

# FALL 2019

# CONCEPTS



## VALUES DEFINE OUR RELATIONSHIPS



Lisa Pickell,  
President

Building or renovating a home is incredibly personal. It can be stressful and invigorating and maddening and fun, all at the same time.

That's when working with someone you trust and can relate to really matters, and why I love what we do. It's all about relationships, and collaborating with people to create something so important for their families and their futures is tremendously rewarding.

I believe our clients invite us into their lives because they know we're committed to making them happy. After 45 years and two generations, the Pickell values of integrity, quality, pride, commitment, value and teamwork aren't just words on a website. It's a reflection of the family

and business we grew up in, and it's evident in everything we do.

As you look through the photos in this newsletter and read the stories of the people who live in these beautiful, diverse homes, you can see how each one's personality and the things that they care about shine through. And, I hope, you can see the joy they—and we—had in creating them.

Of course, not every step in the process sends a thrill of excitement down your spine. There's estimating and permits and decisions and occasional setbacks, but when you have a great relationship with everyone from the designer to the teams in the field, it makes the whole process more pleasant, and it's easier to trust that we're going to achieve your goals.

We're proud to share these latest projects—I hope you enjoy them!

## IN THE NEWS



### **NAMED ONE OF THE "BEST GENERAL CONTRACTORS IN ILLINOIS" BY GENERALCONTRACTORS.ORG**

The editorial staff selected the award recipients "based on their experience, the scope of their projects, the awards they have earned, and the press their work has generated." We're honored to be included in such an esteemed list.

### **LISA PICKELL NAMED ONE OF THE "TOP NORTH SHORE WOMEN IN BUSINESS" BY 22nd CENTURY MEDIA.**

Lisa Pickell was among 15 other women honored at the September 12, 2019 awards luncheon at the Chicago Botanic Garden.

### **CUSTOMIZE YOUR DREAM HOME AT KELMSCOTT PARK.**

We're proud to be constructing Kelmscott



Park's twelve single-family homes in downtown Lake Forest and realize the vision that

Focus Development created. Each home will feature three to five bedrooms and 3.5 to 4.5 baths. Contact us today for a private showing.



The Spiewak's shingle-style home in Mundelein features a mix of stone, lap siding, and cedar shake.



## THE FAMILY COTTAGE GETS A CUSTOM REBUILD

The cottage purchased by Al's grandfather in 1953 had seen generations of family gatherings and summers in Lake Geneva. But as the family grew, the house began to feel more crowded. And what had been charming was starting to feel tired.



Before

The original cottage, purchased in 1953

Kathi and Al spend a lot of time at the property, and they knew they needed to rebuild. They wanted to retain the lake cottage feel, but make the home more comfortable as a family destination. So, in addition to a fabulous master suite and open living areas, the new house includes a bunk room for the kids, as well as bedrooms, a rec room and kitchenette on the lower level. Now, instead of being on top of one another, each family can have some personal space.

A waters-edge, summer-vacation aesthetic sets a casual, inviting tone. "We built a home in Illinois about 10 years ago," offers Kathi, "so we had some ideas about what we liked. I usually lean toward warmer colors, but we wanted the style to be more 'lake' and nautical, but not over the top." That approach is evident in the marine blue tones that crop up throughout the home, knotty wood flooring and special design touches such as a round window above the bar. "The bar is all wood," adds Kathi, "and the window is like a porthole in a ship, with a view of the water."

Kathi and Al's personalities come through in other ways, too. Kathi's love of color and pattern adds real warmth to the interiors. She even designed a stained glass window at the base of the stairs and had it created by a local artist. And Al's millwork company customized cabinetry and trim, as well as the rich woodwork in the bar. Even the big garage features thoughtful cabinetry and rustic wood paneling.

Being so close to the water is not without challenges. As the English basement was dug, water began to seep in. To remedy the situation, the below-grade living spaces had to be enclosed in a waterproof bladder. Additional unfinished space is used to stow kayaks and beach toys.

With a gourmet outdoor kitchen, screened porch and more than a dozen windows facing the lake, the new house recalls the original cottage in one key way—the outdoor stain matches the color of the original cottage brought into the family nearly 70 years ago.







**Opposite Page Top:** Plentiful windows offer lake views from nearly every room.

**Middle:** The stain color honors the original cottage, in the family for two generations.

**Bottom:** A bunkroom lets visiting grandchildren stay close to their cousins.

**This Page Top:** The screened porch is a favorite place to spend relaxing days.

**Bottom Middle:** The master bath features custom millwork and a sunlit soaking tub.

**Bottom Right:** A porthole-inspired window in the bar looks out across the water.





## SCREENED PORCH STEPS UP TO ALL-WEATHER WOW

When Rob bought his Wilmette home, he was already envisioning the “after” images in his mind. “When I saw the screened porch, I thought, ‘This room is so great, it should be an all-year space—and it needs a fireplace,’” recalls Rob. He’d also already pinpointed a few other upgrades, including an updated bathroom, and building out a new fitness room and office in the basement.

