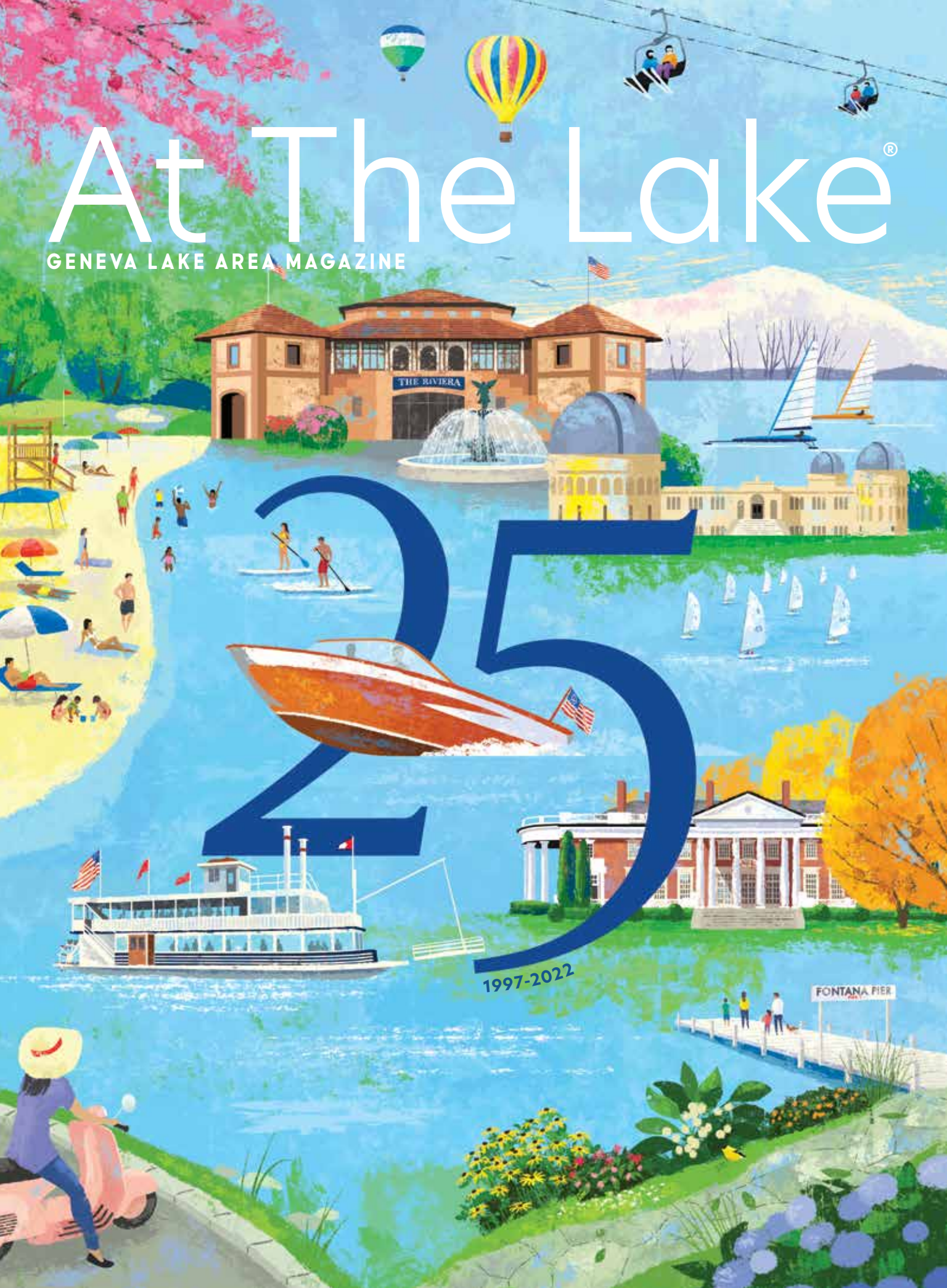


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Growing up in Lake Geneva, I had many summer jobs as a teen. I scooped ice cream for Annie's Ice Cream Parlor on Main Street (now Jimmy John's) and at its Riviera location. I worked at the Lake Geneva Youth Camp in the dining room. I cleared tables at the St. Moritz (now the Baker House). I cleaned rooms at the Ambassador Hotel (now Wrightwood) and sold admission to Paradise Golf Park. I loved living here — we spent summer afternoons at the beach with our beach tags pinned to our swimsuits, we visited the library weekly for a stack of books to read, and our highlight of the summer was walking around Venetian Festival.

In 1997, I started my dream job. As a communication arts major, I loved writing and hoped for a career in journalism. I also worked in the photography department in college. So when the small publishing company I worked for decided to launch a local magazine, I was all in.

I started as the photo editor, collecting images from local photographers and using my own camera, taking my film to McCullough's drugstore in Walworth to be processed into slides. Over the years I have written features, served as editor of *At The Lake* and other magazines we produce, helped publish several local history books, taken photographs (using all my kids and their friends as models), and handled the financial side of the company.

The Nei and Turner of Nei-Turner Media Group, Gary Nei and Bill Turner, believed in me and entrusted me to manage and grow the business through new magazine and event launches as well as acquisitions of new publications. Today our company publishes 20 titles and has offices in Lake Geneva and Madison, with employees in Wisconsin, Illinois, Georgia and South Dakota. But *At The Lake* will always be my first love.

I am grateful to Bill and Gary for the opportunities over the past 25 years to write, research the history of Geneva Lake, and to make a living in my hometown. I am also thankful for our staff, who use their talents to create this beautiful magazine every quarter. Together we are thrilled to share this special 25th anniversary issue with you and hope you have enjoyed reading our magazines as much as we have enjoyed producing them.



Barb Krause
Publisher/CEO
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Dear readers,

A new children's book called "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" was released in the United Kingdom. A 21-year-old Tiger Woods became the youngest golfer ever to win the Masters Tournament. "The Lion King Musical" debuted on Broadway. And *At The Lake Magazine* premiered on local newsstands ... all of these things happened in 1997. That's right — we are celebrating our 25th anniversary, and we want to share the celebration with you, our readers!

That's why we've added this extra special issue of *At The Lake*, a keepsake edition unlike any other we've produced before. In it, you will find updated and newly designed versions of some of our most popular articles from years past, including a tour of the home formerly named Glanworth Gardens, the lakefront estate of the late Richard H. Driehaus, which recently sold to new owners for a record-setting \$36 million. There's also a deep-dive into the history of the antique, wooden boats that are so beloved on Geneva Lake, written by our longtime photographer and image editor Holly Leitner. And for architecture buffs, we are reprinting our piece on the Delavan Lake homes designed by the architect Frank Lloyd Wright, which has remained a reader favorite since it was first published in 2014.

However, we aren't content to celebrate our history merely through retrospection — we're also looking forward, with new articles that capture the magic of the Geneva Lake area in ways we have not yet examined. One of the pieces we're most excited about is a new look at one of the most popular activities in the area — hiking the Shore Path — written by our publisher and CEO, Barb Krause (who has been with *At The Lake* since our first issue!). She spent time this summer walking the full length of the Shore Path with senior graphic designer Lauren Harrigan and graphic designer/ad coordinator Jerriann Mullen, to gather the inside scoop on the current state of this popular hiking trail, and capture new photos of the ever-changing architectural landscape.

Most importantly, however, we know that our success over the past 25 years is due to our incredibly supportive advertisers and to you, our loyal readers. We hope you'll consider this special issue of *At The Lake* a heartfelt note of thanks! We can't wait to see what the next 25 years will bring.

Anne Morrissy
Editor
anne@ntmediagroup.com



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A handful of our current advertisers have been with us since the very first issue, but no one has placed more ads in *At The Lake* over the years than The Abbey Resort and Chuck's Lakeshore Inn.



IT'S A MIRACLE

My first byline in *At The Lake* appeared with this profile of Carolyn Gable in the Winter 2009 issue. For an update on Gable's beloved Shore Path fence, check out page 70!



WRITTEN IN THE STARS

Photographer Holly Leitner started out as an editorial intern in 2004. Her name first appeared in print in the Winter 2005 issue when she wrote this charming stargazing story.

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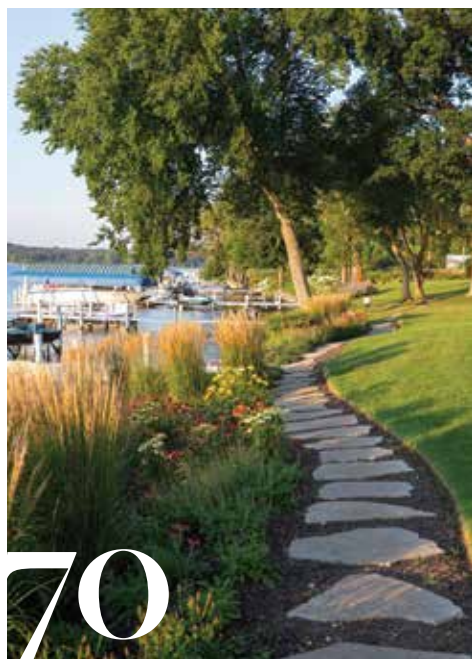


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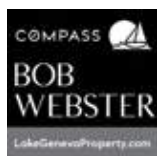
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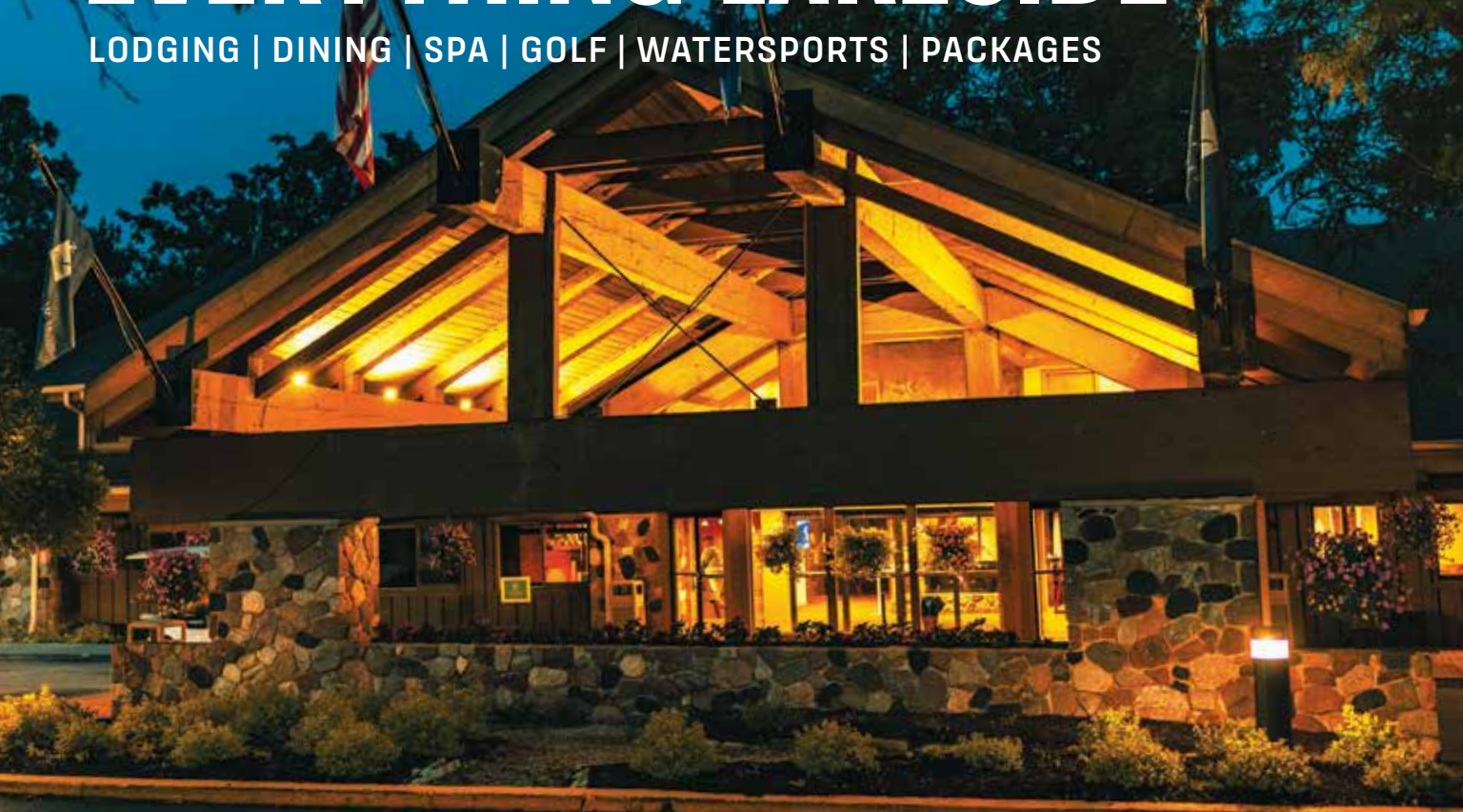
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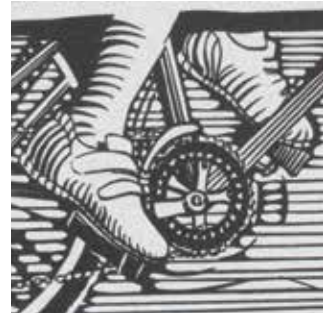
1997 – PRESENT



1997



2000



2003



2004

While *At The Lake* has gone through many changes over the past 25 years, one section that has remained a part of the magazine from the very beginning is *Currents*, where we highlight new and noteworthy happenings in the community. To commemorate our 25th anniversary, we are highlighting some of the most memorable things that have appeared in *Currents* over the years, many of which continue to resonate with readers today. Join us for a trip down memory lane.

