

# our home

*in the finger lakes*

MARCH 2017

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MARCH 2017

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Upgrade the basics and brighten rooms in your home inexpensively.

*letter from Our Home...*

Bucket List: Wandering the corridors of a castle may be on it. Letting your fingers trace the carved wood moldings that frame the halls or feel the cool limestone exterior handcrafted more than a century ago. It's probably on a lot of people's lists but sometimes life gets in the way and dreams are put on hold. Fortunately for us, we have our very own castle right here in the Finger Lakes: The Belhurst Castle in Geneva, and this grand chateau is always welcoming guests.

*Our Home* will take you on a tour of the splendid mansion that is now a highly rated resort. After its first owners sold it back during the Prohibition times, the castle was used as a speakeasy and gambling spot. Now, with all its modern-day amenities, the Belhurst Castle is a renowned place to get away and experience a luxurious trip back in time. The castle not only has overnight accommodations but two restaurants and a spa. It's something you'd expect to find in Geneva, Switzerland but it's nestled right here on the banks of Seneca Lake in Geneva, New York.

Maybe along with your Bucket List, you're thinking of your golden years. Well, you wouldn't be alone. Local architects are seeing a trend in "downsizing" and creating dream houses for aging residents. Homeowners are being smart and building for one-floor, easy-maintenance living and keeping future accessibility in mind. They are also incorporating a wave of technology in kitchens, baths and lighting.

We all want our homes unique but many of us have "builder-grade" materials throughout them. It seemed like a reasonable way to save time and money. But it may be your time to upgrade. *Our Home* has some ideas for turning average into astounding.

So wherever you are in your life's journey, this March issue of *Our Home in the Finger Lakes* will help keep you on course; it may even help you check off some of your Bucket List.

— Jennifer Reed, Niche Manager

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# BELHURST CASTLE geneva's european destination.

BY DONNA DE PALMA | FREELANCE WRITER  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF BELHURST CASTLE AND NEIL SJOBLUM



*The property that surrounds Belhurst Castle was originally the site of a Seneca Indian village and home to the Council of the Six Nations of Iroquois.*

Castles evoke images of kings and queens, riches and ritual — something most assume can only be found in Europe. The Belhurst Castle in Geneva, however, brings a little of this European charm to upstate New York. The mansion, which overlooks Seneca Lake, now provides lodging for visitors to the Finger Lakes, but this wasn't always the case.

“Nearly everyone asks about the early days of Belhurst. They want to know who built this place and why,” said Quinn Hurley, manager of lodging at the mansion.



Quinn Hurley, Lodging Manager | Belhurst Castle

Hurley tells the tale of Mrs. Carrie Collins, then known as Carrie Harron, a woman who went prospecting for land in New York state. She was shown a piece that was once home to the Council of the Six Nations of Iroquois on May 16, 1885. Falling in love, with both her real estate agent and the land, Collins bought the land that very day.

Collins and the real estate agent married but the marriage didn't last nearly as long as the transaction. She divorced the agent to marry Captain Louis Dell Collins, a naval officer who also practiced law. Together, the two built "Bellehurst," meaning "beautiful forest" with the help of two architects, Fuller and Wheeler.

*Carrie Collins, the original owner of "Bellehurst" came from England to the United States as a woman of means. A pair of Japanese golden pheasants roamed the lawn as one of her most prized possessions. The birds are depicted on the china at Bellehurst Castle even today.*

