

This *New* Old Lake House





by Barbara Karabas

Photography by Emily Winters
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For ten years, Mark and Patty Aschliman had been planning and pondering their next home. While their plush two-acre wooded lot with 125 feet of level frontage was perfection, the rambling and dated mid-century ranch that sat upon it wasn't comfortably suited for life with four adult children, plus extended family and friends.

After dismissing the concept of a major renovation, Mark and Patty sought a team to execute their vision for a new – yet seemingly old – lake house. “We looked at a lot of different builders, but we knew Doug Jorndt would be the guy,” recalls Mark Aschliman. “Jorndt/Fahey previously had done some remodeling work for us and we knew their work to be uniformly very, very good and Doug to be incredibly approachable and relatable.”

After a lengthy search and several glowing referrals, the Aschlimans secured Milwaukee-based architect Wade Weissmann, who brought on Emily Winters, principal designer for Peabody’s Interiors of suburban Brown Deer. Together with Jorndt, they set out to build a year-round retreat that was casual, crowd-friendly and from all exterior appearances, looked as though it had seen decades of sandy feet and lake air.

“We wanted a traditional home that looked from the outside like it had been there 80 years, but on the inside was substantial but not showy,” says Aschliman. “An inviting place where you aren’t afraid to sit down and set your beer on a table.” In other words, this home was to be lived in casually but lived in well.



Built with Purpose

With a mission to deliver new construction that appears timeless, ultra-welcoming and oozing with character, the design & construction trio collaborated with Mark and Patty every six weeks. As Weissmann's architectural plan evolved, many of the owners' must-have home elements were ticked off the list.

The team added ensuite baths to each of the four upstairs bedrooms for guest privacy and comfort, a mix of woodburning and gas fireplaces were sketched in to convey the warmest of welcomes, and an airy 550 square foot kitchen with a hub-of-the-home island and fabulous custom cabinet-laden, walk-in pantry. They roughed out dedicated his and hers spaces, including a masculine, museum-like office for history enthusiast Mark and a naturally lit sewing and craft room for Patty.

From a functional standpoint, Weissmann designed the first floor as an empty-nester home broken out to graciously flow between private and entertaining spaces, while the second level serves as a four-bedroom guest house with gaming and bunk rooms. From every vantage point, the Geneva Lake takes center stage.

"I specified ganging windows with transoms that parade around the front of the house to provide big expanses of view," says Weissmann. "All the windows are operable, so natural light and air flow through the house, including an incredible southern breeze through the four-season porch on the lake side."



After six months of design and reiterations, it was time to break ground in fall 2015 on the 9,500-square-foot, four-chimney home. “Wade is a super-detailed architect, so everything we needed to build the house was in the plan, making execution much more streamlined,” says Doug Jorndt of Jorndt/Fahey, LLC, whose local construction company, a partnership with brother, Bryan, and Dan Fahey, has been building exceptional custom homes within a five-mile radius of Lake Geneva for 20 years.

As the walls went up, even more new ideas arose. Subscribing to the motto of “no wasted space,” Patty uncovered nooks for built-in display cases and crannies for closets. Her most impressive alteration came when she reimagined what was designated a balcony to be a breezy bunk room with a lofted book nook accessed only by a hidden Nancy Drew-inspired staircase. The design and construction teams pivoted, incorporating each adjustment beautifully to the Aschliman’s delight.

“I really enjoyed having Patty and Mark continually involved in the design development,” comments Weissmann. “That is where you get all the character you might find in an old house and the quirky details that make the home so interesting, personal and truly theirs.”

While the typical Lake Geneva house takes between eight to 12 months to build, Jorndt says the Aschliman home took 18 months because of its many impressive custom finishes – from a loft & barrel ceiling and a 21 foot arch that splits the kitchen and family room with stealthy built-in storage, to a one-of-a-kind limestone and salvaged wood mantel crafted by Lake Geneva-based Lakeside Fireplace, and finished with a stone inglenook and built-in facing benches. “It takes time to make such intricate details great,” Weissman notes, “but quality workmanship gracefully ‘ages’ the home, adding that warmth, charm, and detail associated with older houses.”





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Architect







Touched by History

Mastering some of the finer details, Winters worked alongside Patty to curate unusual finds and family collectibles that would visually spin the Aschliman's story. Some historic, some symbolic, these inspired touches adorn every room.

In the second story rec room, for example, carefully folded family heirloom quilts are artfully displayed in custom cabinetry, paying homage to Mark's Amish and Mennonite roots. A select number of quilts bedeck the bunk and guest beds. "Patty and I went room by room and assigned a quilt to every bed, giving each a unique personality," says Winters.

The family's love of Lake Geneva and service to the Water Safety Patrol

envelops them whenever they ascend the main stairs, as the landing walls are wrapped in their framed nautical flag collection.

A playful tribute to the couple's travels abroad, a French tête-à-tête sits at the base of these stairs and serves as a literal conversation piece. "Definitely one of my exciting finds," says Winters, who discovered the frame while antiquing and had the piece completely rebuilt.

A true historical haven, Mark's office displays centuries of memorabilia, from a Packer-penned football and presidential signed portraits to a surgeon's kit from the Civil War, which speaks to its owner's 40 years as an orthopedic surgeon. A sentimental

chair from Mark's University of Chicago days pairs unassumingly with his old desk, and an elk chandelier speaks to his hunting pursuits.

Reminiscent of an old sewing table, a butcher block prep table with an inset yardstick saddles up to the kitchen island. Custom built by Heritage Beam & Board, the piece harkens to Patty's love of sewing and quilting.

With each element, the Aschlimans built history into their new haven, even down to the antique handwoven rugs that blanket the wood floors. "True works of art, these vegetable-died workhouse pieces last hundreds of years," notes Winters.

Called to the Lake

In March 2017, the Aschlimans moved in to their perfectly aged, handcrafted lake house and with true Midwestern values, they rolled out the welcome mat. It was perfect.

"The architectural design is fantastic," states Aschliman, "and the craftsmanship required to execute it had to be exceptional."

By design, this home draws people in, wraps them up and beckons them to stay a while. It was built for hot summer days spent at the pier and winters snuggling by one of many fires. It was destined to be the setting for family holidays and friendly gatherings large and small.

"When we talked about the end use for this home, it was evident Mark and Patty wanted it to keep family close, and this home would allow for that, providing a destination to enjoy each other," says Jorndt.

In essence, this house would be a gift for themselves, their children, and one day, their children's children.

"This is exactly how I would build my dream home from a construction standpoint," adds Jorndt. "Everything was painstakingly executed with the understanding that this home would be in their family for generations. It will never go out of style, and one day, when my kids' kids are my age, they will be able to drive by the Aschliman lake house and say that their great, great grandfather built that home and it will still be there, and still be beautiful."