BY ANNE MORRISSY



2008



2012



2015



2016



2017



2020

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1997

Yerkes Observatory celebrates 100 years of operation

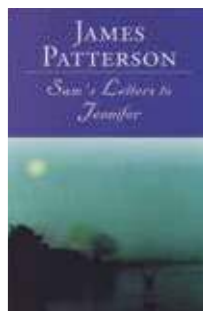
“The birthplace of modern American astronomy, Yerkes Observatory, in Williams Bay, will officially be 100 years old on October 21, 1997.” Our first-ever issue of *At The Lake* celebrated this milestone, reporting that Yerkes would host several community events over a three-day period to commemorate the milestone. (For the latest on Yerkes Observatory, check out “Ageless Architecture” on page 46.)



2000

Geneva Lake Conservancy preserves 160 acres in the Town of Linn

“After years of effort, the Geneva Lake Conservancy has helped to forever preserve the natural beauty of 160 acres in the Town of Linn.” In our Autumn 2000 issue, we highlighted a new land acquisition, which ultimately led to the establishment of the modern-day Linn Nature Park. The land was donated to the Town of Linn by Melita Grunow (see “How Majestic,” page 104).



2004

Author James Patterson releases “Sam’s Letters to Jennifer,” set in Lake Geneva

“This summer, local residents welcomed James Patterson to celebrate his latest book, ‘Sam’s Letters to Jennifer,’ set in present-day Lake Geneva.” The book went on to become the 10th best-selling fiction hardcover book of 2004. More than 500 fans waited outside the Lake Geneva Public Library, some for more than three hours, to meet the nationally bestselling author.



2003

White River Recreational Trail opens between Elkhorn and Lyons



“Thanks to the efforts of the White River Cycle Club and interested individuals, the DNR and the city of Elkhorn worked together to make the dream of the White River Recreational Trail a reality.” Today, the 19-mile trail has been extended to Burlington and serves as a popular hiking and biking trail in Walworth County.

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2008

George Williams College of Aurora University opens a new pavilion for Music by the Lake

“The immensely popular summer staple, Music by the Lake, launches its eighth season with a unique new performance venue and more exciting concerts.” The new, open-air pavilion stage was named the Ferro Pavilion in honor of benefactors Michael and Jacky Ferro, and today it continues to host the popular music series, as well as additional events and fundraisers.



2012

City of Lake Geneva installs new parking kiosk system

“Parking in Lake Geneva just got harder or easier, depending on your point of view.” Our summer 2012 issue described the new parking meter kiosk system as “George Jetson-style” and asked, “How’s that for progress?” Today, the modern parking kiosk system remains a frequent flash point in the community.

2015

Walldogs murals decorate downtown Delavan

“Due to Delavan’s unique and interesting history, the city has been chosen as the site for a mural painting marathon.” A group of professional artists and sign painters collectively known as Walldogs spent a week in the summer of 2015 painting colorful murals depicting important pieces of Delavan’s history. Many of the murals remain today, and provide a popular backdrop for Instagram photos.



2016

New magic theater opens in Lake Geneva

“Among the newest to downtown Lake Geneva shops and attractions is the Tristan Crist Magic Theatre, an intimate (but comfortable!) 43-seat theater.” Master illusionist Crist’s initial location at the intersection of Main and Mill proved so popular that he has since built a new, larger theater on Edwards Boulevard.

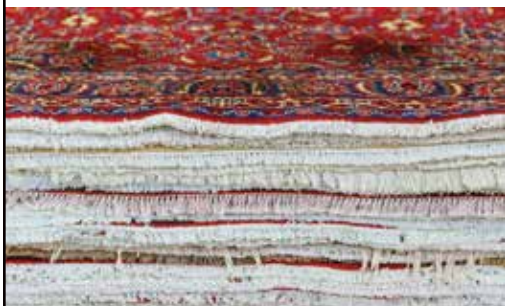
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2017

Lake Geneva hotels gain historic recognition

“Two of Lake Geneva’s historic mansions are set to be inducted into a prestigious hotel group.” In 2017, the Maxwell Mansion and the Baker House were both awarded the prestigious Historic Hotels of America designation from the National Trust of Historic Preservation. Today, both sites remain popular with visitors and locals, preserving a piece of Lake Geneva’s history.



2020

Ice Castles moves to Geneva National

“Lake Geneva will again be transformed into a magical winter wonderland as Ice Castles, LLC, returns with a larger and more interactive exhibit.” After its inaugural year on the Riviera Beach in downtown Lake Geneva, the Ice Castles display moved to Geneva National in the winter of 2019-2020, where it remains today. Thousands of visitors each season visit the illuminated ice kingdom. ❄️



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In Memoriam

BY ANNE MORRISSY

Over the past 25 years, *At The Lake* has been lucky enough to work directly with many community leaders, business owners, photographers, researchers and philanthropists. Their passion for the area and their commitment to preserving its history has enhanced our coverage on countless pages across a quarter century of published stories, profiles and photo essays. On the occasion of our 25th anniversary, we take a moment to honor the memory of those we have lost.

Richard Driehaus (1942-2021) Philanthropist and historic preservationist

Driehaus purchased Lake Geneva's Wadsworth Hall in 1999 and spared no expense restoring the 1907 Georgian Revival home to its full glory (see "Preserving Elegance" on page 32). Following that restoration, Driehaus was instrumental in the formation of the Lake Geneva Beautification Committee, donating the funds for the addition of the Driehaus Family Plaza in front of the Riviera, including the replica "Angel of the Waters" fountain, which now anchors the plaza. For more than 20 years, Driehaus' annual birthday fireworks display was a beloved Geneva Lake tradition.

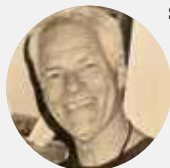


Randy Streblow (1945-2011) After apprenticing under his father from the age of 12, **boat builder** Streblow took over the leadership of his family's Walworth company in 2003 and went on to mentor an entire generation of local wooden boat builders. In 2011 and 2021, local Streblow owners gathered for "Wake the Lake," parading down the lake at sunrise to honor Streblow's memory.



Bruce Thompson

(1947-2020) Talented fine art **photographer** Thompson shot several of the photos that graced the cover of *At The Lake* during our first decade, while maintaining a popular gallery in Walworth where he sold his work. His photos of such local favorites as wooden speedboats (see page 82), iceboats and the Geneva Lake shoreline helped to shape our magazine into what it is today.

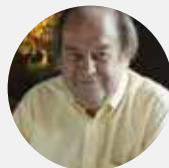


Harold Hartshorne Jr. (1918-2013)

Longtime Lake Geneva resident and generous **philanthropist** Hartshorne was a fixture in many local organizations, including the Lake Geneva YMCA and Horticultural Hall, both supported by his grandfather Simeon B. Chapin, as well as Music by the Lake, the Lake Geneva Public Library, Lake Geneva's Episcopal Church of the Holy Communion and George Williams College of Aurora University.

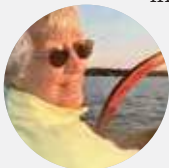


James Dresser (1925-2011) **Architect** and former apprentice to Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin, Dresser left his mark on the Geneva Lake area when he designed the Lake Geneva Public Library, a building he created in a distinctly Wright-ian style. The building was dedicated in 1954.



Joy Rasin (1937-2021)

A passionate **philanthropist** who spent summers in Lake Geneva throughout her life, Rasin contributed her significant talents, resources and knowledge of gardening to local organizations, serving on boards and steering committees of such local institutions as Black Point Estate and Gardens, the Lake Geneva Garden Club and Horticultural Hall in Lake Geneva.



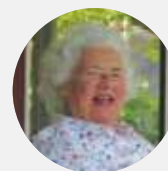
Gary Gyga (1938-2008) **Inventor and game innovator** (and Lake Geneva native) Gyga created the internationally beloved game Dungeons and Dragons, founding TSR, Inc. in Lake Geneva in 1974

for the purpose of producing and distributing the new game. Following D&D's phenomenal success, the company went on to create a full roster of game expansions, novels and even an animated television show. Today, Gyga's memory is honored as part of the Dungeon Hobby Shop Museum in Lake Geneva.



Gwen Tveter (1928-2020)

Local **historian and author** Gwen Tveter served as the founder and president of the Royal Joy Williams chapter of the Questers, and in that role, she volunteered her talents to helping establish the Geneva Lake Museum at its current site on Mill Street. As the first director of Black Point Historic Preserve, she was instrumental in the process of the property's transition from private ownership to its current status as a Wisconsin Historical

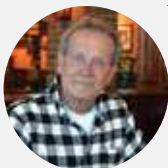



Society public tour site. Additionally, Tveter co-authored "The Black Point Legacy," a book about its history.

Doris Reinke (1922-2018) A **writer and a dedicated historian** of the Geneva Lake area, Reinke was instrumental in placing Elkhorn's Webster House on the National Register of Historic Places. She served as president of the Walworth County Historical Society (WCHS) and collected its archives for many years. Today, the WCHS maintains the Doris M. Reinke Resource Center in her honor.



Ray Strobel (1944-2020) Local **author** Strobel used his experiences living and socializing in the Geneva Lake area as the inspiration for 10 unique books, including



"The Ultimate Cat's Catalog," "Fifty-Eight Things to Do With Your Dog" and "How to Raise a Super Child." 



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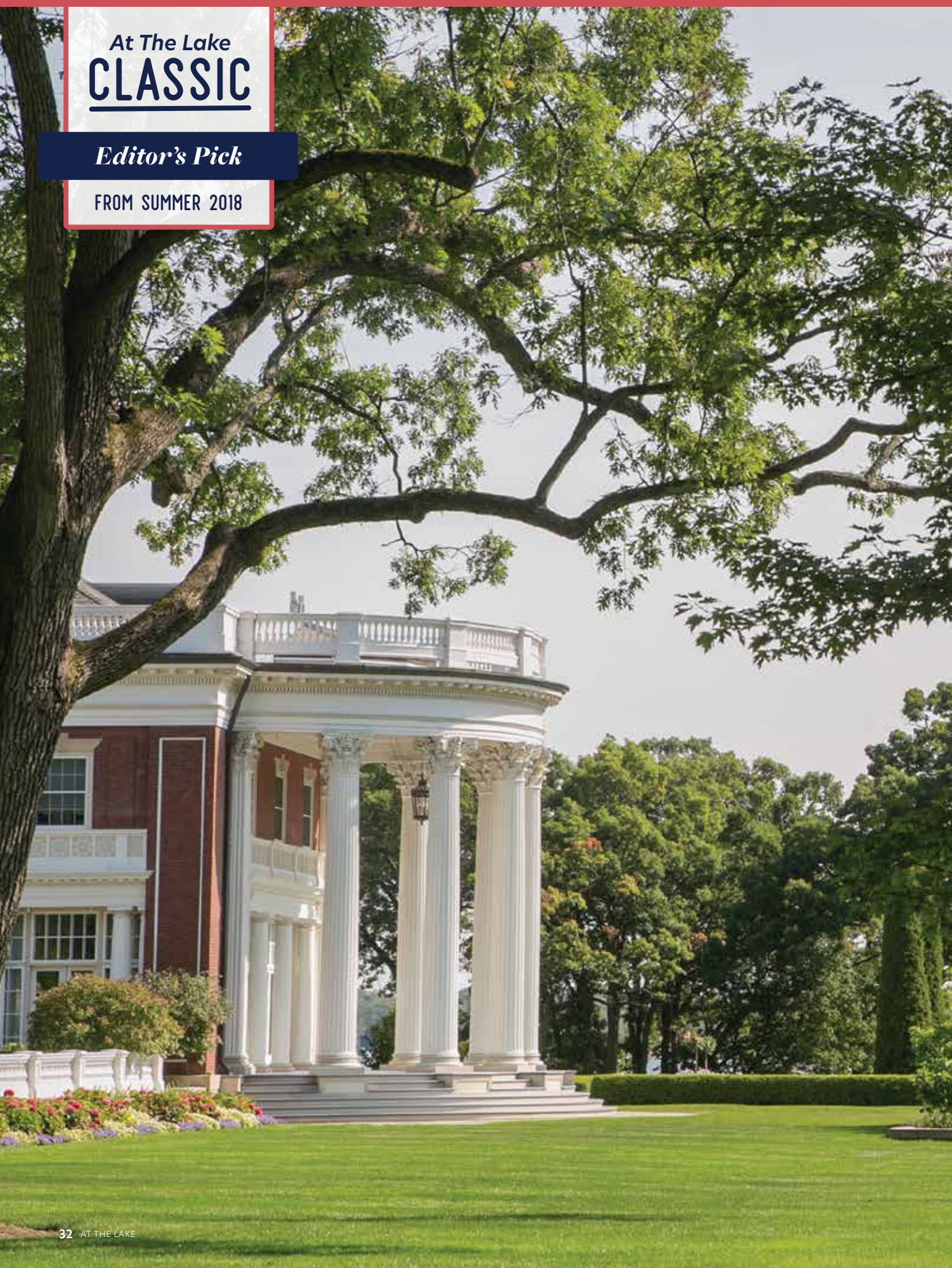