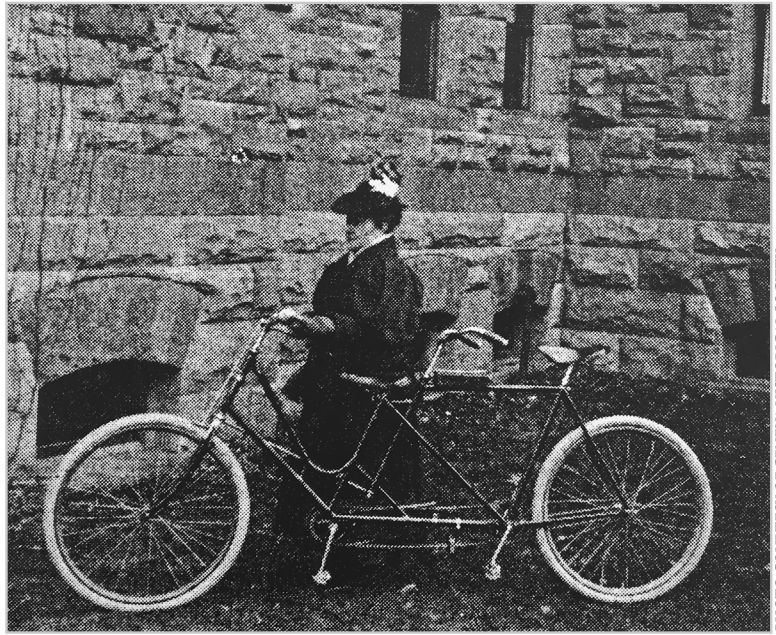


PHOTO COURTESY OF GENEVA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



*The Tower Suite is named after the iconic symbol of Bellehurst Castle's tower. The largest room, has 20-foot high-beamed ceiling and intricately hand-carved oak trim molding.*

The four-story mansion, now known as Bellehurst Castle has been converted into eleven period guest rooms. Two cottages and a ranch home on the grounds are also available for reservations. Two restaurants, Edgar's, a period steakhouse, and Stonecutters, a newer addition to the mansion, provide dinner and tavern fare for guests. The Isabella Spa and Salon and a winery have also been added to the estate.

Hurley believes what guests find most appealing is the mansion's architectural ambiance. "The woodworking, hand carvings, wood

molding and trim in cherry, tiger oak and mahogany are truly magnificent. Red limestone on the exterior of the mansion came from Medina, New York," notes Hurley.

The architecture and history of this 19th century estate is echoed in how the rooms are appointed today. Situated in the mansion's tower, The Tower Suite has 20-foot beamed ceilings, a four-poster bed and balcony overlooking Seneca Lake making it a favorite for couples preparing for nuptials at the Castle.



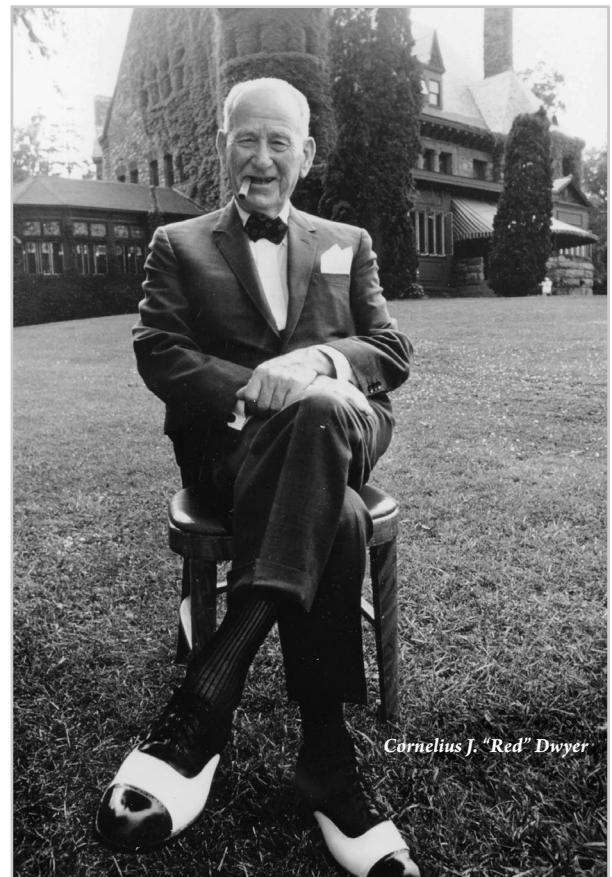
The Tower Suite is the largest room in the mansion, and according to Hurley, the most popular among guests with its widow's walk and hand carved oak staircase. "It was where the Collins took morning tea and watched the sun rise. They also entertained house guests in what is now The Tower Suite."

Named after another colorful personality who purchased the mansion in 1932, Cornelius "Red" Dwyer, The Dwyer Suite is second only to the Tower in popularity. Dwyer opened Belhurst as a speakeasy and gambling spot in 1933 during the Prohibition years. Pressured to shut down gambling operations in 1952, he operated the mansion until 1975.

