



A DISCOVERY *Waiting* to HAPPEN

HISTORIC SITE POSES UNPARALLELED OPPORTUNITY

BY KAREN VANDER WERP • PHOTOGRAPHER BRUCE BLOK

Initially, it was Patrick Allkins who saw beyond the cobbled, antiquated structure now superimposed with a thick layer of dust and cobwebs. It was a question of how to get his wife, Jan Frizzo, to see the same vision as clearly as he did. It took a concoction of cocktails, descriptive verbiage and a glimpse of the picturesque view down the Black River to Lake Michigan, until Jan finally caught his vision.

The original 1898 South Haven dwelling served as the town's river-crossing ferry site and restaurant named The Midway. Later, it became a speakeasy called Huckleberry's. Finally, it was a restaurant, The Channel One, famous for its blueberry pancakes. It was a place that warranted at least an annual trip to savor the delectable pancakes unmatched anywhere else. Patrick and Jan made the trek like many others, never thinking that someday it would or could be their family cottage.

The building was constructed of remnants of lumber, siding and whatever could be salvaged from anything, anywhere. The view had been blocked, the foundation missing or disintegrated. The staircases were narrow and steep. The upper floors had poor circulation and low headroom. There was even fire damage that had not been repaired—just boarded over. It does make one wonder: how many cocktails did Patrick serve to get Jan to agree to this undertaking?

Patrick and Jan had one objective. "Our goal was to make this a multi-generational family cottage," shares Patrick.

Builders Bruce and John Blok of Blok Builders Inc., had other objectives to fulfill the aspirations of Patrick and Jan. The views of the

channel and marina where their boat would be docked needed to be maximized. The building needed to be reconfigured both for entertaining and to allow a flood of natural light. A main floor master suite took high priority in a long list of issues that the ailing structure needed to have remedied.

One request that Jan had was to preserve the prize ferns that grew along the entire length of the front porch. "Because they could not survive a replanting, one of the first things we did was to build a large box/work platform over the entire fern bed," shares Bruce.

Although the house sits directly on the property lines in some areas, it was possible to add a two-story addition in the area where part of the old structure had been removed. This housed a new master suite on the main floor and guest suite on the second floor. A two-story screened porch was built on the south end of the house.

On the main structure, the roof was raised to allow nearly 180-degree views of the marina and channel from the second floor. The main staircase was reversed and enlarged, with the staircase to the third floor stacked above it. The resulting third-story is open and spacious with a bedroom and bath along with its own balcony.

The cottage boasts three kitchens. The main floor kitchen has an island featuring a mahogany and maple top that is reminiscent of the woodwork found on classic Chris Craft boats. The second floor kitchen highlights an exceptional view, plus a large island with a free-form counter top that brings to mind the Lake Michigan shoreline. The third kitchen referred to by Patrick as the "man's kitchen" is situated off the lower level screened porch and includes a grill with commercial



exhaust hood, refrigerator, stainless steel cabinetry, wet bar and computer monitor to display recipes.

In addition to the relocated and reconstructed main staircases, a spiral staircase was constructed in the screened porch. A second floor deck was extended around the main section of the house where a sliding glass door opens onto a wet bar. On the north end of the house, a fireplace was constructed in an enclosed courtyard that offers yet another area for relaxing and entertaining.

Now, the cottage feels like a resort. It is light-filled with numerous areas for entertaining, allowing guests to meander from space to space, imbibing the sights and sounds of waterfront living. The cottage provides ample space for multiple generations of the family to retreat and enjoy their own private space, while still having areas where they can enjoy invaluable time together. Project architect, Arnie Bunkley, and interior designer, Mary Quinn, worked with the homeowners and builder to create a magnificent family cottage maintaining a flavor of history and small-town roots infused with luxury and superior craftsmanship. All hardily agree, "We couldn't have asked for a better team." □

PREVIOUS PAGE:

This destination once catered to elite visitors from Chicago.

THIS PAGE:

ABOVE: The telescope only enhances the unparalleled view.

RIGHT: Eclectic styling and furnishings create a sophisticated cottage ambience.





Eclectic styling and furnishings create a sophisticated cottage ambiance.



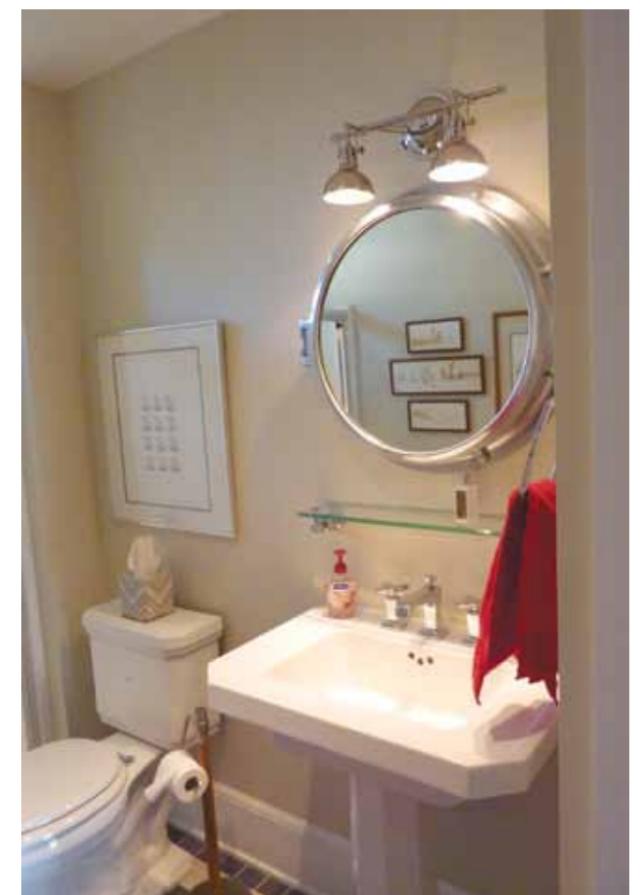
A remarkable transformation turns this commercial restaurant into a comfortable cottage for a multi-generational family.