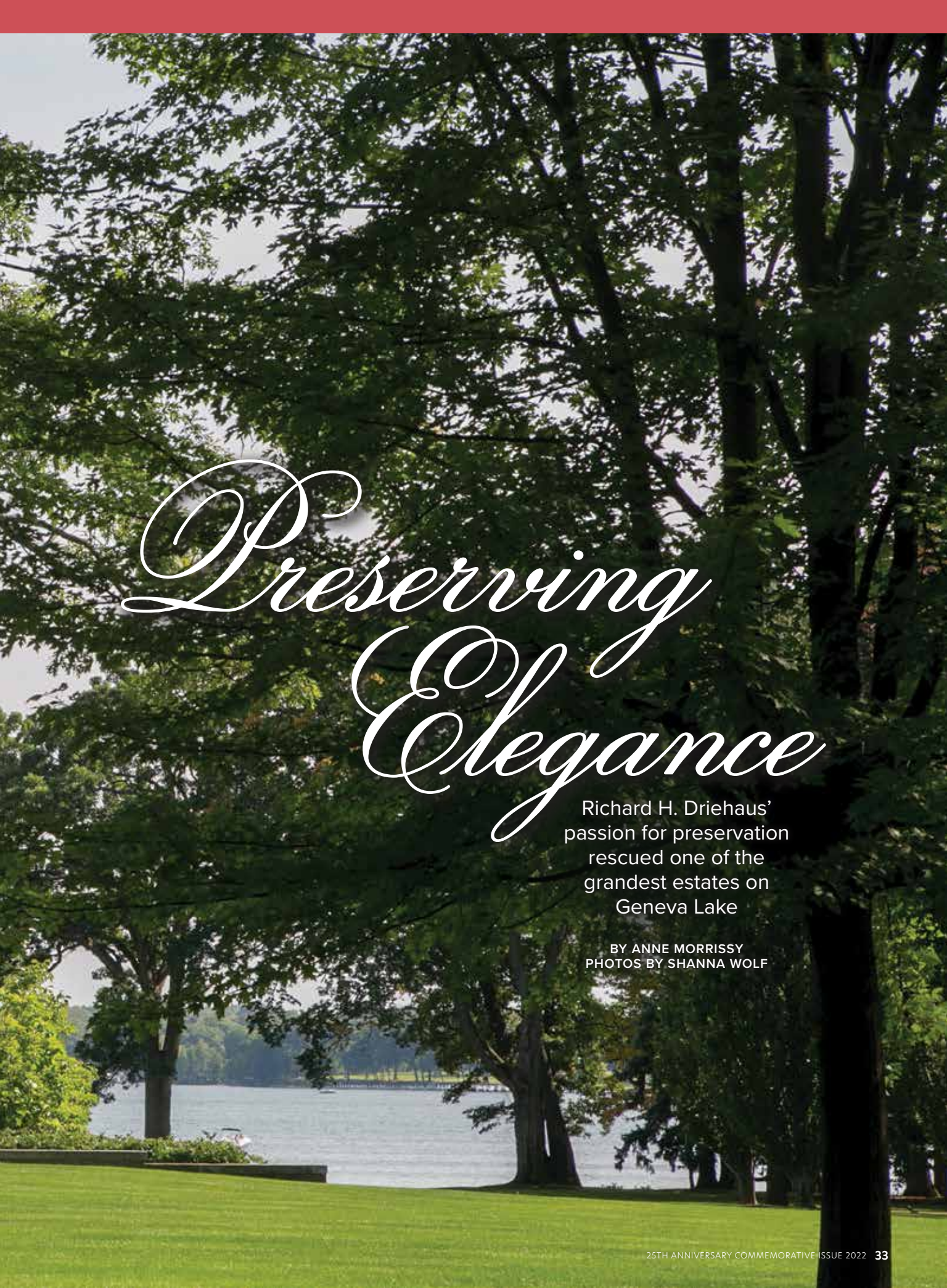
John Tisdall

At The Lake
CLASSIC

Editor's Pick

FROM SUMMER 2018





Preserving Elegance

Richard H. Driehaus'
passion for preservation
rescued one of the
grandest estates on
Geneva Lake

BY ANNE MORRISSY
PHOTOS BY SHANNA WOLF

Editor's note: In March of 2021, we mourned the passing of Richard H. Driehaus, the subject of this article, whose passion for historic preservation and civic beautification enriched Lake Geneva for more than 20 years. Following his death, his Geneva Lake estate, Glanworth Gardens, was sold to new owners for \$36 million, the highest real estate sale in Wisconsin history.

The first time Chicago philanthropist Richard H. Driehaus came to Lake Geneva, he was a college student at DePaul University in Chicago. A member of the Tau Sigma fraternity at the time, he came up one summer for a short trip with a group of his fraternity brothers, and they took a boat ride from the Riviera Docks along the north shore of the lake. His strongest memory of the trip is staring in awe at the opulent estates lining the shore. "I was so amazed at these buildings," he remembered, "and I was wondering if we could walk on the grounds." He had no way of knowing at the time that more than 30 years later, he would purchase possibly the grandest of those historic Geneva Lake estates — the one that was first known as Wadsworth Hall.



He also might never have guessed that he would eventually celebrate every birthday here, with a Gatsby-esque extravaganza featuring celebrity entertainment and a different theme each year. Staring at the Lake Geneva shoreline with his fraternity brothers that day in the 1960s, it is unlikely he sensed that on his 65th birthday, for example, he would enter the party riding high atop an elephant and dressed in a custom-made ringmaster's suit. Along the journey between DePaul and the Driehaus Circus, Richard Driehaus discovered deep passions for classical architecture and historic preservation, interests which greatly affected the estate now known as Glanworth Gardens, and passions which continue to enrich the Lake Geneva area in countless ways today.

WADSWORTH HALL

The estate that Driehaus renamed in honor of his mother's birthplace in Glanworth, County Cork, Ireland, had been hosting elegant parties since it was first completed in 1906. Norman Wait Harris, founder of Harris Trust and Savings Bank, and his wife Emma Gale Harris commissioned the Georgian Revival mansion from noted Boston architectural firm Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, who had designed a number of important civic projects in Chicago — including the Art Institute of Chicago, the Chicago Public Library (now the Chicago Cultural Center) and more than 15 buildings on the University of Chicago campus — and were popular with the city's elite as a result. (The firm also designed Wychwood for the Hutchinsons on Geneva Lake.)





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When Driehaus restored the grand entryway, he included the letter “D” excised into the new marble floor, choosing a German-style Gothic lettering as a nod to his heritage (top left). Dental molding and plaster reliefs frame the marble columns of the fireplace in the main living room (top right). The 40-foot-tall ceilings of the atrium entryway provide an ideal place to display a Baccarat crystal chandelier (above). The estate suffered significantly from years of deferred maintenance by the time Driehaus purchased it. The ornate plaster ceiling in the formal dining room had begun to fall, requiring restorers to tighten and raise the intricate plasterwork (middle right). A solarium on the west end of the home has massive windows that offer lake views (right).



Even by opulent, Gilded Age standards, the home the Harrises commissioned as a Lake Geneva summer residence was breathtaking. Sited on nearly 40 acres of land with 800 feet of lake frontage, the main house contained 13 bedrooms, a grand entry hall featuring 40-foot ceilings, a wood-paneled library, an elegant terrace, and a formal dining room ornamented intricately with piping, garlands and leaves on the ceiling. The Harrises named it Wadsworth Hall, reportedly after Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, a distant relative. The total cost to build the home in 1906 was around \$250,000, or more than \$6 million in today's money.

NORMAN WAIT HARRIS

Norman Wait Harris was born in 1846 in Massachusetts and attended the Westfield Academy. After graduation, he entered the insurance business, eventually founding the Union Central Life Insurance Company in Ohio, the second largest insurance company in the United States at the time. Unfortunately, the rapid success of his company and the death of both his first and second wives during this time took a toll on Harris' health, and he ultimately stepped down from the company to travel and recuperate.

Returning from Europe, Harris married Emma and settled in Chicago. They would go on to have three children together. In 1882, he founded a banking firm under his own name: NW Harris & Co., later changing the name to Harris Trust and Savings Bank (which eventually merged with the Bank of Montreal to form BMO Harris Bank). In addition to his vast business success, Harris was a well-respected philanthropist, supporting the YMCA, the Methodist Church, Wesley Memorial Hospital, Northwestern University, and, famously, the Field Museum, where a sizable donation established the Harris Public School Extension program (now the NW Harris Learning Collection at the Field Museum).

THE STENNING

Harris only enjoyed 10 summers at Wadsworth Hall; while traveling in Japan in 1916, he suffered a non-fatal

heart attack. Returning by ship and then by train, he arrived in Lake Geneva for the season, but sadly passed away from heart-related complications in July. Emma died just three years later, leaving the property to their daughter Pearl and her husband, who had been married in the house in 1910. (The Chicago Tribune carried a detailed description of the wedding.) Despite their happy memories there, Pearl and her husband chose to sell the property in 1920 to Walden W. Shaw, co-

founder of the Yellow Cab Company in Chicago. Shaw renamed the estate The Stenning, after his grandfather's home in England.

Shaw's daughter, Bessie K. Shaw, married Daniel Peterkin Jr., a Morton Salt executive. Walden Shaw began spending more and more time at his home in California, so following their wedding in 1929, Bessie and Daniel Peterkin moved into The Stenning, an ownership that would last more



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than six decades. Bessie passed away in 1959; Daniel Peterkin remarried and ultimately willed the home to his second wife, Dorothy. Very few changes were made to the home throughout this extended length of time, and Peterkin struggled in later years to keep up with the significant maintenance required by such a large and historic home.

RESCUING THE PAST

When Dorothy Peterkin passed away in 1997, the house went up for sale for the first time in nearly 80 years. And Richard Driehaus, then the Founder and Chairman of Driehaus Capital Management, was looking for a summer getaway he could enjoy with his family. Through a friend, he learned that the former Harris estate was available, so in the summer of 1998, he arranged for a tour.

“I went in the house and I saw this big, grand room, which would have been the entrance hall,” he said. “Then I took a right into the library and I saw all that beautiful cross-sawn oak... Then I went into the dining room and saw the ceilings. And that’s when I said, ‘This could be it.’”

Driehaus was undaunted by the condition of the home, which was suffering from decades of deferred maintenance. Having recently purchased and restored the former Cable House in Chicago’s River North neighborhood to use as an office space, Driehaus was ripe for a



An impressive selection of artwork and antiques was exhibited throughout the house (top left). When Driehaus first entered the wood-paneled library, he immediately appreciated the incredible craftsmanship of the vast amount of cross-sawn oak in the room, which he estimated to be worth nearly half a million dollars at the time (top right). Driehaus began collecting antiques and stained glass in the early 1980s. In addition to his passion for historic preservation, he said he purchased Glanworth Gardens because it provided an ideal place to display his impressive collection of Tiffany glass and other artisan stained glass. The rooms shown here are the lower level’s pub and view into the powder room (middle and bottom photos).



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new project that combined his love of classical architecture and historic preservation. “I needed at this time in my life another challenge, in a way, he said. “I wanted to make some impact, and of course I also like preservation. This is all really about preservation.”

He bought the estate for around \$5 million in August of 1998, and then set a goal of finishing the significant restorations in time to host a grand New Year’s Eve party there to ring in the new millennium. The restorations proved to be a massive undertaking. In order to make the deadline, as many as 100 laborers were working in the house at once, seven days a week.

When necessary, Driehaus himself would fly from Chicago by helicopter to make final decisions or weigh in on challenges that arose. For example, the ornate plaster ceiling in the dining room had begun to detach, so a new method had to be devised to re-tighten and re-set the plasterwork.

Nearly every aspect of the home needed to be addressed in some way: the electricity, heating and cooling, plumbing and security were all updated to modern standards of efficiency and sustainability, while the exterior, the interior finishes and the grounds needed substantial restoration work. “The biggest challenge was controlling costs,” Driehaus said. “It turned out to be a very expensive project.” But on New Year’s Eve 1999, the hard work paid off, and the newly preserved estate hosted the first of what would turn out to be many epic parties.

KEEPING LAKE GENEVA BEAUTIFUL

For two decades, Richard Driehaus’ summer birthday parties were the stuff of local legend. A theme was chosen, a substantial guest list was drawn up, invitations (some of them award-winning) were sent out, a high-profile performer was invited and no expense was spared. No two birthday parties were ever the same, but the evening always culminated in a spectacular fireworks display, equally appreciated by party-goers, and the significant number of area tourists and local spectators who

gathered around the estate in boats, eager for the show.

Two of his favorite party themes were the Wizard of Oz theme and the Drive-In theme, which allowed him to highlight his substantial classic car collection. (Fellow vintage car enthusiast and comedian Jay Leno provided the entertainment.) “The parties are really just about enjoying life,” Driehaus said. They were also a tourism generator, helping fill the area’s hotels as people

planned their vacation around the annual fireworks display.

Additionally, after purchasing Glanworth Gardens, Driehaus became actively involved with preservation and beautification in the city of Lake Geneva. He is the founder and former chairman of the Lake Geneva Beautification committee, which since 2004 has sponsored many local improvement projects. The committee has been the driving force behind the installation of

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sculpture and signage welcoming people to the city. They have added fountains in front of the Geneva Lake Museum and the Lake Geneva Utility Commission building and restored the plaza in front of the Riviera (now named the Driehaus Family Plaza), among many other achievements.

According to Carol Wyant, who served as Driehaus' representative on the Beautification Committee, each year the group plants tulips in

high-traffic areas in the city of Lake Geneva and encourages businesses and homeowners to put extra effort into landscaping and holiday decorations through a beautification recognition program. The committee also upgraded and unified the lighting in the Driehaus Family Plaza and adjacent areas of the Riviera. "Wherever Richard had a home, he made it a practice to provide a lot of support to that community," she explained.

PRESERVING THE PAST TO ENJOY IN THE FUTURE

Even once he considered the house "essentially complete," Driehaus maintained that the grounds and gardens were a constant work in progress. The original landscaping plans were drawn up by the famous Olmsted Brothers landscape architecture firm, but never fully executed. After purchasing the estate, Driehaus worked with Terry Guen Associates of Chicago to revive the Olmsted's vision and add new elements. He planted more than 100 new trees and began a landscaping plan to simplify and open up the garden areas behind the house. Other projects included the reconfiguration of the lengthy entry drive, the addition of a swimming pool, the revival of a walled garden (or potager) and the addition of a charming "children's village" for imaginative play.