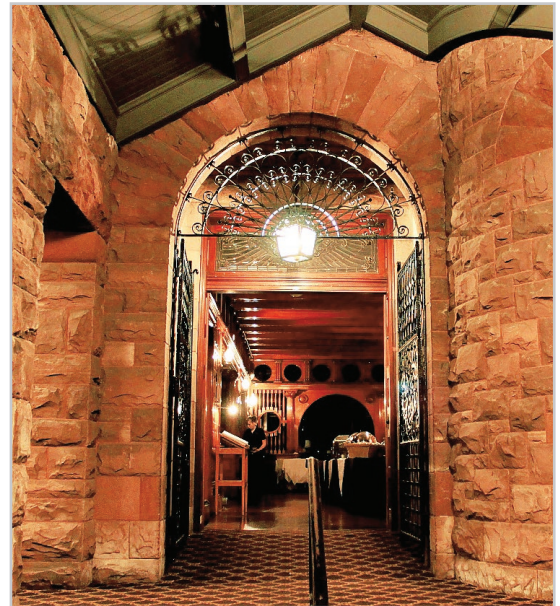
The infamous owner of Belhurst Castle, during the Prohibition Era, Cornelius J. "Red" Dwyer, made the room shown above, his master bedroom. The suite is beautifully appointed with hand-carved cherry oak trim and a magnificent marble fireplace with intricately carved miniature cherry Romanesque columns.



Walk into the quaint Clay Room, a Victorian-style room with carved wood trim. The room is named after Henry Clay, the famous former senator that helped determine the state lines.



Cornelius J. "Red" Dwyer



*Above: The embellished entrance to the 1880s Belhurst Castle leads into Edgar's restaurant, offering delectable selections ranging from breakfast to romantic candlelit dinners. Left top: Turn back the hands of time and place yourself in the glory days of a 1900s Georgian Revival Farm Mansion. Left center: Find cool spirits, scrumptious tavern fare and warm fires any time of the year at Stonecutters restaurant. Left bottom: Nestled inside the prestigious and historic castle, Isabella Spa-Salon takes you away from life's everyday stresses.*



The Dwyer Suite, originally the master bedroom in the mansion, was home to Dwyer for many of the years he owned the mansion. The suite's hand carved cherry oak trim is a perfect backdrop for its grand marble fireplace. Miniature Romanesque columns flank a cherry wood mantel. Jeweled stained glass windows and a view of the lake, a half-circle turret, and a four-poster Queen bed make this suite an ideal spot for a romantic getaway.

White Springs Manor, a 12-room Georgian Revival Farm Mansion, lies two miles west of Belhurst Castle on the grounds of the estate. The location of one of the first dairy farms in New York state, guests check in at Belhurst and are directed to the Manor if they prefer more privacy during their stay. The unstaffed Manor overlooks vineyards and Seneca Lake.

The Vinifera Inn at Belhurst is yet another option for guests seeking a quiet retreat from the everyday.

Two cottages, The Carriage House and Ice House, one originally used as a stable for horses and the other to preserve perishables, and Dwyer House, a ranch house on the grounds that Red Dwyer retired to in later years, each offer accommodations for guests.

If you plan to visit Belhurst Castle, bring your favorite someone. Belhurst Castle was voted one of the most romantic places in New York State and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

• • •



# tracking trends in 2017

*Home design swings toward smaller houses, townhomes and mixed use developments.*

ARTICLE BY  
DONNA DE PALMA  
FREELANCE WRITER



SCOTT POWELL  
ARCHITECTURA



DANIEL R. LONG  
ARCHITECT + ASSOCIATES



Architectural trends for residential homes point to smaller, more efficient homes for 2017 and beyond. “If downsizing can be considered a trend, we’re seeing ‘empty nesters’ moving out of big suburban houses and into high-end condos, upscale townhouses and apartments that are closer to the leisure activities they enjoy,” said architect Scott Powell of Architectura, a firm that designs new homes in and around the Finger Lakes.

Powell said this trend, which emerged after the 2009 housing downturn, is not purely driven by economics. “Many of these townhomes equal or exceed the value of a residential home. People are looking for open floorplans, more maintenance-free living and easy access to places where they dine, shop and work.”

Large suburban tract homes are making way for mixed use housing developments with built-in amenities; younger homeowners are less interested in traditional housing subdivisions or remote locations. Building can be more expensive in higher density areas, so smaller homes make this type of housing affordable.

