



M I C H I G A N
BLUE

MICHIGAN'S WATERFRONT LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

Treasure Island

In, around, and about Mackinac, from the classics to what's new

Benzie County bests: Have you been to Frankfort lately?
Fishing and hiking along the Au Sable | Three home tours
Cottage "design stars" | Wyandotte lowdown
Holland's Wizard of Oz | Explore Manistique
Sipping at a certified sustainable vineyard



SUNRISE, SUNSET

Empire new-build makes the most of spectacular views and a location on two lakes

By Khristi Zimmeth

Photography by Beth Singer

Both pages, clockwise from above: The cottage now has all the comfy amenities this family needs, plus lots of style — from the porch to the exterior, the entryway, and the dining room.



Nicole Withers of Jones-Keena & Co. has worked on many lakefront homes in her 27 years as an interior designer, but even she admits there's something special about the Empire project the Birmingham-based design firm finished in 2020.

"I've never seen a property like this before," she says. Perched high, "it has the most spectacular views," she explains — and not just of one body of water, but two. The narrow site has 120 feet of frontage on Lake Michigan on one side and another 120 feet of frontage on South Bar Lake, which the homeowner describes as "really rustic," and reminiscent of the movie "On Golden Pond," on the other.

The family who owns the land has a long connection to both the site and the area. The husband was born in Empire and lived on a small, self-sustaining hobby farm. When the couple initially went to look at the property, which the husband found in a local newspaper ad, he remembered having raked sand there as a teenager, when he worked in landscaping.

They purchased the lot, which had been used as a rental property, in 2015 and put \$30,000 into upgrading the 1950s cottage. They rented the cottage out for the next few years, but "the plan was always to knock it down and rebuild," the homeowner explains.

That process was started late in 2018, when the couple brought in Withers, architect Joseph Mosey, and Render Construction to help them achieve their goals. More family space was the top priority, according to the homeowners, who have three grown children. So, too, was a home that was "elegant but cozy, with a mature palette."

An artist, the wife wanted to steer clear of the typical beach-home color scheme, which includes a lot of blue. "I wanted the property itself to be the art," she explains, adding that the 4,000-square-foot residence is filled with muted natural tones. The only exception, she says, are the brighter hues found in her canvases. "When people come into the house they say it's so soft, like the colors of a dune. That's exactly what I wanted to achieve."

Withers says the palette was a creative challenge. "The backdrop is her wonderful art collection, which features a lot of Michigan artists, including her own work and that of friends," she shares. "We wanted to make the most of that." The designer says her strategy included borrowing inspiration from the gorgeous sunsets of Lake Michigan, which influenced the soft orange tones found in the great room and kitchen.

An experienced renovator, the wife had never built a new house, but "she was the eyes and ears on the project," Withers says. "She would walk the house during construction and come back with ideas. We ended up creating some really cool ceiling details and other details." At the homeowners' request, they also reorganized the original floor plan to move the kitchen and the dining room to the Lake Michigan side of the house, to take advantage of the views. "I wanted nature to provide the wow," the homeowner explains of her floor plan and color choices.

Withers' goal was to give the family the restful retreat and family gathering place they envisioned. "They wanted to be able





to entertain, feel casual and comfortable while there, and take advantage of the views," she explains.

One of the best places to do that is on the home's third floor. Like the old rental that had been on the property, the new house is affectionately known as "The Perch." Inspired by yearly visits to Nantucket, the owners had originally planned to incorporate a widow's walk at the top of the house. Instead, they built a 15- by 20-foot room on the third floor that includes a bar with seating, a small kitchen, and an outdoor balcony — or, as they like to say, "a perch at the top of The Perch." It's a "great place to watch sunsets," the couple agrees.

Sunrises, meanwhile, are enjoyed with coffee in the kitchen, overlooking South Bar Lake. The wife's favorite things about the house, she says, are the lot, the cozy and welcoming layout, and the interesting light fixtures. She also appreciates that when you walk into the foyer, you can see both lakes. Withers is partial to the views throughout, which can be enjoyed "in every single room, even bathrooms," she says, adding that the "magical" reading room and the screened porch are her favorite spaces.

