

Great Lakes Cottage

European traditions influence a Michigan home



Above: Stone and stucco combine to give the home's entry storybook appeal. Arched shutters on the second-floor windows echo the rounded front door.

Right: If you didn't know this home was located on a lake in northwestern Michigan, you might think it was nestled in the heart of Bavaria with its stone, stucco, dark timberwork, Alpine-style shutters and cedar shingle siding on the exterior.

According to some, the northwest region of Michigan is the best place to vacation in the state. The area not only borders two Great Lakes, but it is home to some of the best skiing, boating and golfing in the Midwest.

So naturally when Michigan natives Lore and John Wagner decided to look

for vacation property, they began their search there. "We thought that we would enjoy being on one of the Great Lakes after vacationing on Lake Superior," Lore says.

It wasn't until the couple stayed at Lore's sister's vacation home in Cross Village on Lake Michigan that the couple



Story by Colleen Morrissey • Photos by Roger Wade • Styling by Debra Grahl



Unlike the European look of the front, the back of the home resembles a classic Northwoods lodge with large plate glass windows for viewing the lake and several tiered decks designed to provide access to the dunes, a small sandy beach and the shallow shoreline of Lake Michigan.

got serious. "Staying at her house gave us a chance to look around," John says.

Lore's sister put the Wagners in contact with her real estate agent. The agent agreed to let them know the minute a lake-side property became available. Only a few months had gone by when the Wagners received the call they had been waiting for.

They drove the four hours up from their home outside of Detroit to take a look at the property and immediately knew it was what they'd been looking for: a parcel

measuring one and half acres with 120 feet of sandy shoreline. "It's not a lot of acreage," John says, "but we have a pretty good amount of shoreline."

The property, which straddles Lake Michigan, is heavily wooded on the interior. Closer to the water, though, the terrain turns sandy with dunes, marsh grasses and shallow waters lapping at the shore. A small bluff overlooks the water. The couple knew immediately that the smallish hill would make an ideal vantage point for viewing the lake as well as the four lighthouses and an island they could see in the distance.

Looking for Logs

With the land purchased, the couple now turned their attention to the type of home they wanted to build on the site. "It was our original intention to have a log home," John says. The couple did some research on log home companies and liked what they found in Town &

Country Cedar Homes, which just happens to be located in the nearby resort town of Petoskey.

After calling the company to inquire about the type of log home packages it had available, a representative invited them and their three children to stay in the company's model home in Petoskey.

"It was a thrill for us and the kids," John says. The next day they met the design staff and took a tour of the company's mill and kiln-drying operation. They