Dan Long, of Daniel R. Long, Architect + Associates,

who’s been designing homes in the Finger Lakes for 14 years, had hopes the residential market would rebound after the 2009 recession, and it has, just in the last two years.

“It’s been a long road for many in the profession,” Long said. “Before 2009, there was a major increase in tear downs and rebuilds on the Finger Lakes. People were demolishing older cottages to make way for new homes. After 2009, the number of these projects dropped significantly. There were fewer requests for new construction and additions too. [Now] clients are revisiting delayed projects and there are some new start-ups. Things are beginning to happen again.”

According to Long, his clients with larger homes are opting to sell. “People are finding smaller homes. They are renovating or building with a goal of creating their ‘dream home.’ Whether located in the woods or on a lake, the idea of realizing that ideal continues to motivate them.”

Both architects point to better efficiency in layout and energy usage as priorities for their clients. Long said his clients ask for flexible floor plans and anything that reduces maintenance. “One-floor living with future accessibility in mind is key.”

One trend that Powell finds exciting is the use of fewer applied materials. “We recently moved into a new office. Instead of putting up a suspended ceiling, we decided on the exposed roof structure. When I look up, I see the underside of a roof, light fixtures suspended directly from that structure and steel beams.” Powell said the studio-style space aids creativity. He prefers it to working in an enclosed office or cubicle.

Powell sees a demand for unstructured, unfinished, loft-style space from commercial clients, but this trend has been slow to catch on in the residential market. “We’re eager for more contemporary residential design work with its emphasis on outdoor living and immediate access to porches and decks — design that features larger windows and exposed structural elements, but so far locally, residential design continues on a more traditional trajectory.”

Creating spaces for outdoor living continues to be a popular feature that’s building steam nationally. This trend which began with oversized porches, decks and patios, is expanding to include outdoor kitchens and seemingly outdoor living rooms.

The home office is making a resurgence as Baby Boomers and Gen Xers prepare to work from home. As homes get smaller, the home office is expanding and becoming an important feature.

Technology is quickly moving into kitchens and bathrooms. Designing a built-in infrastructure within a home to support electronics and lighting is trending. Technology is now being used for conservation of water and energy.

Also trending is an increased interest in creating a healthy environment within the home. Improving indoor air and water quality has become a central focus for many homeowners.

Soon the formal living and dining room will be a thing of the past, replaced by the kitchen. Kitchens are now bigger, include seating and the latest design concepts like mixed metals, mixed woods and new materials such as terrazzo, cork and resins.

Lean construction techniques, innovative materials and more advanced design modeling software are changing the way people think about architectural design. Unlike the past, what could only be imagined can now be drafted and configured with limitless variations. With smarter clients who do their own research on the features they want to incorporate in their homes, home design takes a leap in 2017 and beyond.

• • •

*Editor’s note: Donna De Palma, MFA, studied painting, design and photography. She has interviewed and worked with many interior designers and architects in her current role as a freelance writer and as a public relations consultant. De Palma uses her knowledge of color theory, surface pattern and 3D design to create simple, elegant home decor that is comfortable and affordable.*



“ ONE-FLOOR LIVING WITH FUTURE ACCESSIBILITY IN MIND IS KEY. — DAN LONG ”





# a new home for “Old Betsy”

BY DONNA DE PALMA | FREELANCE WRITER  
PHOTOS BY JACK HALEY | MESSENGER POST MEDIA



OLD BETSY PHOTOS COURTESY OF FRANK DE LUCA | SWBR ARCHITECTS

Most of you know, “Old Betsy” was the nickname Davy Crockett gave to his beloved first rifle, so it’s not surprising a group of local firefighters used the name for one of their most treasured trucks.

But where do you store such an antique when modern equipment takes over the firehouse?

Finding a new home for “Old Betsy” is on the minds of members of the Pittsford Volunteer Fire Department.

The department is eyeing an 1850 two-story residence at 19 North Main Street in Pittsford and an adjacent carriage house for the antique fire truck, circa 1925, and two old hose carts.

Frank DeLuca, architect, AIA, of SWBR Architects is project manager for the proposed expansion and renovation which evolved from a series of master plans he prepared for the firefighters, first in 2007, and then, in 2010.