There were a few unexpected surprises along the way, including

Both pages, clockwise from far left: The kitchen was moved to the Lake Michigan side of the home. Note the color of the leather stools (there are pops of orange throughout the home). An inviting guest room, "the perch," and the dining room all offer great views.



a period when Lake Michigan was rising at an alarming rate and the homeowners almost lost their septic field.

The family finally moved in in June of 2020, so they'll mark two years in their new space this summer. Withers says the talented design team also included Amanda Rose and Tracey Brugioni of Jones-Keena, and landscaper Jeff Hennig of Environmental Artists, who worked with the challenging lot and whose design for the property became a model for residential dune restoration projects in Leelanau County. Withers calls him "a genius."

The homeowner admits she was intimidated by the building process at first, but she ultimately enjoyed it. "I had an absolute blast," she says, adding that the results were well worth the wait. "Throughout the day, the lake just turns to diamonds," she marvels. "We feel so fortunate to have this in our family." 🌊



Both pages, left to right: The porch, living room (with a natural stone fireplace of Michigan limestone), and master bath all exude cottage charm and sophistication. The branch-like light fixture in the bathroom fits the home's nature theme.

BUYER'S GUIDE

INTERIOR DESIGNER

Nicole Withers, Jones-Keena & Co., Birmingham, jones-keena.com

BATHROOM, MASTER

Cabinet, Storage – O'Brien Harris, Potoskey

Cabinetry – O'Brien Harris, Potoskey

Chandelier – Treelot White Large Chandelier, Curroy & Company, CAI Designs, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Countertop – Matarazzo, PMP Marble & Granite, Troy

Drapery – Fabrication, Design Designs, Whom? Fabric, Pinder, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Flooring – Polar Grey Basketweave, Clot, Troy

Mirror – Moon Square Mirror, Ultermost, Lighting Resource Studio, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Sconces – Barton Grande Sconces, Visual Comfort, City Lights Detroit, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Wall Paint – Benjamin Moore, Ashwood

BEDROOM, GUEST

Bed Frame – Synchronicity Bed, Universal Furniture, Jones-Keena & Co., Birmingham

Bedding – Pine Cone Hill, Annie Selke

Bench – Palma Bench, Bernhardt, CAI Designs, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Chandelier – Puredred Large Lantern, Curroy & Company, CAI Designs, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Drapery – Rosemary Linen, Fabricut, Designer Furniture Services, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Flooring – White Oak, Everlast Floors, Troy

Lamp – John Richard, Lighting Resource Studio, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Rug – Oushak Rug, Boga Rugs

Table, End – WILDMOOD, CAI Designs, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Wall Paint – Benjamin Moore, Ashwood

DINING ROOM

Bench – Prague Bench, Charleston Forge, CAI Designs, Michigan Design Center, Troy;

Pillow – Kinley Linen Pillow, Pine Cone Hill, Annie Selke

Chairs, Dining – Loretta Side Chairs, Hickory Chair, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Chandelier – Maximus Grande Chandelier, Curroy & Company, CAI Designs, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Drapery – Massa Granite, Pinder, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Flooring – White Oak, Everlast Floors, Troy

Light, Foyer Ceiling – Lorford Smoke Bell Lantern, Visual Comfort, City Lights Detroit, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Mirror – Lovel Mirror, Gabby Home, CAI Designs, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Rug – Dartmoor N, Pweter, Surface Designs International

Runner, Hallway – Oushak, Soylmeseler Oriental Rugs

Table, Dining – Madelone Dining Table, Michel Ferand

Table, End – Gustavian Chest, Madam History, CAI Designs, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Wall Paint – Benjamin Moore, Aegean Olive

Wallpaper, Hallway – Cameron Walnut, Winfield Thybony, Kravet | Lee Jola | Brunschwig & Fils, Michigan Design Center, Troy

KITCHEN

Backsplash – Adex, Virginia Tile Company, Troy

Bar Stools – Woodbridge Furniture, CAI Designs, Michigan Design Center, Troy;

Upholstery – Orange Faux Leather, Kravet, Kravet | Lee Jola | Brunschwig & Fils, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Chairs, Breakfast – Jonathan Charles, CAI Designs, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Countertops – Baccarat, PMP Marble & Granite, Troy