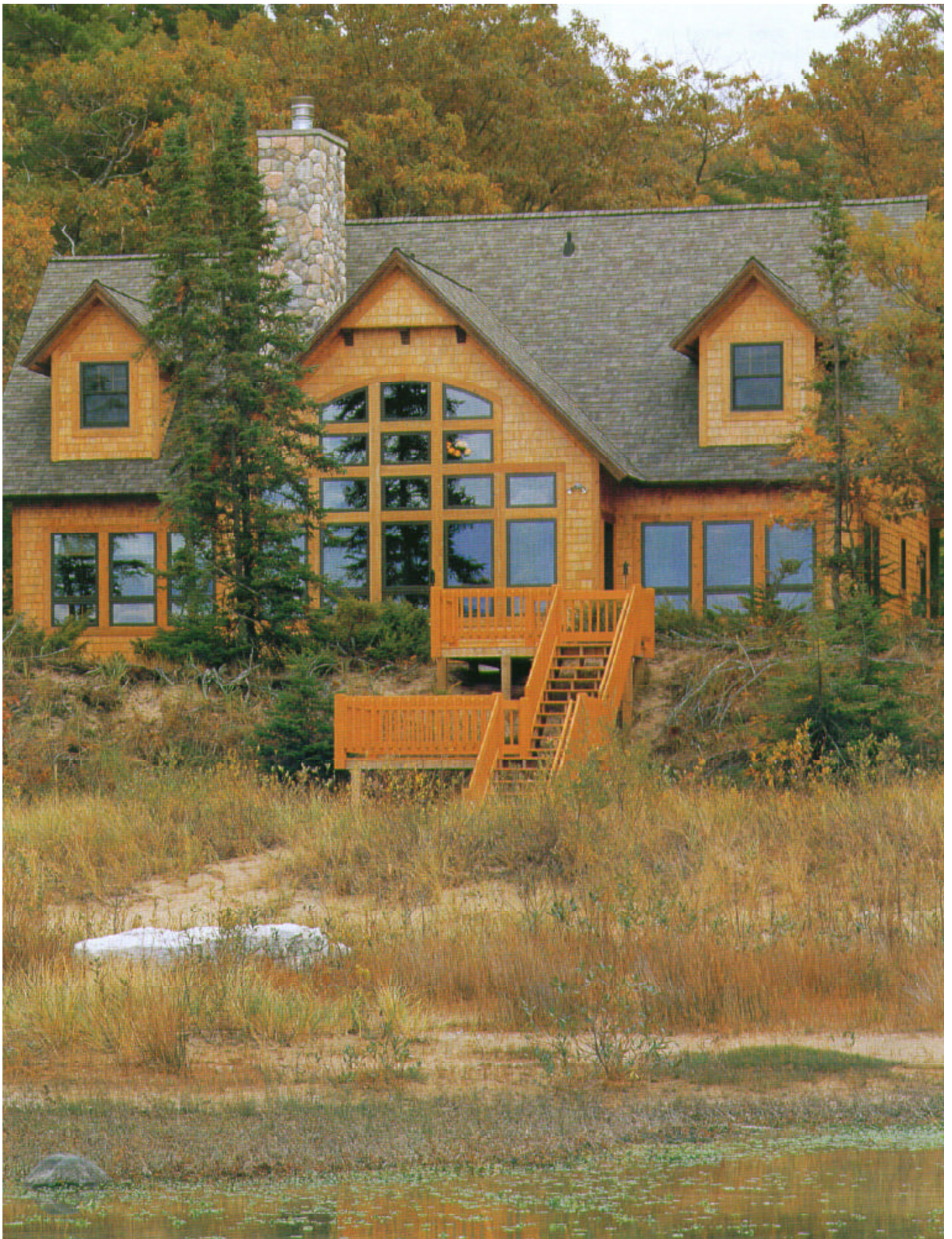
learned that a signature of the company was to put northern white cedar on the exterior of the home. "Since 1947, we have used northern white cedar on the exterior of our homes because of its beauty and natural resistance to insects, moisture and decay," says Scott Paquette, a sales and design manager for Town & Country. "On the interior, we offer cedar as well as other species of wood, since it will be protected from the elements."

While the overnight stay and tour was impressive, what really convinced Lore and John to choose the company was Town & Country's ability to supply almost all the materials needed to complete the home as well as provide a contractor to construct it to turn key. "They would do the complete job from start to finish," John says.

"The fact that we were four hours away made it a lot easier knowing that there was just one person responsible for the entire project," Lore adds.

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After doing some subsequent research on the Internet and through Town & Country's web site, the couple decided to modify one of the company's stock log home plans to make it better fit their particular needs. "But as we got further into the design phase," John says, "we changed our minds and decided not to go with a log home."

Once Upon a Cottage

Since they would probably only build a vacation home once, the Wagners decided to follow their hearts and go with a home that resembled not a log home, but a European cottage with stucco, stone and timbers on the outside. "John and I have always really liked timber homes in the Tudor style," Lore says. "That old European look has always appealed to us. When we told Town & Country, they said: 'Well, we can do that, too.'"