**FRANK DE LUCA**  
SWBR ARCHITECTS



DeLuca said the 2010 master plan illustrates how much space is required to meet the current need. “The department is ‘busting at the seams’ and the carriage house with its large overhead doors and historic look lends itself to housing antique fire equipment.” Proposed as part of this capital improvement campaign is more glass for the Carriage House exterior and soft lighting so the trucks can be visible to passersby.

The two buildings will be used by the department’s membership for gatherings and official business. An outside area is proposed that would serve as a memorial to firefighters across the country and the Firefighters Brotherhood.

SWBR landscape architects could assist with the design and planting of that space, according to DeLuca. The project began with an abatement program for the two structures to eliminate environmental hazards like asbestos and lead paint. Final plans are in proposal form awaiting approvals and funding. “Our dream is to have the project completed by 2018,” said DeLuca.

The addition to the house at 19 North



Main Street will serve primarily as a meeting space and will reflect the historic nature of the surrounding neighborhood, said DeLuca.

This project is a culmination of a 10-year relationship between DeLuca and the fire department. DeLuca, who’s spent over 12 years working exclusively with local fire districts, says he knows intimately the unique needs and space required for smooth operation of this vital community service. “This project is near and dear to my heart. A personal passion of mine. A dream project.”



*Editor’s Note:  
Messenger Post Media plans to revisit “Old Betsy’s” home once it is approved and the community project is completed.*

# a upgrade the basics and brighten rooms in your home inexpensively

# grade above

BY LAURA FIRSZT | NETWORKX.COM



“Builder grade” is a term used to refer to home construction materials. It is the lowest ranking, compared to quality, custom and ultra custom grades. If you live in a builder grade home, you may find that the finishings, although in good shape, are a bit too basic for your taste. How can you make your house a real home, one that meshes with your family’s style, without renovating on a large scale (and sending perfectly usable materials to the landfill)? A few inexpensive cosmetic updos can work wonders to upgrade basic builder grade.

## Kitchen

The kitchen is the heart of most homes and the cabinets are the largest item in this important room. Because they are so visible, cabinets tend to be the most complained-about builder grade feature. The simplest way to make basic oak or particle board kitchen cabinets more upscale and modern is by sanding and painting them. While you are in painting mode, you might want to revamp the counters as well. There is paint available that will give almost any type of countertop — laminate, tile, wood or solid surface — the glamorous look of granite.

If you are up for a more enterprising scheme, consider removing the doors from several of the cabinets to create stylish open shelving. A dingy kitchen can be brightened considerably in this way. Just make sure that you organize your dishes and ornaments to design an attractive display. Or take the opposite tack and build your kitchen cabinets up to the ceiling and cover the addition with crown molding. This not only produces an elegant, sophisticated look but eliminates a dust-catching surface that is difficult to clean.



### Living and dining room

Molding and wainscoting can also add a touch of class to living and dining room walls. This is an easy DIY project. For extra oomph, apply wallpaper above, or beadboard below, your new wall trim. Building frames out of molding material is another quick fix that provides dramatic flair to your builder grade windows.

Install built-in bookcases or cupboards for both beauty and practical storage space. The look of costly custom built-ins can be faked with inexpensive units from IKEA.

### Bathroom

Builder grade bathrooms, especially mirrors and vanities, are another pet peeve among homeowners. Adding a frame and some shelving helps to define the huge expanse of mirror typically found in standard construction.

Vanities may be painted, similarly to kitchen cabinets. As an alternative, add trendy door inserts, such as glass or metal mesh. One popular trend is replacing the vanity altogether with a quirkily charming repurposed piece of furniture. Two great transformations are a dining room buffet or a vintage sewing machine table turned into a unique bathroom vanity. Don't forget to repurpose the old vanity as well ... perhaps as a potting bench?

Changing hardware and light fixtures will also make a big difference in your bathroom and all through the house. You could purchase new ones, but why not recycle the old by spray painting them a more up-to-date shade?

### Garage door

One builder grade garage feature that homeowners generally seem less troubled by is basic garage doors. However, the door of your garage, one of the first things that passersby notice about your home, plays a large role in your home's curb appeal. If you are hoping to sell your property, especially in a relatively slow real estate market, your garage door deserves an upgrade.