The overall effect — from the grounds to the interior and exterior renovations to the priceless private collection of antiques on display — is exquisite, and truly unparalleled. When asked what most inspired him about Glanworth Gardens, Driehaus said he has always been interested in sense of place. "There are four elements to that," he explains. "Scale, form, quality of materials and individual characteristics that are absolutely unique." Then he went on to quote the French philosopher Ernest Dimnet from memory: "Architecture, of all the arts, is the one which acts the most slowly, but the most surely, on the soul." It is a sentiment that speaks to architecture's long-reaching effects. In the case of Glanworth Gardens, Richard Driehaus first experienced these effects on that fateful Tau Sigma boat ride and they resonated for him for decades.

Listening to Driehaus speak about his love of historic preservation, it became clear that he was inspired to leave pieces of history for future generations to appreciate, combining an appreciation for the past with a hope for the future. It's an outlook that was echoed in his approach to the annual birthday parties as well. "The next one is always going to be the best one," he said, smiling. 🍷



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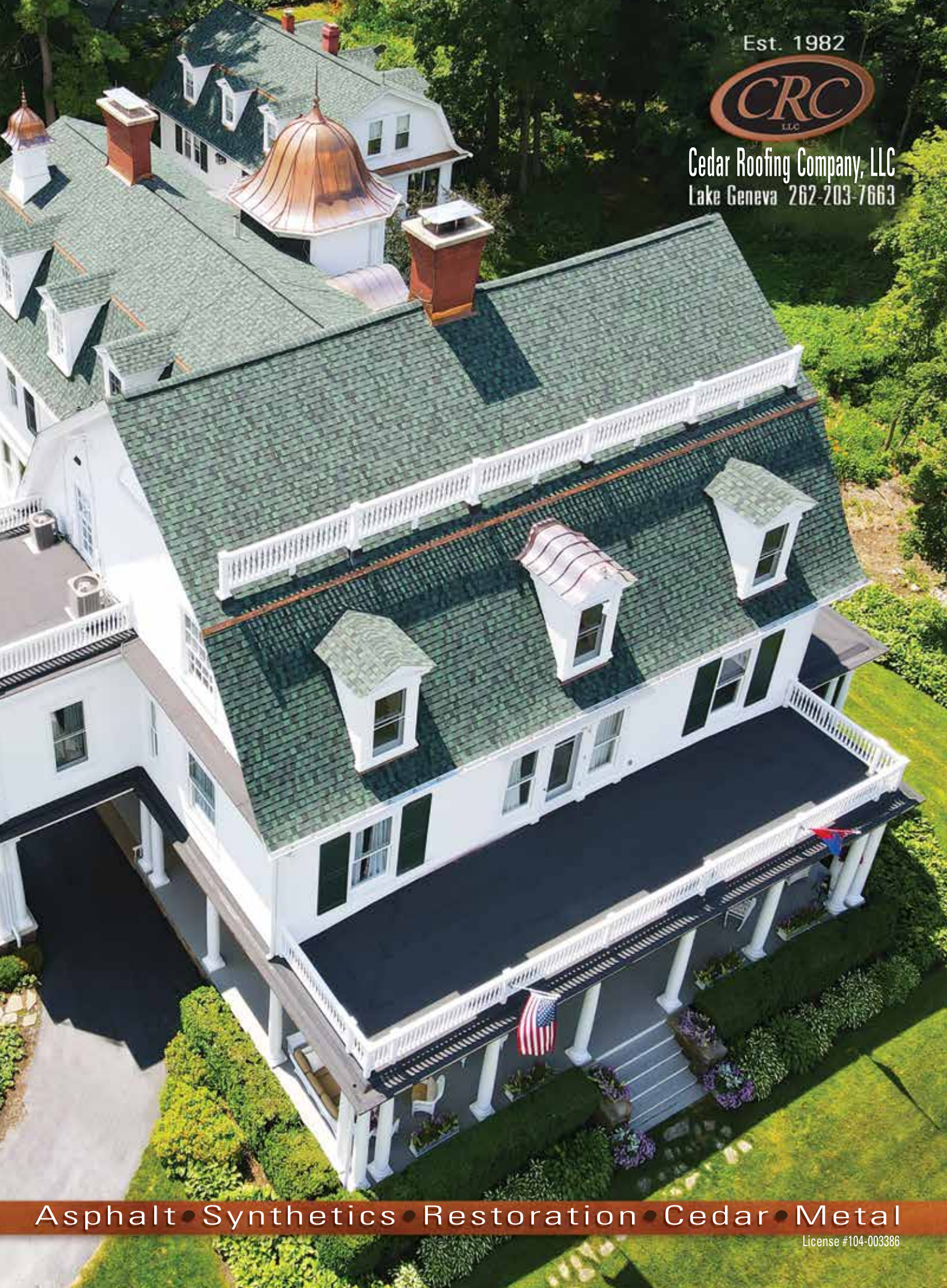
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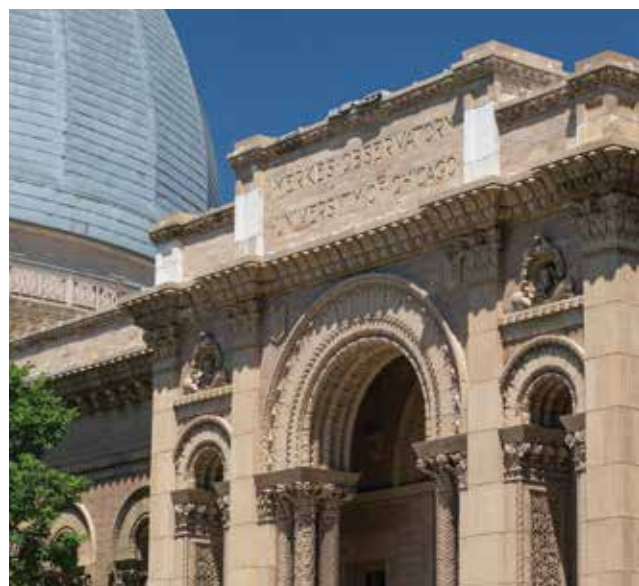
A fresh look at the iconic historical landmarks of the Geneva Lake area

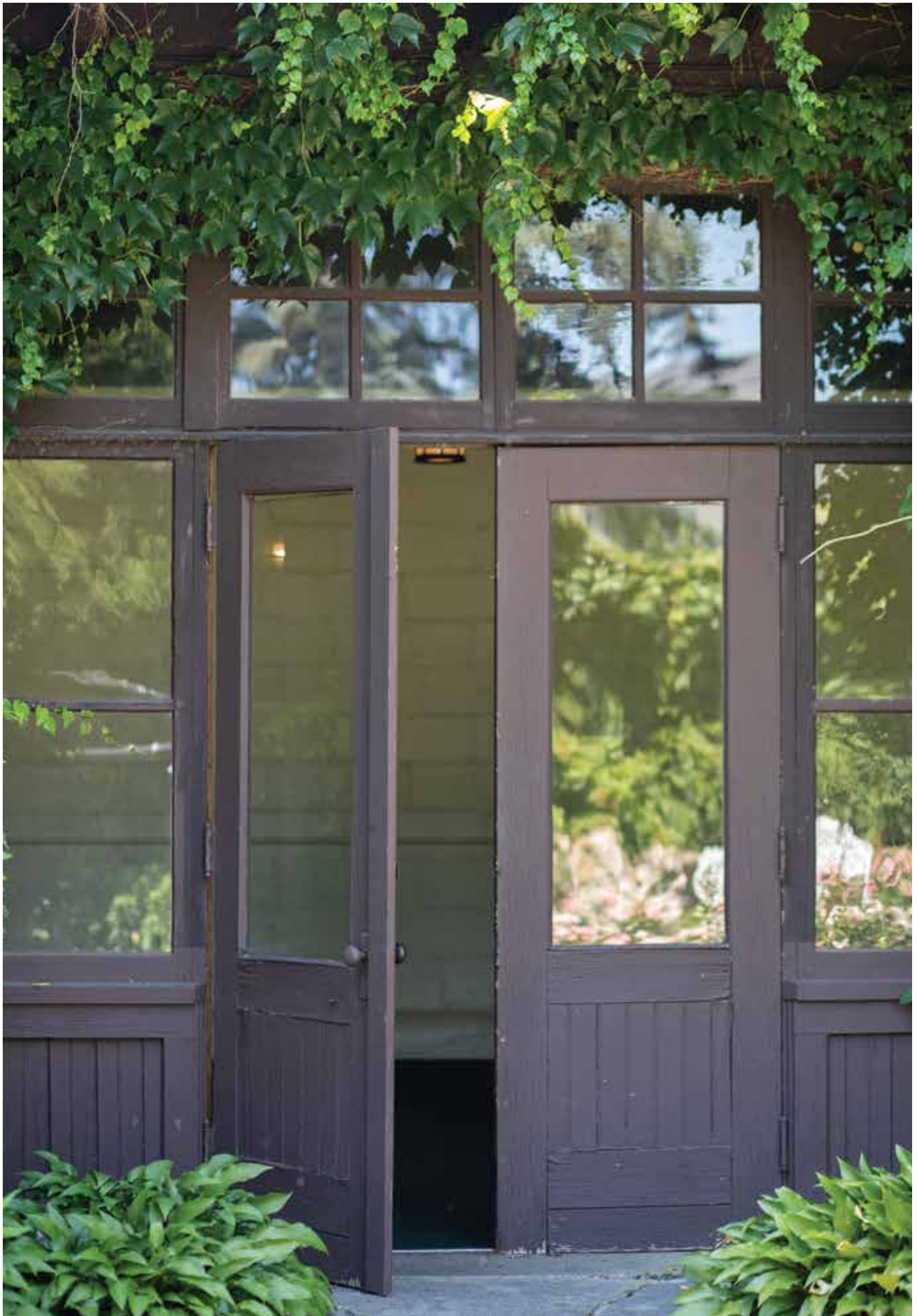
BY ANNE MORRISSY | PHOTOS BY SHANNA WOLF





Since debuting 25 years ago, *At The Lake* has remained committed to sharing the rich and fascinating history of the Geneva Lake area, and we particularly love to explore exceptional historic architecture, including many examples designed by genre-defining architects. In this portfolio, we set out to highlight four of the area's most iconic structures, buildings that help to define Lake Geneva visually and connect us with those who have come before. Thanks to the stewardship and combined efforts of community members, local governments and passionate nonprofit organizations, these four landmarks have been significantly preserved or restored, ready to capture and inspire the imaginations of many generations to come.

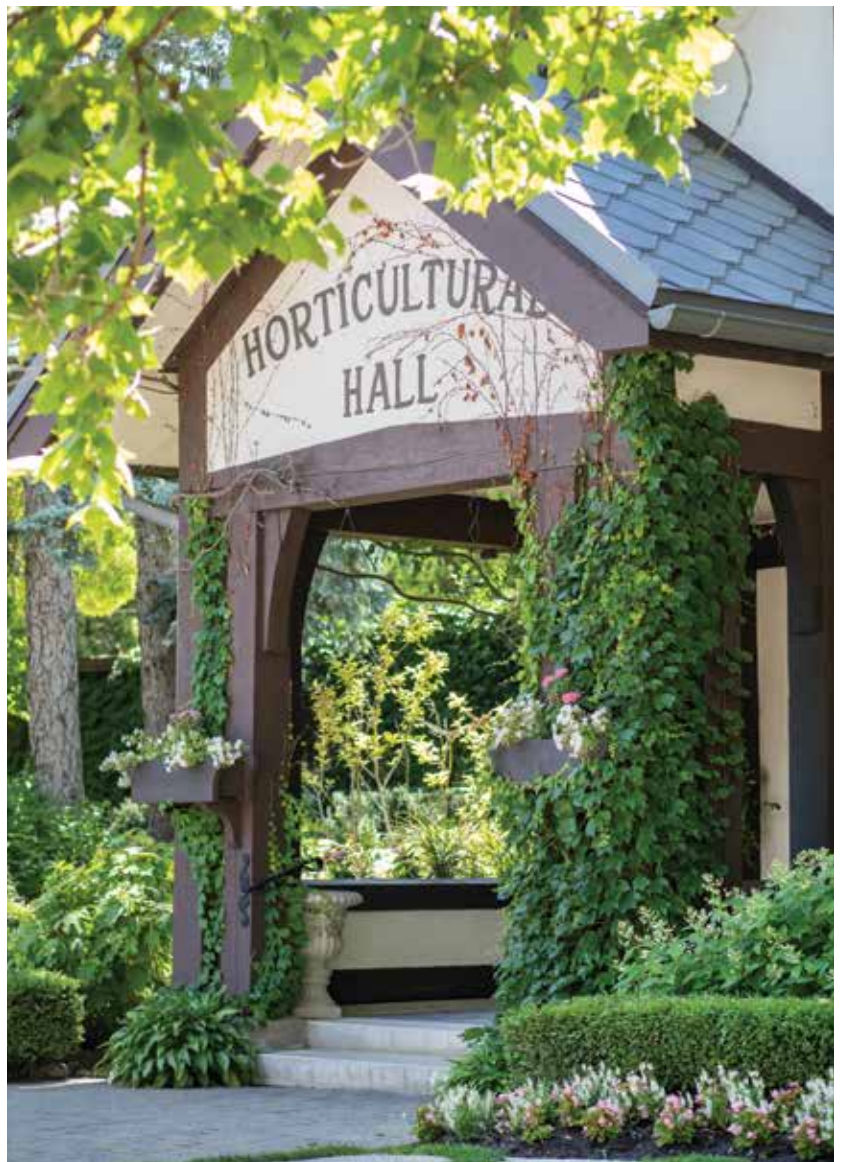






Horticultural Hall

Opened in June of 1912, Lake Geneva's Horticultural Hall was originally constructed for the use of the Lake Geneva Gardener's and Foreman's Association, a professional organization for the groundskeepers of the estates around the lake. The building was designed in the English Arts and Crafts Style by architect Robert Closson Spencer Jr., to evoke an English guild hall and garden. Over the years, the space became an integral civic building, used for a wide variety of events, fundraisers, meetings and celebrations. It even hosted presidential candidate John F. Kennedy when he was campaigning in Lake Geneva in 1960! Restoration efforts over the past 15 years have included a roof replacement using tiles imported from France, the installation of a commemorative brick walkway, painting updates, and the addition of a gate and walkway into the garden itself. Today, Horticultural Hall and its impressive gardens remain a timeless piece of Lake Geneva.