ABOVE: A second floor kitchen offers a magnificent view and a custom kitchen island with a free form shape mimicking the Lake Michigan shoreline.

BOTTOM LEFT: Windows abound to take in the views.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Nautical accents, such as the porthole mirror, are design features seen throughout the house.

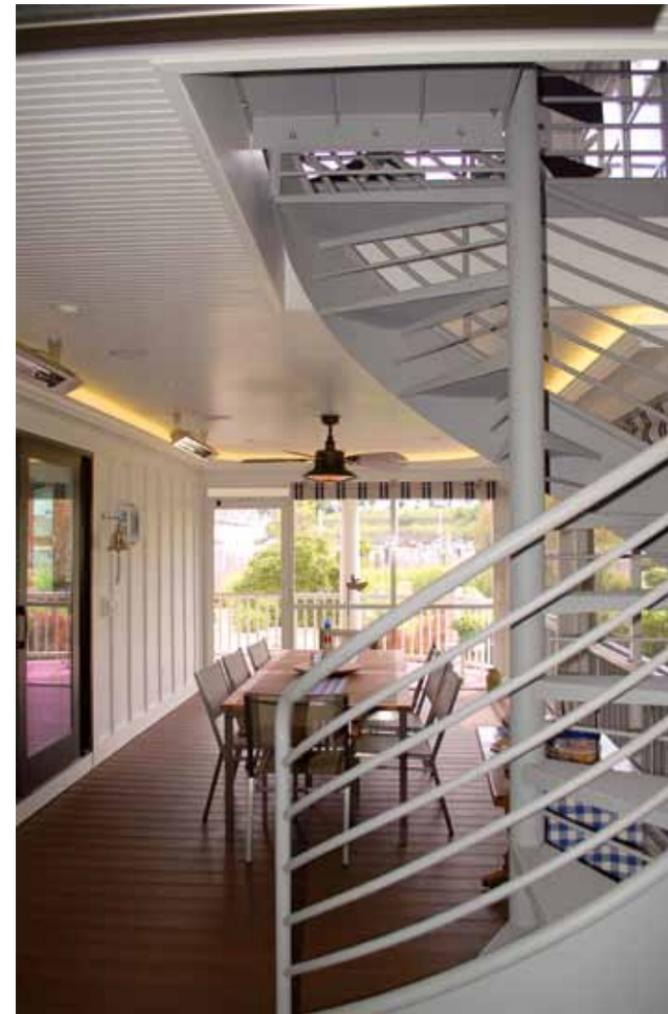




ABOVE: The main floor kitchen island features a mahogany and maple top showcasing woodwork reminiscent of Chris Craft boats.

MIDDLE: Multiple levels give everyone their own space and contribute to the "resort" feel of the home.

BOTTOM: On the north end of the home, the fireplace with wood box was constructed in an enclosed courtyard, creating another outdoor oasis.



ABOVE: A unique spiral staircase connects the lower level screened porch and an upper porch, giving easy access for everyone to enjoy the views.

BELOW: "His" kitchen includes a grill with commercial exhaust hood, refrigerator, stainless steel cabinetry, and wet bar.

BLOK Builders Inc.



PRINCIPAL OWNERS:

Bruce and John Blok

NUMBER OF YEARS IN BUSINESS:

The business was started by our grandfather 70 years ago, doing work on some of the fine old houses in Kalamazoo. After our father retired to travel and take up woodcarving, we took over from him, and are looking forward to passing the torch on to two of our sons, Brady and Arnie.

EDUCATION:

We both grew up in the business. We each have a son who has joined us in the business after graduating from Western Michigan University. This will make the fourth generation. Another of John's sons is branching off into a related field, designing and building custom furniture pieces.

YEAR BUSINESS STARTED: 1943; Incorporated in 1993.

BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY:

Just do it like it should be done and the rest will fall in place! We believe that quality and attention to detail along with always trying to provide a great customer experience is the best and only way to do business.

WHAT SETS YOUR BUSINESS APART?

Our personal involvement, our many years of experience with a really diverse mix of custom projects, and our crew. We do all of the carpentry work on a project in house, from rough framing to trim and built-in cabinetry. By doing this we can control the quality and process far better than if we subcontracted it out. We enjoy challenging and unique projects. Our crew takes great pride in their work, and by being on-site from start to finish, are able to really put a part of themselves into each project. That personal investment certainly shows in the result.

HOBBIES, VOLUNTEERISM, ETC. :

We are both avid outdoorsmen, and love travel, camping, hiking, and birdwatching. Bruce is a photography enthusiast and loves to snorkel tropical reefs. John likes making bike trips and canoeing the Boundary Waters. Both of us are married and have five children.

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER & WEB ADDRESS:

For additional information call (269) 375-8268
or visit www.blokbuilders.com