Flooring – White Oak, Everlast Floors, Troy

Hood – O'Brien Harris, Potoskey

Lighting, Bar – Chatham Lanterns by Ralph Lauren, Visual Comfort, City Lights Detroit, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Lighting, Breakfast Table – Goodman Large Pendant, Visual Comfort, City Lights Detroit, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Pillows, Accent – Eastern Accents, Jones-Keena & Co., Birmingham

Rug – Boga Rugs

Stove – La Coma, O'Brien Harris, Potoskey

Table, Breakfast – Fitzwilliam, Bungalow 5

Wall Paint – Benjamin Moore, Hazy Skies

LIVING ROOM

Armchairs – Jules Swivel Chair, Hickory Chair, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Artwork – Jones-Keena & Co., Birmingham

Chandelier – Mazarin Chandelier, Bliss Studio, Jones-Keena & Co., Birmingham

Chest, Decorative – Bickerton Chest, Jonathan Charles, CAI Designs, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Table, Coffee – Gore Coffee Table, Inlter Feeder

Flooring – Boga Rugs

Lamp, Chest – Ferro Designs

Lamps, Blue and White – Zigzag Table Lamps, Curroy & Company, CAI Designs, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Pillows, Accent – Surya, CAI Designs, Michigan

Design Center, Troy

Sofa – Lorraine Sofa, Hickory Chair, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Wall Paint – Benjamin Moore, Hazy Skies

Wall Treatment, Fireplace – Limestone, Beach Blend Ashlar, The Stone Mill, Lakeview

PATIO AND PORCH

Ceiling Treatment – Beadboard, Rander Construction, Traverse City

Cushions – Kingsley Bate, Spring Stripe, Jones-Keena & Co., Birmingham

Fan – Mawrick LED Collection, Monte Carlo, City Lights Detroit, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Masonry – Bluestone, Rander Construction, Traverse City

Table, Coffee – Seasonal Living, Jones-Keena & Co., Birmingham

Tables, End – Urbis Imports

Sofa and Chairs – Frances Collection, Kingsley Bate, Jones-Keena & Co.

SITTING ROOM

Armchairs – Springhouse Lounge Chair, Charleston Forge, CAI Designs, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Ceiling Treatment – Nickel Gap, Rander Construction, Traverse City

Flooring – Sajal Rug, Surya, CAI Designs, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Ottoman – Custom, Jones-Keena & Co. Upholstery Studio, Birmingham; Fabric, Mattone Citrus, Kravet, Kravet | Lee Jola | Brunschwig & Fils, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Table, Occasional – Seasonal Living, Jones-Keena & Co., Birmingham

Wall Paint – Benjamin Moore, Hazy Skies

THE PERCH (BALCONY)

Chairs, Patio – Bailey Chair, Urbis Imports

Flooring – White Oak, Everlast Floors, Troy

Light, Wall – Voice Scones, Visual Comfort, City Lights Detroit, Michigan Design Center, Troy

Railing, Balcony – Rander Construction, Traverse City

Stools – Just French Blue Stools, Pine Cone Hill, Annie Selke

Table, High-Top – Simone Bar Table, Four Hands, Jones-Keena & Co., Birmingham

Wall Paint – Benjamin Moore, Hazy Skies

EXTERIOR

Building Materials – Cedar Shingles

Landscaping Installation – Twin Bay Landscaping, Traverse City

Outdoor Flooring and Masonry – Twin Bay Landscaping, Traverse City

Paint Color, Exterior Door – Benjamin Moore, Sweet Vibration

ADDITIONAL PROJECT CONTRIBUTORS

Architect – Joseph Mosey, Joseph Mosey Architecture, Northville

Builder – Eric Rander, Rander Construction, Traverse City

Contributing Designers – Tracy Brugioni and Amanda Rice, Jones-Keena & Co.

Design, Kitchen – O'Brien Harris (formerly Signature Kitchens), Liz Firebaugh, Potoskey

Design, Landscape – Jeffrey Hennig, Environmental Artists, Leland

Drapery (Fabrication) – Design Designs, Wixom

Porch, Sunspace – Sunspace of West Michigan, Wyoming