Once again, paint is a versatile tool, which you can use to give the entire door a warm, appealing appearance. For a change of pace, do the trim in a crisply contrasting hue. You can even paint on faux carriage house windows.

...

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# Q and A



ROBIN HARGRAVE

BY DONNA DE PALMA  
FREELANCE WRITER  
PHOTOGRAPHS  
SUBMITTED BY  
ROBIN HARGRAVE

*Our Home in the Finger Lakes* spoke to local architect, **Robin Wandersee Hargrave**, about her thoughts on being an architect, on the value of historic preservation and on what inspires and guides her design work.

**Our Home:** What were the early influences that led to you becoming an architect?

**Hargrave:** Likely my family and surroundings were the biggest influence to becoming an architect. I grew up in a small ranch house, both my parents were teachers, so we were taught to work diligently and take studies seriously. My grandmother, however, owned several adult care homes that I remember loving to visit. These huge and beautiful older homes seemed to go on forever. As children, we'd visit my grandmother's residents. They were wonderful people and loved my grandmother and meeting her grandchildren. I was always more interested in exploring those buildings — I could draw the floor plans of most of those houses today.

**Our Home:** You are known for specializing in renovation and adaptive reuse. What is it about historic preservation that interests you?

**Hargrave:** Older buildings have such an appeal for me and historic preservation just makes good sense. I live in this world; my profession is to create living spaces, so why would I not be concerned about preserving our buildings and our environment? We, as a society, are coming to the realization that the earth and its resources are real and limited. A great quote by Donovan Rypkema, a real estate guru and space planner I admire, sums it up, "At most, perhaps 10% of what the environmental movement does, advances the cause of historic preservation. But 100% of what the preservation movement does advances the cause of the environment."

**Our Home:** What are some of your primary strengths as a designer and an architect?

**Hargrave:** I listen. That's my greatest skill as a designer. I hear what my clients need and want, things they may not be able to verbalize. If I know what they want, then I can be creative, if they let me.

*"I tend to look to antique homes for inspiration, even when designing a new home."*

— Robin Hargrave

**Our Home:** Can you give a few examples of things that inspire your designs?

**Hargrave:** I'm inspired by a challenge. So working within an existing home, taking clues from what's already there, the proportions, massing and detailing is one of my greatest inspirations. I tend to look to antique homes for inspiration, even when designing a new home.

**Our Home:** Can you give an example of a transformation, a home that was completely reinvented by your architectural design?

**Hargrave:** I designed an addition to a home in Oswego several years ago. I think it originally was a Liberty Home, another version of a Sears mail order house. Ed owned the home and then married Jane. Ed wanted a garage and Jane with her great sense of style, just didn't love the house. So we set out to transform it into a Craftsman-style bungalow with a three-car garage, on a sloped site. We situated the garage low behind the original house. Jane and I were given free

reign to do whatever we wanted above the garage. We added a master suite, modified the existing interior layout, redesigned the kitchen and living room, added a few window seats and gave the little ranch an Arts and Crafts exterior.

**Our Home:** What is the one design feature that goes a long way in making a home memorable?

**Hargrave:** I love to offer clients ideas for built-ins. Window seats, organization stations, mudroom benches, shelving and cubbies. I think built-ins embody the integration of function and aesthetics. The craftsmanship of a home leaves a lasting impression. Many times it's something you feel, like harmonious proportions of space surrounding you, or more tangibly, a finely-carved newell post.

**Our Home:** What do you consider when planning a space?

**Hargrave:** The flow to and through the space is critical, as are the proportions and natural lighting opportunities. Of course, all of that is dependent on the function of each space.

**Our Home:** What do you tell a homeowner who's considering a major remodel?

**Hargrave:** I ask my client to consider how their needs could be met with minimal impact to the character of their existing home unless the character is something they want to transform also. I think any modification has to enhance the existing structure.

**Our Home:** How do you advise a homeowner who is considering building a new home?

**Hargrave:** I ask clients who want to build from the ground up to come with an open mind, an idea of what spaces they might like to have in their new home and how they would like those spaces to interact with one another. That's so much better than coming in with a floor plan pulled from the internet, something they've

already agonized over. It's usually too cookie-cutter to meet their family's needs.

I also ask them to consider the environment and their building site. For a new build, I discuss energy efficiency design features with my clients. I follow a client's cues but never fail to ask, "Have you considered geothermal or other environmentally-friendly options," just to see if they're open to it.