Black Point Estate

This beautiful Queen Anne-style Victorian home, originally named Die Lorelei, was built in 1888 by Chicago beer baron Conrad Seipp and his wife Catharina as a summer residence. It remained in the family for over 100 years, and subsequent generations made very few changes to the home, preferring to enjoy an old-fashioned version of life at the lake. In 2005, Seipp's great-grandson William O. Petersen donated the land, the home and its contents to the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS), for use as a museum. Today, the Black Point Estate and Gardens tour, offered in conjunction with Lake Geneva Cruise Line, is a must-see for history and architecture buffs from around the country. Recently, the WHS has undertaken a restoration of the property's gardens and landscaping, drawing inspiration from plans developed by landscape designer Olof Benson in 1900.







The Riviera

Originally built in 1932, part of a civic project to provide work for local builders and craftsmen during the Great Depression, Lake Geneva's Riviera has become one of the most recognizable landmarks on the lake today. The upstairs ballroom, with its unmatched, wraparound lake views, has played host to such famous musicians as Dave Brubeck, Louis Armstrong and Stevie Wonder. Today, the building is maintained by the city of Lake Geneva, which rents the ballroom for the use of weddings, parties and fundraisers. In 2021, extensive restorations to the Riviera building included: replacing the roof, updating and replacing the building's infrastructure systems, and replacing the ballroom's terrazzo floor and plaster ceiling, among many other updates.







Yerkes Observatory

Since 1895, the large dome of Yerkes Observatory has risen over the lake in Williams Bay, defining the distinctive horizon of the lake's west end. The building, designed by famed Chicago architect Henry Ives Cobb, was constructed to house the then-newly-formed Department of Astrophysics at the University of Chicago, and still to this day contains the largest reflecting telescope in the world. As an extension of the world-famous university, over the years Yerkes Observatory hosted a wide range of the world's greatest astronomers and scientists, including, famously, Albert Einstein. In May of 2020, the university sold the building and its contents to the Yerkes Future Foundation, a nonprofit organization devoted to preserving the building and sharing the history of this groundbreaking institution. The foundation recently completed the first phase of an ambitious, multi-million-dollar restoration, reopening Yerkes Observatory for public tours once again. 🦋

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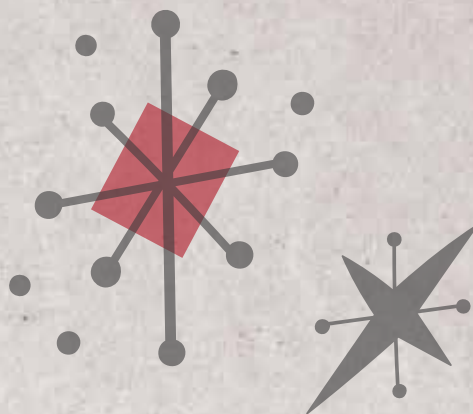
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Restaurants may come and go, but fond memories of a special few will linger decades after signage comes down and table linens are folded for the final time. Menus, photos and newspaper ads transform into artifacts, evidence of uniquely treasured times.

Lake Geneva's culinary history boasted countless prime examples of memorable dining experiences that once satisfied patrons' cravings for the refined, the unusual and the delectable. Let's indulge in memories of a few of them.

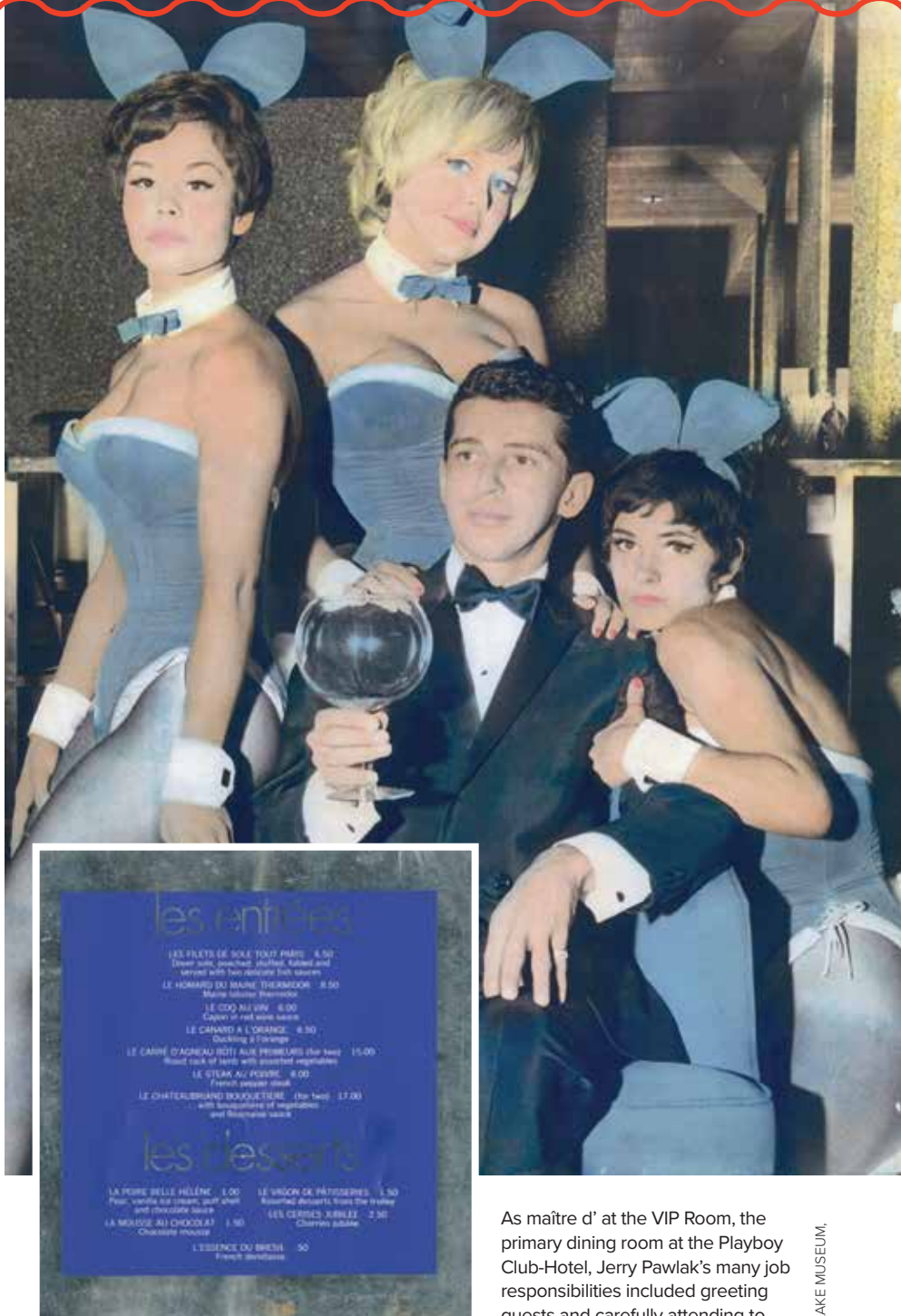
THE VIP ROOM, LAKE GENEVA (1968-1981)

No place in the area booked more "A list" entertainers from 1968 to 1981 than the VIP Room at the Playboy Club-Hotel (today's Grand Geneva Resort and Spa). Tony Bennett, Cher, Ann-Margret and many others took the stage at the iconic restaurant, generally performing two shows a night to catch the early and the late seating.

Celebrities not only performed, they also dined in the VIP Room ... but so did others who could pay, behave and abide by the dress code, which included jackets and ties for men, dresses for women. Jerry Pawlak, longtime maître d', says it was an unwritten rule to not pester performers — or a scantily clad Playboy Bunny.

The fare — luxury and cutting-edge for the times — would seem like a bargain today. Pawlak's keepsake menus list such upscale items as stuffed artichoke hearts, back-fin crabmeat cocktails and green turtle soup glazed with cream and sherry. Among the main courses: venison steak, stuffed veal, poached turbot.

At the highest end was the "Imperial Steak Tartare" for \$10, an entrée of finely chopped raw tenderloin covered with beluga caviar and served with chilled vodka. "You could order everything on the menu — all apps, soups, entrees, desserts — for \$89," Pawlak muses. "Today



As maître d' at the VIP Room, the primary dining room at the Playboy Club-Hotel, Jerry Pawlak's many job responsibilities included greeting guests and carefully attending to their requests while ensuring the rest of the staff remained on task. He also occasionally posed for promotional photographs with the resort's famous Bunny servers (top photo). To emphasize the resort's cutting-edge reputation, the menu at the VIP Room was printed on a futuristic metallic material similar to Mylar, and the dishes were titled in French. Some of the entrees available included Maine lobster thermidor, duck a l'orange, coq au vin and chateaubriand for two (middle photo). The restaurant's decor exuded midcentury chic, and featured low stone benches trimmed in blue fabric with matching rounded club chairs and plush carpet.

TOP: COURTESY OF JERRY PAWLAK, MIDDLE: COURTESY OF THE GENEVA LAKE MUSEUM, BOTTOM: COURTESY OF TOM BURROWS.

that's a cheap bottle of wine."

Pawlak remembers that one time when Playboy Magazine founder Hugh Hefner arrived to dine, the chef insisted that no menus be offered to the party of six. "I'll make whatever he desires," Pawlak recalls being told. Hef's choice? Fried chicken and mashed potatoes.

Inside the VIP Room there existed a staff hierarchy: from the busboy who set and cleared the tables, to the back waiter who gave the food orders to chefs, to the front waiter who stayed in the dining room, to the captain who finished preparing certain dishes tableside and finally to the maître d', who wore a tuxedo while keeping the staff on task and customers satisfied. Pawlak began working at the VIP Room in 1968 as a bartender, before transitioning to captain when an employee was fired for failing to properly prepare the cherries jubilee, eventually working his way to the top spot. "Best job I ever had," he says.



The Crow's Nest was located in a former residence and featured lake views from its east-facing windows.

THE CROW'S NEST, FONTANA (1975-1987)

When the VIP Room closed, Pawlak worked as the manager of The Crow's Nest in Fontana, another popular dining option in the area, open from 1975 to 1987. It was lauded for its "warm, bright atmosphere" and its lake views, as well as excellent food and service. When Pawlak came on board in the 1980s, he was quick to

hire former Playboy Bunnies, because, he says, "I knew how well they were trained."

The Crow's Nest had a memorable seafood menu, according to Pawlak. "They had two tanks, one for swimming trout and one for live lobster," he recalls. The patron would select the fish or crustacean they preferred, and back to the kitchen it

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would go, only to return as a fresh-as-you-can-get entrée. In the Geneva Lake area, “the concept was unusual at that time,” Pawlak says. Today the 60-seat Crow’s Nest — once located at the intersection of Reid and Third streets in Fontana — is the site of condominiums.

SILVANO’S ITALIAN RISTORANTE, LAKE GENEVA (1971-1993)

What began as Rondo Manor — a rural supper club located on Highway H in Lake Geneva from 1961 to 1969, featuring a piano bar and entertainment six nights a week — languished as one link of a steakhouse chain for two years, until new ownership ushered in a cuisine change: sophisticated Italian fare. Ron Schreiner became acquainted with the business at age 12, when he was hired to fill in for a no-show dishwasher. He quickly learned to enjoy the atmosphere and camaraderie of restaurant work, and soon was promoted to salad prep, second chef and then chef.



The dining room at Rondo Manor (later Silvano’s) featured a crackling, wood-burning fireplace.

In 1971, Schreiner bought the business with Silvano Stefani, and became full owner when Stefani moved to Texas in 1979. “He was the first in the area whose Italian cooking went beyond pizza and pasta,” Schreiner says. That meant serving a five-cheese and five-layer lasagna, Chicken Vesuvio (pan-fried in white wine with potatoes),

veal Italiano and other classic Italian entrees. Schreiner says they kept a bit of Rondo Manor’s supper club menu and offered a Friday night fish fry, with potato pancakes made from scratch, the batter prepared 20 gallons at a time. Other holdover menu items from Rondo Manor included relish tray recipes for pickled beets and kidney bean salad, a popular pepper steak entrée and the Sunday special, chicken and dumplings.

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The restaurant, located on 11 acres of property at the edge of Lake Geneva amid a grove of pine trees, was designed with lots of windows in the bar and two dining rooms. That meant good viewing of wildlife — including deer, raccoon and fox — especially as dusk arrived. “The whole place went silent when wildlife showed up,” Schreiner remembers. Inside, the room was decorated with a moose head trophy with red lights in its nose. The owner would flick a switch and make those lights blink: “Little kids loved it,” Schreiner says. “I’d always say the rest of the moose was outside.”

Schreiner’s wife Linda, a medical technologist, pitched in at Silvano’s on her days off. The couple sold the business in 1993, “after so many years of 70-hour work weeks,” Schreiner explains. Today, the building has been razed and the lot at the intersection of county highways H and NN in Lake Geneva sits empty.

