like coming home,” shares Christine. Aside from the views and sentimental connection, building on the original footprint would allow them to preserve their close proximity to the water, rather than having to adhere to updated setback

requirements. Most importantly, despite its cramped layout and hodgepodge aesthetic, the nearly 80-year-old cabin had plenty of charm that begged to be preserved. Incorporating the existing log ceilings, timber beams, stone elements and iron accents would be an essential part of the renovation plan.



The process of transforming the house began by stripping away the additions. On the main floor, only the original kitchen, hearth room and lake room survived. New construction spaces on the main level included an entry and great room, dining room and primary suite. The open flow of the new floor plan ushered the interiors

into modern times, as did the addition of central heating and air conditioning and radiant-heated concrete floors. Upstairs, the loft bunk room was transformed into a full, second story with two guest bedrooms, a shared bathroom and a casual loft.

Nicholas shares that the vision for the new spaces was a “simple but

elegant design” built around structural timber-framed elements and an abundance of glass. Setting the tone from first glance, the grand entry and great room feature walls of glass and Douglas fir timbers extending from the front entry to the lakeside patio. “The timbers march in a pattern from east to west, drawing you through the house



and framing views of the lake,” Nicholas explains. But seeing the views wasn’t enough for the homeowners, they wanted to feel the connection to the outdoors. “We used three sets of glass walls in the great room, dining area and lake room that open up the house to the outdoors beautifully,” says Nicholas. “So, on summer days,



LEFT A deep blue vanity painted in Benjamin Moore’s “Sea Reflections” brings coastal charm to the guest bathroom, while the floor tile adds a fun pop of pattern. Gleaming chrome fixtures are balanced by the natural wood mirror.

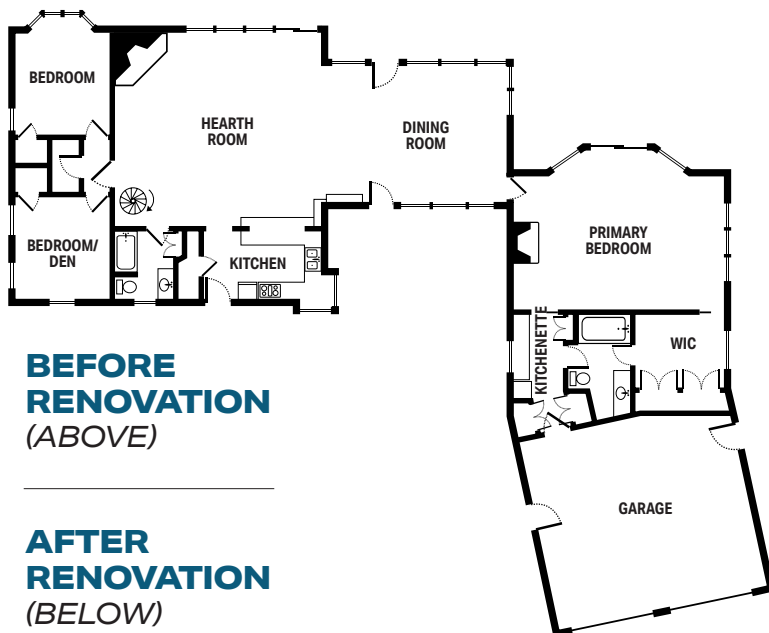
MIDDLE The primary bathroom’s walk-in shower is encased in ceramic tile with a textured glaze while pebble-tile flooring and a granite-topped shower bench continue the natural appeal.

RIGHT The redesign swapped the original spiral stairs for a full staircase with custom twig balusters.

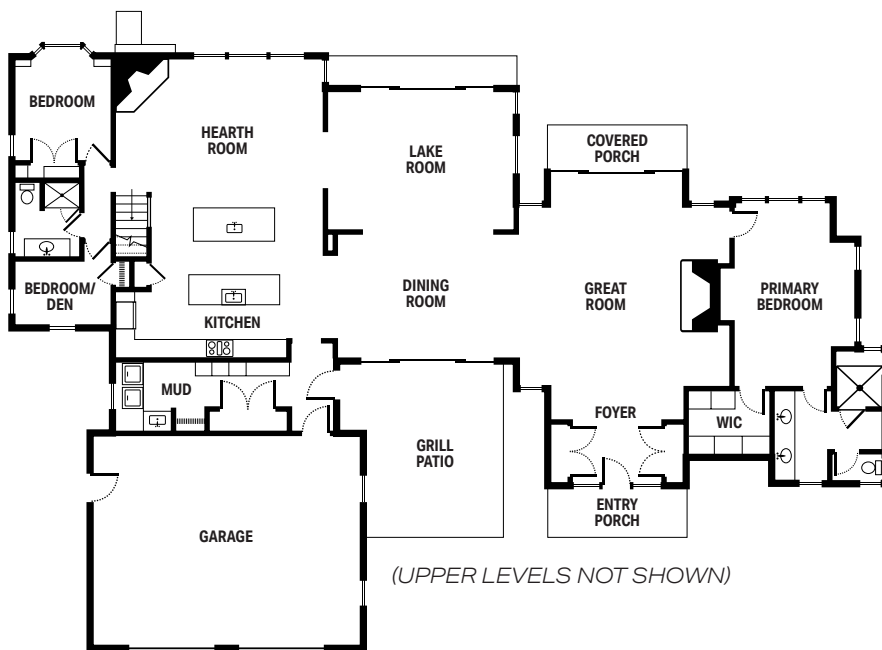


ABOVE The new lake room boasts vaulted ceilings, floor-to-ceiling glass that opens up to the lake and a welcoming conversation area. "We wanted to play off the water surroundings, so we incorporated blues and greens," says Natalie. The water-prone area had to be practical, too. "We did tile floors in the lake room and concrete floors in the great room," she adds. "Any room that is connected to the exterior has a hard surface for extra durability."

INSET Low ceilings and wood paneling made the original lake room feel drab.



AFTER RENOVATION
(BELOW)



you have lovely breezes coming through the whole house.”

Through intentional design, every new space includes a wink to the original cabin: the log ceiling and antique chandelier in the lake room, the knotty pine beams repurposed from the original bedrooms now centered above the dining table, the fireplace mantel made from a railway tie taken from the original foundation. Even the layout

reinforces the effect. “The house has the ability to hold a lot of people, but then there are these little moments and spaces where you can just step away and feel like you’re back in the older, smaller lake home,” Nick shares. “Overall, the cottage is 80 percent new, but there is so much character, history and nostalgic memories sprinkled throughout that it isn’t just a comfortable, serene place to gather — it’s really meaningful, too.”

HOME DETAILS

SQUARE FOOTAGE

2,057 *BEFORE*
3,700 *AFTER*

BEDROOMS
3

BATHS
2 *FULL*