“Even my dear friend, who is a designer, thought I should live in it for a while. She thought that I’d eventually love the screened porch,” he adds. “She thought the room might be too small for a fireplace, and that the 200-square foot area might not justify the work.” But he was never really attached to the “before” version of the house. Instead, a plan to build up from the existing stone wall was developed.

The process wasn’t always straightforward. The 2.5-foot wall wasn’t insulated, so a variety of solutions were explored. “The village suggested we cut out the center of the stone and insert insulation, but we eventually found other ways to bring the R-value up,” explains Rob. A lower ceiling, carefully chosen windows and radiant heat under the bluestone floors offset any challenges with the low stone wall.

Less seen by visitors to the home but just important to the family, are changes to the basement. One fun touch is a door concealed by a bookshelf in the office. “I worked with Pickell on a house about 10 years ago,” says Rob, “And Orren came in while we were trying to solve a tough design challenge and said, ‘Have you thought about this?’ and sketched out a solution on a napkin. The same thing happened with this—he stopped by and said, ‘You know what would be cool?’”

Now that the work is complete, the sun room has become his kids’ favorite place to sit and study. Because the original exterior doors are still in place, the room can be sealed off or opened up into the family room. It’s also a popular spot when entertaining, “It’s not quite the draw of a kitchen, but when I put the bar out there, it’s close,” notes Rob. Even the designer friend has had to concede that it was a good call.



**Top:** A 2.5-foot garden wall became the foundation for the windows and fireplace.

**Middle:** A bookcase conceals the entrance to a planned basement speakeasy.

**Bottom:** A full-featured gym is steps away from the basement office.



## GREAT LINES CALL FOR A NEW LOOK



Mike Piskule,  
Architectural Associate

In spite of its pleasing, contemporary design, this home was looking tired. Shiplap siding, installed at an angle to match the roof lines on the outside walls, made the house feel out of date. What's

more, the siding was causing ongoing maintenance issues, especially where the wood was coming into contact with plantings at ground level.

The Pickell team was asked to retain the essential character of the home while updating the facade. As the designers went to work, they proposed some small but significant changes. For example, Pickell recommended making the center portion of the split gable more visually pronounced, replacing the stucco with something that would enhance its vertical lines. After exploring a variety of cladding materials, from stained cedar to charred shou sugi ban, the team and client agreed upon a beautiful composite tongue and groove decking, with a distinct color contrast to bring focus to the center section. In fact, all of the exterior faces were changed to vertical siding that ties all of the elements together.

To break up the massive vertical planes, the designers also brought in louvered metal roof structures with cable rail

attachments over each garage door, which connect to visually to the windows above. In addition, a custom roof was added above the front door. The covered entry is not only more practical, it makes the door feel better proportioned to the rest of the home. Exterior paint and new landscaping completed the refresh.



**Top:** Louvered roof structures echo the shapes of the garage windows and break up the flat garage facade.

**Middle:** Vertical lines, warmer colors and a bold contrast at the entrance bring this contemporary design into focus.





**Top:** Opening the kitchen brings light and water views into the main living spaces.

**Middle:** A serene gray and white palette complements the couple's furnishings.

**Bottom:** The condo even has a kitchenette downstairs to accommodate visiting family.

## STUNNING VIEWS FROM LAKE GENEVA CONDO

Close to the water and a short walk to Lake Geneva's restaurants and shopping, Claudia and Steve found the perfect year-round home in a two-story, 3,000+ s.f. condo. The space and location were right, but there was work to be done.

Claudia and Steve reached out to the Pickell team to look at the home with fresh eyes. Knowing of the company's reputation for building high-end custom homes, Claudia and Steve weren't sure that the Pickell Group would be right for a condo renovation. Now that they've moved in, it's clear they found a great match. "It was a very good experience," recalls Claudia. "Orren came to check on the project, and our foreman stayed on top of everything."

In updating the condo, the doors, windows and exterior were already defined, but the interior was open for discussion. "Our biggest challenge," offers Claudia, "was the kitchen. It was a closed off, with a U shape and a low ceiling." The couple wanted an open, light-filled concept. Taking down the kitchen wall and raising the ceiling wasn't straightforward—the attic joists ran perpendicular to the great room. The solution? A recessed tray ceiling that visually defines the kitchen and living areas while accommodating

the home's structural needs. The kitchen now features a spacious island, additional banquette seating and ample storage—plus a great view of the lake.

Claudia and Steve made all the color and material selections themselves, resulting in a serene gray and white palette—a perfect backdrop for their cozy furnishings with pops of blue and red. Claudia notes that they get the most comments about the breathtaking Marina Blue granite on the first-floor bar. Nearly black, the stone is iridescent and glimmers with pops of color when touched by the light.