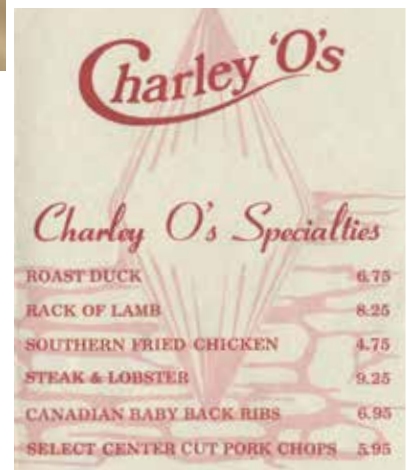
CHARLEY O'S, WILLIAMS BAY (1969-2008)

Many people today know Charley Obligato as maître d' at Lake Geneva's Anthony's Steakhouse and Williams Bay's Café Calamari, but his deepest thumbprint on hospitality in the Geneva Lake area remains his namesake Williams Bay restaurant, Charley O's. That legacy was rooted in 1969, when Obligato purchased The Chalet, a mom-and-pop operation in Williams Bay, which he renovated and reimaged to create a refined restaurant open for lunch and dinner seven days a week.

For 39 years, Charley O's deep Naugahyde booths and fine dining menu earned generations of fans.

because the booths featured phone jacks, an unusual amenity at the time. But it wasn't just businessmen who loved Charley O's — the restaurant was a popular spot for locals and tourists as well.

"It was fine dining for the times," Obligato says. The menu was printed on a parchment-paper scroll and boasted elegant dinner



A parchment-style menu scroll for Charley O's. The title 'Charley O's' is in a large, stylized red font at the top. Below it, 'Charley O's Specialties' is written in a cursive font. The menu items are listed in a two-column format with prices to the right.

ROAST DUCK	6.75
RACK OF LAMB	8.25
SOUTHERN FRIED CHICKEN	4.75
STEAK & LOBSTER	9.25
CANADIAN BABY BACK RIBS	6.95
SELECT CENTER CUT PORK CHOPS	5.95

The 110-seat restaurant — at Geneva Street and Highway 67 — remained a popular dining option in the area for 39 years. "Chicago customers would come for business lunches," he remembers, because they preferred the rich, clubby interior, including booths with Naugahyde seating and inlaid wood tabletops. Obligato could even offer to place a phone on the table for these business lunches,

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Lumberman's Lodge was designed to evoke a North Woods camp kitchen.



options, including rack of lamb, lobster thermidor, shish kebobs, veal marsala ... all for less than \$8 per dinner. The price included soup, salad and entrée. Charley O's famous French onion soup, served in metal crockware and topped with a thick layer of melted cheese, was a menu staple from the very beginning.

The restaurant was so popular that Charley O's locations opened in Lake Geneva and Wauwatosa as well. A friend added his modernized version in Elkhorn. However, by 2015, all of the outposts had closed. Obligato says stricter drunken driving laws were a factor: diners imbibed less, which affected revenue. (The primary location closed in 2008). Today, Privato Pizza

Bistro & Lounge occupies the former Charley O's site in Williams Bay.

LUMBERMAN'S LODGE, LAKE GENEVA (1963-1973)

For diners looking for a more affordable but equally memorable meal option, Lake Geneva's Lumberman's Lodge offered family-style dining in a unique environment. The long, wooden building on Highway 12 with its casual interior was meant to evoke a camp kitchen for loggers in the North Woods. (Co-owner Wayne Komula had worked as a logger before going into the hospitality industry.) Komula may have borrowed the idea from other Wisconsin tourist towns: Paul Bunyan "cook shanties" in the Wisconsin

Dells and Minocqua offered the same all-you-can-eat, experiential dining concept.

Beef, chicken and other meats were served by the platter at this family-style restaurant that opened in Lake Geneva on Highway H in 1963. Customers paid for their meal at the door, then sat at long picnic tables awaiting the delivery of big trays of food and beverages. The cost? A mere \$2.50 (\$1.25 for diners under 10 years old) for an all-you-can-eat feast.

The serving style kept the staff running. Lake Geneva native Pamela S. Meyers worked one summer as a waitress at Lumberman's Lodge. "I quickly learned that 5-foot-2 girls needed a lot of muscle to do the job," she remembers. Meyers says the main entrée changed daily. Sides included bread made from scratch, baked beans and potato salad. Homemade pies also were included.

"We usually had several tables to serve

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at one time, and it involved a lot of running back and forth if customers wanted more food,” she says. Because diners had paid on the way in the door, they often neglected to leave a gratuity, Meyers says. “I remember one time a family left me a \$5 tip, and I thought I was rich.”

Today, the Lake Geneva House of Music occupies the building where generations of diners ate bottomless platters of comfort food at the Lumberman’s Lodge.

GLEN NELSON’S, LAKE GENEVA (1955-1980)

From 1955 to 1980, diners looking for an elegant fine dining option in downtown Lake Geneva sought out a restaurant with a red canopy and neon sign outside: Glen Nelson’s. The site had served as a fine-dining restaurant dating back to 1923, but not until 1955 did Nelson himself buy out his business partner and change the name, ushering in a new era of elegant meals.

The atmosphere inside Glen Nelson’s was peaceful: cushioned booths, candlelit tables, local art on the walls, instrumental music in the background. Lunch special included meatloaf, chicken stew and southern fried chicken with baking powder-biscuits and honey, which drew widespread raves. Dinner options tended to be more formal — stuffed



Glen Nelson’s neon sign pointed the way to the popular Lake Geneva restaurant.



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flounder, veal cordon bleu, steaks and crepes — and meals started with “shoe salad” (lettuce, green pepper, tomato, sardines and hard-boiled egg slices). Onion soup and two-toned cheesecake, Nelson’s wife’s recipes, were in high demand, and Nelson himself crafted a signature Swedish martini, made with Aquavit, as a nod to his heritage.

Waitstaff stayed on board for decades. Nelson’s daughter, Joan Meginniss, says that head waitress Alice Gray stuck with the restaurant from beginning to end. “Alice was famous,” she says. “She knew all the regulars and treated each customer as family.”

Meginniss remembers Glen Nelson’s as “one-of-a-kind” in downtown Lake Geneva in those days. For the average person, she adds, restaurant dining was reserved for special occasions, but the mix of patrons in Lake Geneva meant big business for Glen Nelson’s. “Businessmen would lunch there and meet in the back booths for social time,” she explains. And when the tourist season started, the crowd swelled. “In summer, there would be long lines waiting to get in.”

The Nelsons lived above the restaurant, and each of their children worked there when they were old enough, and sometimes even when they weren’t. “My oldest daughter, at age 4, sneaked down and seated the first customers of the day, handing them menus,” Meginniss laughs. “Dad was not amused.”

Meginniss says her daughter was disappointed when the restaurant was sold in 1980. “She was a waitress there all through high school and college,” she explains. “She got her law degree but still wishes she could have owned Glen Nelson’s.” Today, where Glen Nelson’s used to be you will find Le Cookery, a kitchen and home goods shop on Lake Geneva’s Main Street. 🍷

Note: Many of the photos in this piece were provided by the Geneva Lake Museum. We are ever grateful for the work of the many staff and volunteers who maintain such an exceptional archive of Lake Geneva history.



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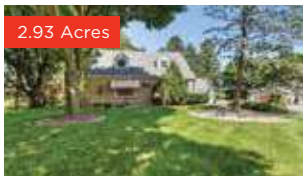
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A Path TO THE PAST

The definitive *At The Lake* guide to the Shore Path

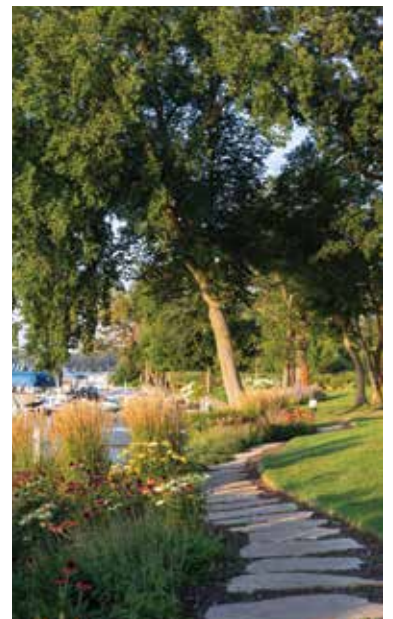
BY BARB KRAUSE | PHOTOS BY LAUREN HARRIGAN, UNLESS NOTED

The shoreline of Geneva Lake can be considered a living history of sorts, landmarked by grand estates, associations and camps that were established after the Great Chicago Fire in 1871 by some of Chicago's biggest "movers and shakers," with recognizable last names like Wrigley, Wacker, Selfridge, Seipp and Drake. They were mayors and judges, entrepreneurs, radio personalities, railroad developers and bankers. They were also generous donors and trustees of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the University of Chicago

and the Field Museum, as well as founders of Lake Geneva's Horticultural Hall, the Lake

Geneva Public Library, the Water Safety Patrol and many of our lakeside camp foundations. Their grand mansions on Geneva Lake featured pipe organs, Tiffany domes, fountains, chapels, observation towers and even a windmill.





Geneva Lake's public shore path is an incredible opportunity to stroll into the past. Hikers are able to see firsthand some of the properties and estates built more than 120 years ago that are a testament to this area's incredible origins. Although many turn-of-the-century mansions are long gone, several dozen historic buildings still stand along the shoreline, relatively unchanged.

The Shore Path encircles the entire lake, meandering very close to the shoreline, with a slight detour onto neighborhood roads at Trinke Estates on the lake's southeastern shore. The actual surface of the path varies from property to property — materials include grass, stone, brick, gravel, asphalt and wood planks — and the route passes right through what is idiosyncratically known on Geneva Lake as the “front” yards (lake-facing side) of lakefront homes. The public is asked to stay on the path and be respectful of these otherwise private properties.





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Built: 1890

Original ownership: Patrick Healy and family (1890-1932)
Healy co-founded Chicago's Lyon & Healy



In the following pages, we will answer some of the most common questions we've been asked about this unique Geneva Lake attraction.

HOW LONG IS IT?

Locals agree to disagree about the answer to this question. This year, a few stickers have popped up for sale in local stores touting different mileage. Several staffers of *At The Lake* walked the entire path again this past summer, breaking it up into three days' worth of treks and taking care to track the exact starting and stopping mileage. Various mileage trackers and pedometers were used: brands included Apple, Runkeeper, FitBit and Nike. FitBit and Runkeeper aligned the best. **We agreed on an official Geneva Lake shore path length of 21.9 miles.** When one of our staffers walked it all in one day in 2014 with a Garmin tracker, she clocked 21.6. And when she did it again in 2020, she clocked 21.9. We measured about 21.91 this time around.

It's easy to break this walk up. There are several public access points, parking areas and restrooms in the city of Lake Geneva, as well as in the villages of Williams Bay and Fontana. There are also public boat launches at the end of Linn Pier Road and Hillside Road on the lake's south shore, where you can be dropped off or picked up, and use portable toilets (year-round).



Big Foot Beach State Park also offers parking (day pass required) and restrooms (seasonal). Make sure to plan ahead: the longest stretch without restrooms or any public access is from Lake Geneva to Williams Bay, or about 7 miles. In a pinch, you could be picked up at Chapin Road, which is about 3.75 miles from Lake Geneva.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT TO SEE?

The estates along the shore have changed quite a bit, even just in the past five years. Many older homes and cottages have been torn down and replaced with new, usually larger ones, built in their place. Since the last printing of *At The Lake's* Shore Path Guide in 2016, three historic estates have been razed: the replica of Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater; the Healy estate on the west side of Williams



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Bay; and Swinghurst, a Victorian-era home that was located next to the Geneva Inn. A new home is currently under construction at Pebble Point, and a new finished home has appeared on the Healy property.

The Swinghurst lot is currently vacant. But its new owner, Carolyn Gable, has recreated her “Expect a Miracle” fence along the Shore Path, to the delight of path ‘regulars.’ Gable formerly owned another mansion on Geneva Bay, and her fence with its inspiring quotes was very popular. She sold that estate five years ago, and the new owners painted over the fence. The fence on the former Swinghurst property was finished this summer, complete with a notebook to sign and a bell to ring.

Glen Arden, located on the southeastern shore, was recently rebuilt to look nearly identical to the original from the outside. Once owned by cartoonist Sidney Smith, the original home had a third-story turret room where Smith created his



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Andy Gump syndicated series. The restoration carefully preserved the turret and it has been reattached to the new structure. (Visit our online archives to read more about this estate in our Summer 2022 issue.)

Historic homes are not the only Shore Path sites to undergo changes: the Lake Geneva Public Library also recently completed a \$1.3 million renovation. New stained-glass dividers separate reading areas that overlook the lake. The dividers feature the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Lake Geneva Tulip windows from the old Lake Geneva Hotel (1912-1969), painstakingly recreated by Gilbertson Stained Glass. In 1894, Mary Sturges donated a house and two adjoining lots to the city to be used as a public library. When the library's collection outgrew the house, James Dresser, a student of Frank Lloyd Wright, was hired to design a new library, which was built in 1954. The recent renovation updated the interior and furnishings, added public restrooms just inside the library's entrance, and repurposed two lakeside rooms into public meeting spaces.

WHERE IS MATTHEW MCCONAUGHEY'S HOUSE? AND OPRAH'S?

At *The Lake* magazine is officially endorsing the unpopular opinion: Matthew McConaughey does not have a house on Geneva Lake. Sorry readers, it just isn't true.

The Oprah rumor makes more sense, since she has ties to Chicago. But no, she doesn't have a house here either.

