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# Contempo Colonial

Old World elegance meets modern comfort in this timeless lake home.

BY **LUCINDA HAHN**

PHOTOS BY **LINDA OYAMA BRYAN**

**Along the lakeshore** in southwest Michigan, a hodgepodge of architectural styles rises from the bluffs: ultra-modern collaborations of steel and glass mesh with Wrightonian gems, split-levels nursing hangovers from the '70s, and log cabins.

But when a family of four bought a beachfront lot two years ago, they envisioned a style they hadn't yet seen (at least in their neighborhood): a Colonial – one so classic in its simplicity and symmetry that Ben Franklin would have felt right at home.

"I grew up in New York," says the wife and mother of the family, who spearheaded the design and construction. "I've gone to Cape Cod (Mass.), Nantucket (Mass.), Williamsburg (Va.), and I've always been in love with beautiful Colonial homes."

Project Designer Beth Lindahl of Orren Pickell Designers & Builders went to work. The traditional exterior was easy to replicate: white façade, rows of blue-shuttered windows, a hip roof, and brick chimneys at each end. More challenging was making the interior pleasing for a 21st-century, beach-centric couple with kids.

Out went the traditional Colonial floor plan and its uptight symmetry; in came a perfectly modern, open layout – key for a family who loves to entertain. Lindahl also pushed powder rooms, hallways and closets to the front of the house, and turned all the important rooms toward priority No. 1: the timeless, heart-stopping view out back.

"This vista is just spectacular in the summer," says the homeowner,





A Marjorie Price painting graces the dining room's left wall. Above, the coffered ceiling adds elegant formality.

gesturing to the living room's 10-foot-high French doors. Beyond, the blue-greens of Lake Michigan shift under the sunlight's moods. "We have French doors everywhere – even in the master bedroom. You walk through the house, and with the exception of a guest bedroom, you see the lake from every room."

For the interiors, the homeowner shunned trends – a lesson learned while tromping through too many dated homes as a Chicago realtor. "I wanted the house to feel good in 50 years, timeless." Yearning for the beachy elegance of a Hamptons retreat, she ripped out a magazine spread of Diane Keaton's house in *Something's Gotta Give* and – with pal Nadine Fatora, an interior designer – got to work.

In the dining area, a whimsical, Marjorie Price painting of bathers in a blue sea sets the color scheme for the house. She spotted the painting, titled "Deep Water," in a LAKE magazine article, she says. "It was the first thing I bought for this house, before there was even a stick in the ground. I knew I wanted it as soon as I saw it. It's soothing and happy, and it feels youthful, which is how we are here. We party and play."

That wasn't the homeowner's only snap decision; toward the end of



A 13-foot marble-topped island is the kitchen's centerpiece, while French doors lend a stunning lake view.









In the bedroom, large French doors let the outside in.

construction, she decided the dining area looked too plain – and told contractors to turn the smooth ceiling into an ornately coffered one. “It just looks more interesting,” she says, “and adds a little formality.”

In the adjoining living area, white couches flank a fireplace and two antique Russian-pine coffee tables. Antiquing is a passion, and her finds are everywhere – from a Thai wagon wheel to 19th-century wooden dumbbells, lined up on a bookshelf like bowling pins. “I found them at a little antique show in Florida, and I bought the whole set,” she says. “They’re just fun.” (For more resources, see Design Details, this page.)

Wide-plank, vintage French-oak floors lead to the kitchen, where a 13-foot marble-topped island reigns. More French doors “let the outside in,” she says, and make it easy to bring snacks out to the pool. The cherry cabinets, stained in chocolate brown, include a butler’s area with an icemaker and wine refrigerator. “We set up a bar here for parties,” she says. “It’s an awesome house to entertain in.”

Not least because of the outdoor spaces. With the house situated atop a bluff, the backyard had just a smidgeon of level land before careening steeply to the beach: Cue miracles of modern landscaping. Using retaining walls to build out the bluff an extra 12 feet, Shawn de la Foret (of Nature’s Way Landscaping, Stevensville, Mich.) gave the family more room for a pool, yard and fire pit.

He also set the stage for her husband’s favorite oasis: a 40-foot-wide wooden deck halfway down the bluff, outfitted with speakers and overlooking the beach. It’s sunset-watching central – and the go-to spot for tanning or sipping drinks with friends. The family spends so much time there, they’ve given it a tongue-in-cheek moniker: L.D.

“Lower deck,” she explains. “Like, ‘I’ll be on the L.D.’”

That sense of fun and informality will be in full play this summer, behind the strict Colonial façade of this traditional home. It’s a juxtaposition the family wears as comfortably as a pair of beach sandals. “We just open up the house, and everyone kind of comes and goes,” she says. “It’s very put-your-feet-up.”

## DESIGN DETAILS

*Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Tap these resources to replicate the beachfront style of this Colonial abode.*

### CONSTRUCTION

**Orren Pickell Designers & Builders**  
Lincolnshire, Ill.  
888-742-5355; pickellbuilders.com  
*architecture and construction*

**Kantor Bilt Construction**  
Niles, Mich.  
269-683-1922;  
kantordevelopment.com  
*pool, deck, outdoor shower*

**HARD INTERIORS**  
**Susan Fredman and Associates**  
Chicago  
312-587-8150; susanfredman.com

**SOFT INTERIORS**  
**Nadine Fatora**  
773-404-4899

**LANDSCAPING**  
**Nature’s Way Landscaping**  
Stevensville, Mich.  
269-429-1694; natureswayinc.com

### ANTIQUES AND ACCESSORIES

**Antiques on Old Plank Road**  
Westmont, Ill.  
630-887-1995; oldplank.com

**Heritage Trail**  
Wilmette, Ill.  
847-256-6208; heritagetrailmall.com

**Lovell & Whyte**  
Lakeside, Mich.  
269-469-5900

**Marjorie Price**  
New York  
(Shows at studio b. in  
Three Oaks, Mich.)  
marjorieprice.com

**Marco Polo**  
Harbert, Mich.  
269-469-6272

**Shipshewana Antique Market**  
Shipshewana, Ind.  
260-768-7090;  
shipshewanaantiques.com