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The Architects

The continued series highlighting some of the practicing Architects in the Great Lakes region and their passion for creating inspired spaces and places

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Softwood and stone

Text: R.J. Weick

In a northern subdivision, where shoreline and woods meet, this home offers a delightful interplay of light amid stone and softwoods. Its silhouette evokes a sense of contemporary sleekness and respectful intention to its location on a sloped, waterfront site leading down toward Lake Michigan. Purposeful, interactive volumes are complemented by horizontal paneling, hipped rooflines, and a rich, natural material palette contextual to its environment.

It is a design refined and artfully developed by the Michigan-based team of Wentworth Builders Inc. of Harbor Springs, Frederick Crosley Ball Associates of Harbor Springs, Interiors Inc. of Petoskey, and Richard Hoffman Landscaping, as a warm haven in northern Michigan.

“They wanted a retreat from their busy, corporate lives,” said Scott Kennard, presi-

dent and owner of Wentworth Builders Inc. “They wanted to have a quiet, private home with a view of the water that was warm and within northern Michigan’s architectural vernacular.”

Wentworth Builders is a fine homebuilding company specializing in the craft and build of high-end custom homes and lakeside cottages with a belief that craftsmanship is more than a practice, but a philosophy. Since its establishment in 1982 by Mark Wentworth, the company has developed a portfolio of projects throughout Charlevoix and Emmet counties primarily on the waterfront. Wentworth Builders is driven by a cohesive vision of core values in consistency, communication, craftsmanship, collaboration, and care to ultimately deliver beautifully finished details and homes that exceed client expectation.

Kennard, who became a partner with Wentworth in 1996 and assumed ownership in 2002, said the company’s purpose is building “wow” experiences.

“Our passion is craftsmanship and our cause is preserving the natural beauty of our community. We are committed to the local Traverse Land Conservancy and the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council and recognize that our clients come here and are attracted to this area, because of its natural beauty—certainly that is why we all live here,” Kennard said. “We really value a team-approach with one vision and it is our client’s vision.”

For Wentworth Builders, the typical client is someone who has a history with the region and dreams of a home with a view of the water, and also values and appreciates the team’s reputation and dedication to detail and customer service as they help

guide homeowners through each stage of their ten-phase process. It is a process that is supported by the company’s team of project managers, foremen, and craftspeople; as well as vetted trade partners, onsite supervision, weekly job site reports, and an updated monthly schedule highlighting milestones, walk-throughs, and site meetings, according to Kennard.

“We are transparent, realistic, and provide an itemized budget,” Kennard said. “Our values are to collaborate as a team to ensure a smooth process and a better product. We are consistent and provide clear communication on schedule, procedure, and expectations—and craftsmanship that demands a high-level of professionalism and care from all teams and trade partners.”

Though the clients initially had started the process with a different team, Kennard said they reached out to Frederick Crosley Ball, a luxury residential and commercial architectural design and planning firm, and Wentworth Builders to realize their vision. Interiors Inc., a custom interior design practice with more than 25 years delivering design and furnishing services for residential, hospitality, and commercial clients; and Richard Hoffman Landscaping, a comprehensive landscaping company blending modern sophistication with natural beauty; quickly joined the collaborative team to help refine the overall design of the home and site. Kennard said there were many ideas brought to the table that accentuated its flavor and design, while staying true to the level of craftsmanship throughout the process.

“For instance, the interior paneling was not specified in its style and we threw mockups in and working with Ball, the architect, we came up with this idea of horizontal paneling without trim. The interior windows and doors with horizontal paneling were mitered and returned to meet the window, there is no trim in the house whatsoever, it is all done through the wall surfaces,” Kennard said.

“We pushed some of the design elements at the time that weren’t mainstream and they questioned the creative path we were on until they saw some of the work done and realized where we were going,” Kennard added.

Though the site itself, which is located within an established subdivision, presented an initial challenge as a mature, sloping lot that required a real respect to the land, the end result is one that maximized waterfront views through careful positioning and design. The home, which is artfully built into the landscape, appears flush with the site from the drive and then extends down to meet the sloping scale of the property, resulting in a full, walk-out basement. The







deck, which features a stone tile patio and stainless cable rail for an unobstructed view of the water, is shaped in relation to the setback of the property and is supported by the office and guest bedroom in the lower-level. On the exterior, stone can be found along its perimeter and is integrated throughout the interior as well.

For Kennard, it is how the stone plays within the interior and exterior, the use of softwood, and use of large skylights in the library and kitchen—suffusing interior spaces with natural light—that stand out as distinctive to him about the home. Other

details comprise custom built-ins intended to blend into the background, a stone fireplace, horizontal board-and-batten siding, and anodized bronze finished cladding on the windows and doors. Influenced by an educational background in the fine arts from Alma College, Kennard said art and design is held as a great importance to him.

“I recognize the importance of being the eyes on the job, on the project, and at the site, if you will, to represent the architect’s vision, the interior designer’s vision, and really the whole design team,” Kennard said. “I want to magnify their vision and ensure

that the architect’s vision is represented in our work at the highest craftsmanship level we can attain.”

At the end of the day, it is the prospect of bringing new people to the area—and their dream homes to life—that inspires Kennard.

“I have grown up here in Harbor Springs, went to school at Alma College, and came back recognizing the quality of life here,” Kennard said. “I am excited every day to come to work and be able to bring new families to our area to share in the wonder of living in northern Michigan.”