To give the design team a better idea of what cottage style meant to her, Lore scoured books she had collected on cottages and marked photos she liked. "Later I sat down with one of the company's designers and we went page by page through the books," Lore says. "I pointed out the things that I liked. A couple of months later he mailed us concept drawings—and they were exactly as we had hoped."

One minor problem had to be resolved, however, before the plans could be finalized. Because the home was to be located in a region with sand dunes (which are managed by the state to make sure the lake's ecosystem is preserved), the design had to be approved by the local sand dunes authority. "We were a little restricted about where we could put the house on the property," Lore says. "You're not allowed to move a dune or interfere with a dune in any way."

Town & Country took the geographic survey of the property the



A pair of elegant hammerbeam trusses work together to hold up the roof over the great room. The trusses frame the couple's wood-burning fireplace, which was constructed from cultured stone.







Above: Decorative ceiling rafters were included in the design of both the kitchen and dining room to extend the look of the frame into rooms adjacent to the great room. White walls and light-colored furnishings contrast with the dark timbers.

Left: Easy-to-clean tile tops the floors in the kitchen and dining room. Pine cabinets, white Corian countertops and dark beamwork create an interesting play between light and dark colors.

couple had received when they bought it and identified two possible locations for the house. After meeting with the dunes authority, they decided to site the house on a small bluff overlooking the dunes. "It worked out real well because that meant that we could elevate the main floor of the house (to give it a better view of the lake), and put in a basement," John says. "Normally homes in that area don't have basements."

With their home sited, the plans could be finalized and a date set for construction to begin. Building the approximately 2,700-square-foot home took a little more than a year to complete.

Storybook Ending

The home resembles a European cottage on the inside and out, just as Lore and John had requested. While Swiss chalet-looking shutters, stucco and cedar shingles define the style on the outside, inside, the European feel is underlined with decoratively carved timberwork and the use of darker colors against lighter backgrounds. For instance, to give the frame an Old World look, the Wagners requested that all the Douglas fir timbers used in their home's post-and-beam structure be stained a dark mahogany similar to what is found in centuries-old timber frame buildings in Germany and throughout Europe. In contrast, the



LET FREEDOM RING

While the Douglas fir post-and-beam structure is only in the great room, wood can be found in this child's bedroom and throughout the home—mostly in the form of tongue-and-groove cedar planking either on walls or ceilings.



Lore's interest in contrasting colors can be found not only in the darker frame set against the lighter tongue-and-groove planking in the great room, but in her choice of furnishings and finishes for the master bedroom, too.

tongue-and-groove cedar planking on the ceiling was given a golden hue and the walls were given a crisp coat of white paint. "I wanted the lighter cedar and the darker Douglas fir for the contrast," Lore says. "I have that theme repeated in many places throughout the house."

The timbers themselves hark back to an earlier era, with their elegantly curved knee braces and large wooden caps, discreetly hiding the place where fasteners are located (the frame employs metal joinery to hold timbers together). Hammerbeam trusses reminiscent of those found in old European churches complete the look. "The hammerbeam trusses in the great room are the focal point in the house," Lore says. "The balcony upstairs looks out through the hammerbeams to Lake Michigan. It is very attractive."

To keep the cost of their home affordable, the couple decided to feature large structural framework only in the great

room. "People tend to put the big impact items in the rooms where they're going to spend the most time, especially if there are budget limitations," Town & Country's Scott Paquette says. Decorative ceiling rafters in the kitchen and dining room pull the look together and extend the look of the frame beyond the great room.

Outside, the small king post truss under the gabled entrance is the first indication that something special lays just beyond Lore and John's front door. As guests move through the house they encounter not only the elegant hammerbeams, but also the incredible view of Lake Michigan beyond the floor-to-ceiling windows in the great room. It has an enchanting effect on guests that the Wagners relish each time someone new comes into the home. **THI**

RESOURCES:

Town & Country Cedar Homes,
www.cedarhomes.com (800) 968-3178