**Our Home:** Can you identify some historic references that inspire your work?

**Hargrave:** My understanding of how a human interacts and fits within any given space has become clearer as a result of traveling and experiencing historic places and spaces. It's one thing to read about a building and view photographs but it's entirely different to experience it. I specifically remember a few buildings designed by LeCorbusier, while studying abroad. We studied famous architects, LeCorbusier was a favorite at Syracuse University, but in the classroom I'll admit, I wasn't a big fan. Then I went to Europe and walked through a few of his creations. Only then could I understand his manipulation of space — the proportioning and efficiency of his spaces. Corbu's machine for living apartments and Notre Dame du Haut in Romchamp, France resonated with me. LeCorbusier's Notre Dame is a sculptural church on a hilltop. He created a house of worship that transmits light as eloquently as any Gothic cathedral with stained glass and flying buttressing. I also distinctly remember the impact of experiencing the Brion Family Cemetery by Carlo Scarpa. It's a modern, concrete design adjacent to a much older section of cemetery in the countryside of Italy near Venice. The use of



natural light, water, and bold geometric shapes creates a very religious space, which seems to defy its modern materials.

**Our Home:** What are some of your pastimes, hobbies and outside pursuits?

**Hargrave:** I love houses. I would collect houses like some women collect shoes! But, as a family we love the outdoors — campfires, hiking, camping and canoeing. We recently added scuba diving to the mix. We enjoy travel, as often as we can fit it into our busy schedules. Our outings produce photographs, which in turn gives me fodder for my love of scrapbooking. Taking photos and collecting images brings me back full circle to being a designer. I can get lost in the color, texture and layout.

**Our Home:** You're an instructor at Monroe Community College where you teach interior design. Why did you start teaching?

**Hargrave:** I sort of fell into teaching. A friend who taught and wanted to go in a different direction, opened the door to teaching. I walked through that door looking for some predictable income. My parents were both educators and I remember being told as a child, "Oh, you're going to be a teacher, just like your parents, aren't you?" I remember being in front of the first class I ever taught, with a classroom full of students so ready to learn ... and I thought ... I am meant to do this! Although admittedly, I'm a much more complete and happy person when I have a design challenge to solve.

**Our Home:** Are there any misconceptions your students have about architecture and interior design?

**Hargrave:** I think they may underestimate the amount of motivation and dedication it requires to learn about and produce good design.

**Our Home:** Do you have any closing comments on your design philosophy?

**Hargrave:** My education trained me to understand space, to create space and fit it to the human scale. Like the Fibonacci sequence or Michelangelo's proportioning system. Working as an architect in the last few decades has trained me to use what we already have. There's a definite connection between going green, historic preservation and reuse.

**Our Home:** People are always curious about the type of home an architect lives in. Can you tell us about your house?

**Hargrave:** My house is definitely a work in progress. I live on Main Street in the historic village of Lima. The original structure, a carriage factory, dates back to 1795. Sometime around the 1840s, its post and beam structure was converted into Federal style with its two flanking chimneys and a parlor on either side of the center entrance.

I have plans to combine both kitchen and dining room at the back of the house into a great room. We've reconfigured most of the upstairs. Each room now has its own door. With 2,600 square feet to heat, we have also improved the energy efficiency in our home. I can't wait to remove the aluminum siding and restore some exterior character to the house.

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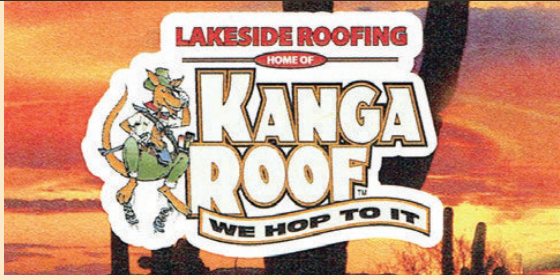
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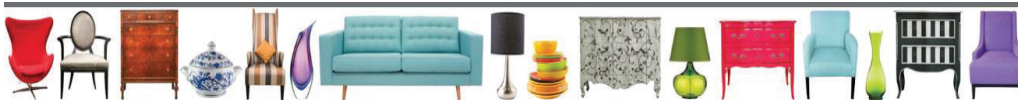
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