Lake Geneva does, however, have a history of celebrities and famous residents. One such figure in the early days, Sidney Smith, was the first cartoonist to be offered a million-dollar contract. His creation, "The Gumps," first appeared in the Chicago Tribune in 1916. The newspaper sent a statue of the strip's main character, Andy Gump, to Smith's Lake Geneva estate. The statue was eventually relocated to Lake Geneva's Flat Iron Park after Smith died in a car crash in 1935.



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The estate Casa del Sueño has had its share of celebrity owners. Lee Phillip Bell and Bill Bell, creators of the soap operas “The Bold and the Beautiful” and “The Young and the Restless” lived there. (The latter show’s fictional town is named after nearby Genoa City.) Today the estate is owned by Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker.

Another celebrity resident is Thomas Lennon, probably best known for his role in “Reno 911!” as Lieutenant Jim Dangle. You may also recognize him as Joey’s identical hand twin in “Friends.” Lennon is very approachable and has been generous with his local appearances, most notably helping to raise funds for Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin at the Lake Geneva Walmart last summer.

Lake Geneva continues to be a popular destination for visitors from all over, so you never know who you might run into.

IS GENEVA LAKE’S SHORE PATH THE ONLY PATH LIKE IT IN THE U.S.?

We have yet to find another lakeshore path that encircles an entire lake, and is free of charge and open to the public. Many lakes offer partial walks of their shoreline. Lake Geneva is sometimes called the “Newport of the West,” and there is a similar path in Newport, Rhode Island. The Cliff Walk meanders between the ocean and Newport’s enormous estates (most of them Stone Manor-sized), but only for a 3.5-mile-long segment. And there’s a 2.8-mile walking path around Green Lake near Seattle, but without famous historic estates.

The Geneva Lake Shore Path, with its 21.9 miles of scenic lake views and historical sight-seeing, is undoubtedly one-of-a-kind. It’s a locally treasured attraction and something we hope will still be available to our residents and visitors a century from now. 🐾

At The Lake publishes the Geneva Lake Shore Path Guide, a pocket-sized guide with information about 101 historical and contemporary points of interest. To order, visit atthelakemagazine.com or call 262-729-4471.



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Shore Path 101

Enjoy your own experience on the Geneva Lake Shore Path with these helpful tips:

- The path is open to the public, but the yards, grounds and piers of the private homes and organizations along the path are not.
- To get on and off the path, use public access points, like the lakeshore areas in the city of Lake Geneva and the villages of Williams Bay and Fontana. Entering or exiting via lawns, driveways or other private property is trespassing.
- Dogs are allowed on the path but must be leashed and picked up after.
- Bikes and strollers are not permitted. Many sections of the path are not navigable by wheels of any sort.
- The majority of the Shore Path is not accessible to those with mobility issues. For the smoothest terrain, start at the Lake Geneva Public Library and limit your distance to about a half-mile east or west.
- Bring water, sunscreen and bug spray. Cell phone service can be limited in some areas.



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FROM SUMMER 2011





Vintage *Cruising*

The history of wooden boats
on Geneva Lake

BY HOLLY LEITNER

CLINT FARLINGER



Editor's note: Since this article first appeared in 2011, there have been new additions to the wooden boat building community in the Geneva Lake area. The article has been re-edited and updated to reflect the current landscape.

A wooden boat is a true labor of love requiring many hours of maintenance with much heart and soul. With low-maintenance fiberglass options cutting across the water so effortlessly, you may wonder: why do people bother?

"There's something about wood that's very sensual," said Larry Larkin, a local expert on wooden boats and antique boat restoration. "Fresh varnish is almost narcotic-like, the way the wooden boat rides, feels ... whereas fiberglass is like driving a tin can in comparison."

Lake Geneva became a favorite summer destination after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, helped by the completion of the Chicago & Northwestern train line to what was then a rural village. A "resorting" culture was born. Wealthy Chicagoans built beautiful refuges from the city, and their luxury homes sprung up along the shoreline. The only way to

reach many of these lake homes from the train depot was by boat, and the municipal piers were filled with public and private steam yachts meeting summertime residents and delivering them to their homes. Word spread about the "Newport of the West," and more Chicagoans flocked here, many of whom wanted to own their own boats. From these customers, the local boat-building industry was born.

"Lake Geneva is perfectly fitted for wood boats," mused Randy Streblow of Streblow Custom Boats. "This lake has all types. It's a big lake and can handle it."

THE EARLY YEARS

Some of the early lake vessels were sailboats and steam-powered yachts, or small rowboats and fishing boats constructed by just a few craftsmen in town. According to Larkin's research, in the 1870s, "a quick-witted English

immigrant" named Napper set up shop at what is now Library Park in downtown Lake Geneva. Napper and his crew could build a steam yacht from local wood over the course of a winter.

At the same time, Napper was also building sailboats and small fishing boats. The first annual Fourth of July races were held, and in 1876, several summer residents formed the Lake Geneva Yacht Club. Sailboats of the era were known as "sandbaggers," because the sailors had to perform a delicate dance on the vessel in order to move heavy sandbags side-to-side to balance the boat with the wind as the lake's waters were churning.

Around 1900, steam yachts began to be replaced by yachts with gas-powered engines. By the early 1910s, the gas-powered speedboat was born, and had the ability to reach previously unheard-of speeds, as high as 15 miles per hour. The modern concept of lake life had really begun.

One vintage example of the era that is still on the lake today is the *Stardust*, built in 1913 as the ultimate speedboat. A high-powered motorboat designed to displace water with its hull, the *Stardust* cuts through the water rather than sliding over the water like modern planing boats do today. At this time, most gas-powered marine engines were converted from airplane engines. However, when the



HOLLY LEITNER

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short to own
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The Big Three

In the 1920s, these boat builders helmed companies that dominated the market

JOHN L. HACKER, *Hacker-Craft Boats*

Hacker's most popular boats, the Belle Isle Bear Cats, were owned by such famous figures as J.W. Packard and Henry Ford. Early in his career, Hacker even designed a floating biplane for the Wright Brothers. The Hacker Company was extremely successful by the beginning of the 1920s. In 1921, the company expanded and by 1928, Hacker-Craft boasted sales totaling \$450,000, equivalent to more than \$5 million today.



GARFIELD WOOD, *Gar Wood Boats*

Gar Wood came into the boat industry by pure love of the sport. A born inventor, at one time he held more U.S. patents than any other living American. At age 17, he invented a downdraft carburetor that enabled his inspection boat to outrun other inspectors, but he was perhaps most famous for his hydraulic hoist for dump trucks. For Wood, boating was a beloved hobby, and he wanted speed. He was the first man to reach a speed of 100 miles per hour on water.



CHRIS SMITH, *Chris-Craft Boats*

It's said Chris Smith built his first boat at age 13, and from then on, his obsession for perfection continued. By 1881, he and his brother produced boats full-time, and in 1922 they partnered with Smith and Sons Boat Company. At this time, the team built a plant in Michigan, where they could produce boats on an assembly line, making Chris-Craft runabout boats available to the middle class.



United States entered World War I, the government developed many new marine engines for use by the military. When the war ended in 1918, a surplus of these new engines appeared on the market, ready to power the nation's leisure boats.

THE LUXURY ERA

By the 1920s, three national boat builders had sprung to the forefront of the market: John L. Hacker of Hacker-Craft; Chris Smith of Chris-Craft Boats; and Garfield Wood, aka "The Gray Fox," of Gar Wood Boats. Each man stamped his personality on the vessels he made. Hacker was known for his elegant style; Smith for his convenient runabout design; and Wood for speed. What these boats all had in common was a high level of quality.

"The shear line of a Hacker — no one could draw that line like John Hacker could," said Larkin, adding that Hacker's attention to grace and detail made a lasting impact on boat design.

With the completion of U.S. Highway 12 between Chicago and Lake Geneva in the 1920s, boat owners could hit the road with a trailer in tow, carrying these high-performance, quality wooden boats with them on vacation. "Route 12 opened up the way to Lake Geneva, and brought the speedboats to life," said Larkin. With the completion of the highway, the demand for Napper's local, utilitarian, rough-oak lumber boats disappeared. Instead, boats like the Philippine Mahogany Chris-Craft began to dominate the lake. Napper and other local wooden boat builders faded into yesteryear.

In the "Roaring Twenties," people were dancing at night and boating by day. The soaring stock market meant more and more wealth from Chicago arrived every day, and many fashionable lakeside estates were built. The new lake set had developed a taste for glamour, and local, handmade products fell out of favor. Instead, they opted for wooden powerboats, custom fit with top-quality wood, brass railings, Belgian lace curtains, beveled glass, leather trim and Oriental rugs.

DOWNSLIDE: THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Then in 1929, the rollercoaster of the stock market plummeted. All the jazz and glitter

of the '20s was killed by the Depression of the '30s. Hacker went bankrupt. Chris-Craft limited production and later produced utilitarian boats for the war effort. Of the Big Three, Gar Wood Boats remained the least affected by the crash, as Wood had already made his millions inventing the hydraulic dumptruck lift.

"[The Depression] really had a big effect on the lake culture," said Larkin. Luxury was quickly stripped back to core practical concerns. However, after World War II, luxury boats once again began to start their engines. Wooden boats graced the waters again in larger numbers beginning in the 1950s. But then, the industry perfected fiberglass molds.

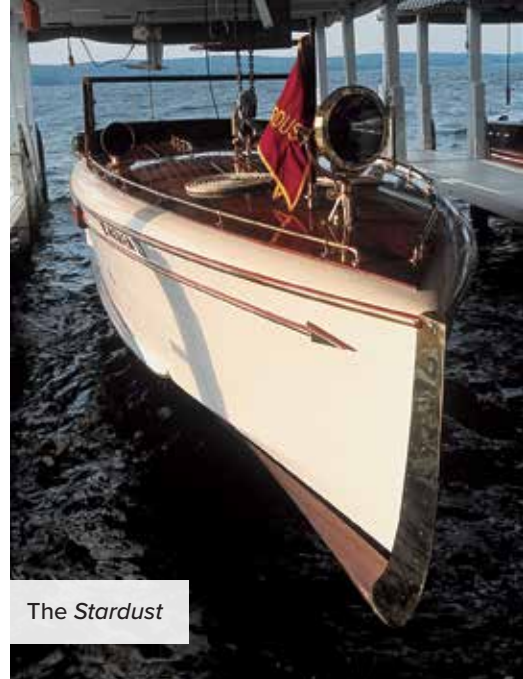
"By 1960, it was like a switch was flipped, and everything was fiberglass," said Larkin. Suddenly, wooden boats were a relic of a bygone era, and no one seemed to miss their personality. Gone were the days of difficult-to-maintain wooden boats. Those boats were

suddenly considered lesser quality; people wanted fast, easy and reliable boats, and fiberglass delivered and dominated the market. Wooden boats were abandoned, burned for metal or shoved away to rot in forgotten barns.

"The pain of the old boat, if you can get it to run, is you just put your knee there, pull, push, learn how many pumps before it goes, soak it long enough, and if all goes right, if you're lucky, it might start..." said Larkin, who owns *Alouette*, a new boat based on Hacker-Craft's triple-cockpit design. "That's the nature of the beast."

REAWAKENING: RE-CREATION OF RECREATION

But then, in 1980, the pendulum swung again, and suddenly there was a re-emergence of love for wooden boats. People who had grown up spending their summer in the back of their family's wooden boat remembered the warm, nostalgic feel of them. They wanted that piece of their youth back. A market for the old, wooden boats



The *Stardust*

began to blossom. People pulled their discarded boats out of barns and fixed them up, piece by piece. The Antique and Classic Boat Society (ACBS) was founded in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York, a place topographically similar to the Geneva Lake area. The membership of the ACBS grew on a national scale, with

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the goal of preserving and restoring antique and classic boats.

Once these vintage wooden boats returned to the water in large numbers, the craze spread further. Everybody, it seemed, had to have one. And during this era, people had the luxury of being choosy. They didn't just want an old Hacker-Craft, they wanted a Hacker-Craft from the prime year of 1935, or a rare Chris-Craft Barrelback, and could search the country until they found it.

It was a golden era for scouting wooden boats, and these early collectors had their top pick of pedigree boats. In turn, this renewed interest in the older models brought wooden boat building companies back to life. Hacker-Craft began making boats in greater numbers again; Williams Bay's own Gage Marine had already teamed with Hacker to create the Gage-Hacker, a new vintage-style wooden boat customized for Geneva Lake. While John Hacker had long passed on, his legacy continued.

By 2000, the boat-collecting market was considered dry by most; all the best vintage boats had been snapped up and even the second-choice boats became collectibles. Boats that had once been dime-a-dozen runabouts were now collectibles. At the same time, boat building went back to its local roots. Streblow Custom Boats moved to Walworth in 1987. The well-built Streblow quickly became an icon of Geneva Lake; today more than 150 of them call the area home. Additionally, Lake Geneva boat builder Bergersen Boat Co. makes classic wooden Shepherds from vintage schematics, and in 2021 wooden boat builder Grand Craft relocated its workshop from Michigan to Genoa City.