The couple was also impressed with the Pickell project manager's ability to answer questions and with the book of warranties, finishes and appliance manuals she created for the house. "It has everything from the carpet and paint colors to the style of the sliding glass doors," says Claudia, "And I've already referred to it when I called Wolf about an issue with the oven."

With three adult children, one grandchild and another on the way, this up-to-date, airy Lake Geneva condo is turning out to be the perfect low-maintenance hub for their family to enjoy time together.



## THE FIRST KELMSCOTT PARK HOME TICKS ALL THE BOXES

Myretta and Glenn were driving through Lake Forest one Sunday when they saw a sales trailer for a new development and decided to stop in. “We were looking to downsize,” explains Myretta. “We wanted a first-floor master bedroom and something maintenance-free.” The trailer had just opened, making them the first to buy one of the 12 luxury single-family homes created in a collaboration between Orren Pickell Building Group and Focus Development.

The couple selected the four-bedroom Morris model and started making it their own. “The process was great,” says Myretta. “Last time we built a home, we just worked with a builder, so we had to make all of the decisions ourselves. This time, the architect and the team were very encouraging, recommending providers and pointing us in the right direction without trying to make decisions for us.”

Glenn appreciated the way they could track the process online through their personal website. He could log in any time to see what progress was being made, view photos and review their choices and upgrades.

At Kelmscott Park, homeowners can choose finishes from a shortlist of architect selections or customize anything to their tastes. “That could be overwhelming,” comments Myretta. “We went with a lot of standard options, but upgraded the floors to white oak, put heated floors in the bathroom and added beams in the family room.”

Trained as a chef and an avid cook, Myretta also put a lot of thought into the kitchen, incorporating all the bells and whistles in the open, airy space. She estimates that they spend about 90% of their time in the connected kitchen-family room, enjoying the sun from the southeast exposure.



**Above:** This Morris model features clean lines and a towering window that captures natural light.

**Bottom:** A two-story family room connects to the chef's kitchen. The owners worked with the architect to add wood beams across the ceiling.





## EXPLORING THE HOME OF MICHELANGELO'S MARBLE



Lisa Pickell and Rob Oldenburg

About two hours from Florence lies the source of some of the most beautiful marble on the planet. Nestled at the foot of the Apuan Alps and within sight of the Ligurian Sea, the Carrara marble quarries have been supplying marble for artists and builders since the time of Ancient Rome.

Michelangelo chose Carrara marble for his masterpiece David. The Romans clad the Pantheon with it. Calatrava had it polished as flooring in the Milwaukee Museum of Art. And this summer, Lisa Pickell, Rob Oldenburg and a long-time

friend and client had the pleasure of touring the Carrara quarries while traveling in Italy.

"It's stunning," offers Lisa. "It's in the heart of Tuscany, surrounded by beautiful mountains and green, and the scale is striking. It's enormous. But the quarry isn't out of place—it's part of the history and fabric of the area."

Rob adds, "The same families have been quarrying there for generations, but they've only touched a small percentage of the stone. They're using heavy equipment instead of animals now, but the methods haven't changed much. They're able to move bigger blocks, but it's still hard work."

"I was surprised by the variety," recalls Lisa. "I always associated Carrara with pure white 'statuario' marble, but some has beautiful gray and gold striation, and some is almost completely gray. One color isn't higher quality than the other—it's about what you like and the aesthetic you're going for."

"I expected the various colors to come from different parts of the mountain," says Rob. "But you can get very different effects from a single block."

"This was a really exciting opportunity for us," adds Lisa. "We love what we do, and we're kind of nerds about it. So of course we went to see the marble quarry on our vacation. It was fun to experience the process and the history first-hand."

"The tour guide suggested that we tell all of our clients to put it in their kitchens," laughs Rob. "We're not likely to go that far, but it's nice that if someone wants to know more about marble or how to use it, we have some great insights to share."

## WELCOME THOMAS PINS, ALA



After more than a decade running his own practice and 20+ more designing high-end homes and commercial spaces, Thomas joined the Orren Pickell Building Group as president and lead architect in 2019.

Moving to the Pickell team allows Thomas to focus on what he does best—collaborating with clients and creating beautiful homes. A natural leader, Thomas exemplifies the Pickell commitment to great design, integrity and teamwork, noting that our careful balance between architecture and construction helps us stand out among design-build firms.

While his personal aesthetic preferences lean a bit toward traditional, Thomas enjoys designing extraordinary homes, no matter what the style. "Any style can be beautiful," offers Thomas, "if you do it well."

Thomas is registered as a licensed architect in Illinois and Wisconsin, and is a City of Chicago Registered Energy Professional. He has studied architecture in the U.S. and Europe.



Open Dec. 14 & 15 Only

The URBAN FAMILY FARM HOUSE in Kenilworth will be open to the public on December 14 & 15. Visit <https://www.pickellbuilders.com/urban-family-farmhouse> for more information. We hope to see you there.

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