And so, there's a new chapter in the history of wooden boats. Today, of course, there are many boats on Geneva Lake, from sailboats to ski boats to the new/old "classics." The love of the wooden boats lives on here, and from the looks of the lake, we suspect we'll still be writing about them for years to come. 🛶



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: HOLLY LEITNER, BRUCE THOMPSON, HOLLY LEITNER, CLINT FARLINGER



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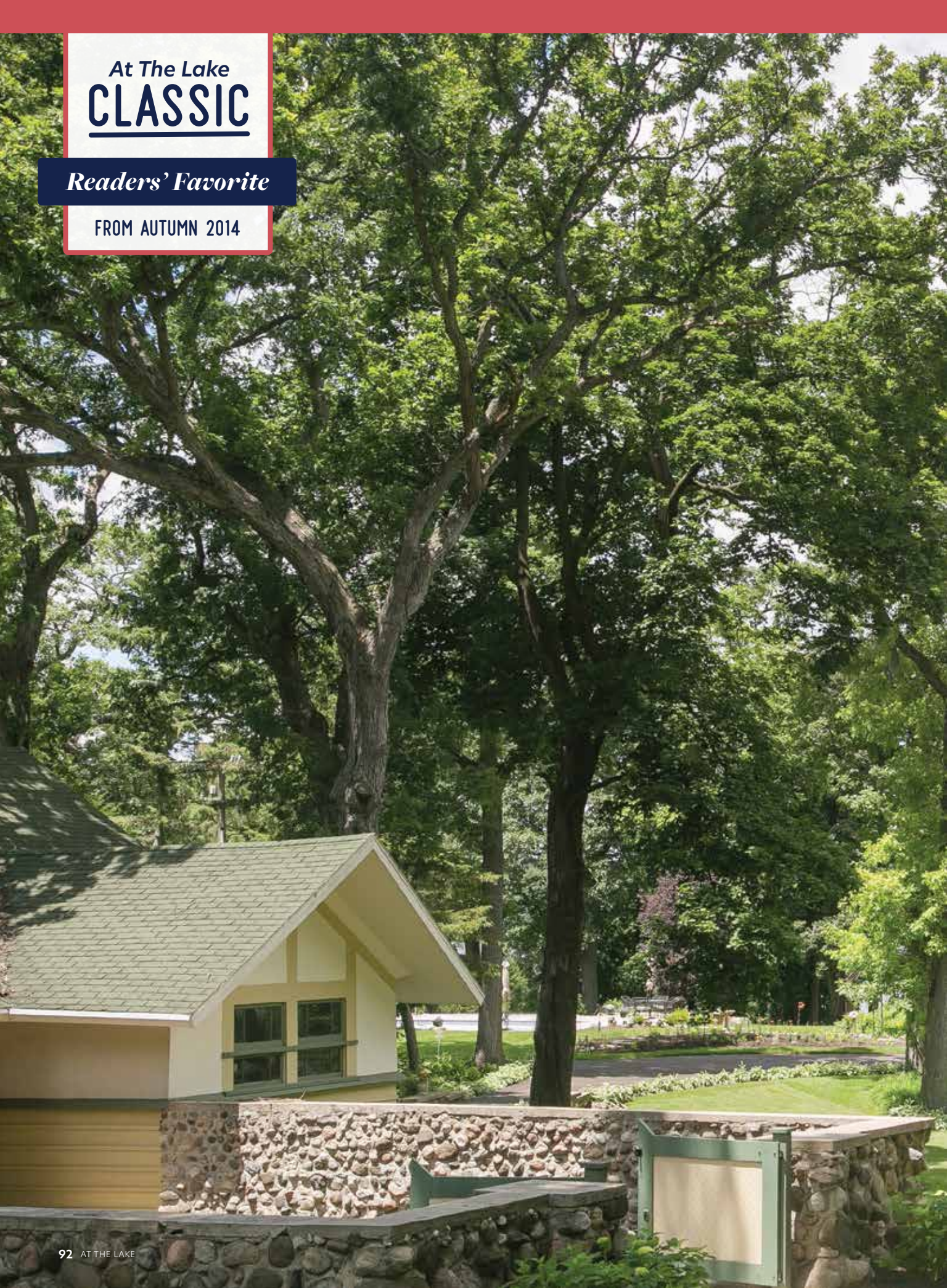
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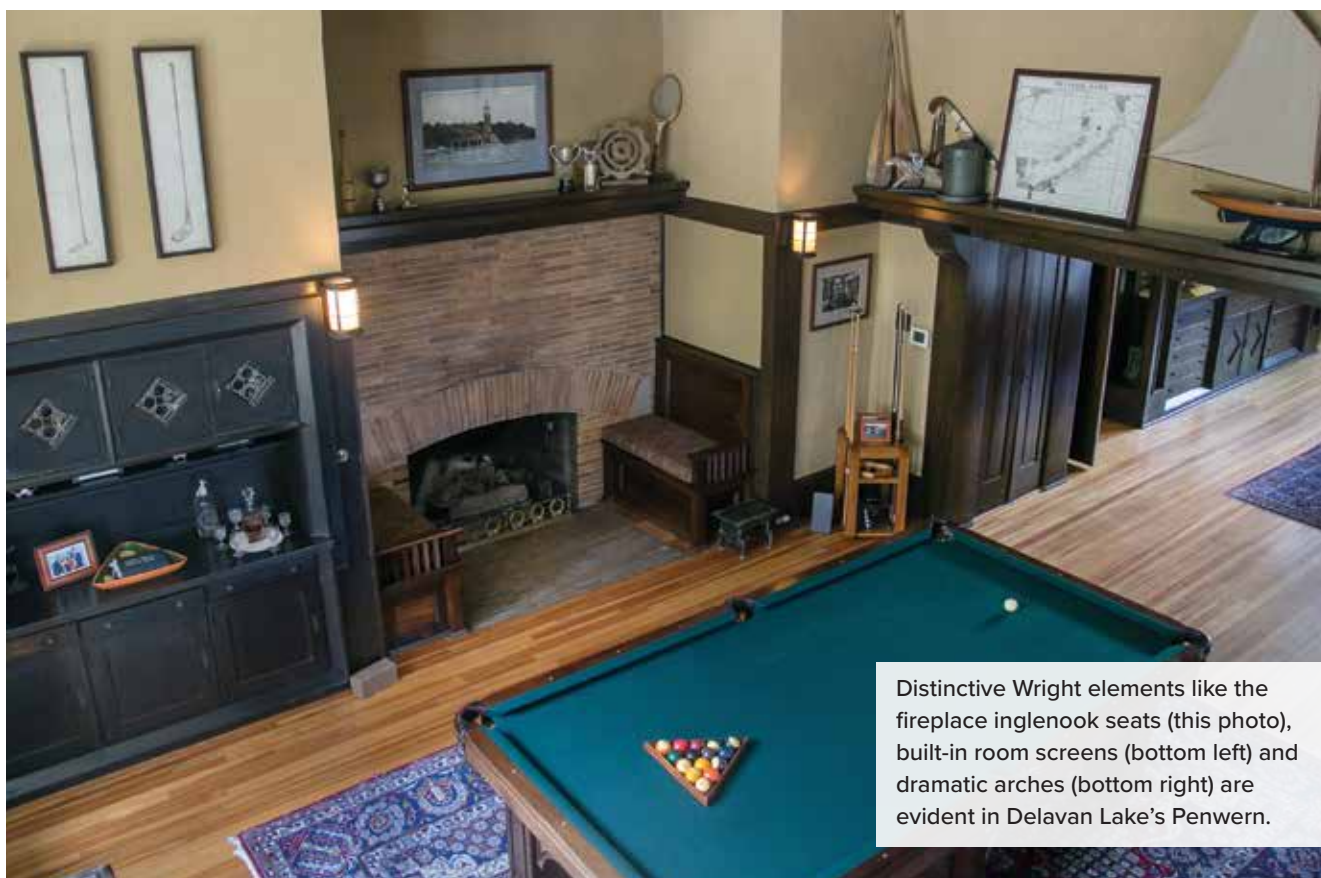


DEHAVAN LAKE Way Right FOR WRIGHT

Early 20th century cottages by the
legendary architect still grace the
lake's south shore

BY MARK HERTZBERG





Distinctive Wright elements like the fireplace inglenook seats (this photo), built-in room screens (bottom left) and dramatic arches (bottom right) are evident in Delavan Lake's Penwern.



Editor's note: This piece first appeared in our Autumn 2014 issue. It has been edited for length.

Venerated 20th-century architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) has a passionate following among design aficionados more than a century after he began his career in the Chicago suburb of Oak Park. His influence is still evident in architectural design to this day, and many of his original works have become tourist attractions around the country — from famed Fallingwater in Pennsylvania to Chicago's Robie House to the immaculately preserved Forest Avenue homes in Oak Park itself. Less well known is Wright's influence on the Lake Geneva area. But nearby Delavan Lake boasts five Wright-designed homes, all of which remain private residences.

Between 1900 and 1905, five Chicago-area residents commissioned Wright to design their summer cottages on the south shore of Delavan Lake. Their choice of architect meant these "cottages" — four of them in fact full-sized homes — boast a coveted architectural legacy. At the time, Wright's career and reputation were rising. By the turn of the 20th century, he had already completed more than 50 projects, including many homes in his native Oak Park. He had turned his attention to designing lake homes and cottages in several states and in Ontario, in addition to his better-known city and suburban homes.

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The five Delavan Lake cottages designed by Frank Lloyd Wright are:

- 3407 South Shore Drive, built in 1900. Designed for Henry H. Wallis, who also had a residence at 3301 South Shore Drive and never lived in his Wright house, instead selling it to two brothers, the doctors Heber and William GoodSmith. Today it is known as the Wallis-GoodSmith House.
- 3335 South Shore Drive, built in 1900. Designed for Fred B. Jones and named Penwern.
- 3211 South Shore Drive, built in 1902. Designed for Charles and Mary Ross.
- 3209 South Shore Drive, built in 1902. Designed for the Ross' daughter and son-in-law, Carrie and George Spencer.
- 3455 South Shore Drive, built in 1905. Designed for A.P. Johnson.

THE ARCHITECTURAL REVOLUTION OF FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

At the time that Wright designed these five Delavan Lake cottages,



Despite Penwern's intended use as a summer residence, Wright included a large fireplace with distinctive brickwork.

his architectural vocabulary was evolving. Unlike many other residences he designed throughout his career, these were commissioned to serve as strictly seasonal homes. They are located less than a mile apart, but Wright designed each specifically for its client and unique site, and each has a distinct look and a commanding view of the lake. One of Wright's hallmark design theories was that a home should blend into the surrounding landscape in an organic

way; therefore, the cottages were all "organic" in Wright's vernacular.

Today, Wright is perhaps most closely associated with what has come to be known as "Prairie Style:" suburban stucco homes, generally light in color. While some of the Delavan Lake homes have Prairie-style design elements, including broad overhanging eaves, they vary from the classic iterations in that they were designed for a rustic setting. The homes were originally sided in wood, with some incorporating stucco on the second floor, and generally featured board-and-batten siding stained dark green to be more appropriate for their country setting. Built long before home air conditioning, all of the cottages except the Wallis-GoodSmith house featured open verandas facing the lake. Lacking central heating, Wright incorporated fireplaces made of his signature Roman brick. Some of the original gas lighting fixtures still exist.

Wright eschewed Victorian-era homes with their "boxes" of rooms. The lake cottages, like many of his designs, feature open floor plans in their common spaces. While the homes were often referred to as "cottages," only one of them was small enough to be considered a true cottage by today's standards.

THE WALLIS-GOODSMITH HOUSE

How did Wright come to design five homes on Delavan Lake between 1900 and 1905? The answer lies in the architect's relationship with Henry H. Wallis, his friend and client. Wallis

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owned a successful hardware store and company in Oak Park. He was married to Minnie Schulz, a native of Delavan, and made additional money by buying and selling lakeside property in his wife's hometown, which was already a popular vacation spot boasting at least five resort hotels. By 1900, Wright had designed 18 homes in Oak Park and neighboring River Forest.

In 1895 Wallis had published a small sales brochure for "Wallisia," a largely undeveloped piece of land on the south shore of Delavan Lake, each page branded with the words, "H. H. Wallis SELLS Delavan Lake Property." The brochure is illustrated with maps and idyllic photographs. One photo of a canoe docked along the tree-lined shore is captioned, "A Quiet Retreat." Another shows a sailboat race with the caption, "A Weekly Event — Delavan Lake Yacht Club." The back page of the ribbon-bound volume pointed out that the lake is "about five miles long," has "six good hotels,

three public steamers, two railway lines, and bus lines to each, from each hotel." It further promised that Delavan Lake boasted easy travel to and from Chicago, good fishing, an improvement association and delivery services for the procurement of groceries and necessities.

Wallis had sold 65 properties and 11 lots in the first six months of 1899 when the Delavan Republican noted that, "H.H. Wallis ... has been what

might be justly termed a hustler for that side of the lake." On May 3, 1900, the newspaper wrote, "H.H. Wallis, who is ever hustling for Delavan Lake, entertained a party Tuesday, who were looking for cottages to rent for the summer." By the end of the July that same year, Wallis had reportedly sold his 99th lake property.

A glimpse into the relationship between Wright and Wallis is found in the correspondence of Marion



The Wallis-GoodSmith House, stained the way Wright intended.

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THE HOTEL GENEVA

Next door to Delavan Lake, Lake Geneva boasted one Wright-designed building, the Geneva Hotel, on the site of today's Geneva Towers Condominiums. Built in 1912 as one of the first modern "motor hotels," Wright's design for the Geneva Hotel made use of his groundbreaking architectural philosophies: a low, horizontal building intended to blend into the natural environment, with 360 feet of water frontage on the White River lagoon and a wide, shaded piazza. The hotel was demolished in 1970.



Wright designed Penwern to blend into the lake landscape.

Johnson. In 1946, she wrote to Wright about a possible commission for the architect. Wright wrote her, "I would like to build on the site of the Wallis Cottage for you — let us know more of what you have in mind," adding, "I loved Henry [Wallis]," next to his signature. In a letter written in 1992, Johnson shed further light on the close friendship between Wallis and Wright: "Wright and Henry Wallis were such close friends (like brothers, as Mrs. Wallis said), and whenever he sold a lot, Mr. Wright would dash off little mementos for him, as they were next-door neighbors in Oak Park."

Wright's first suggested design for Wallis featured an arched porte-cochere, like the one he later built for Jones, but Wallis evidently did not prefer it. The finished Wallis-GoodSmith cottage was the result of the second design Wright showed to Wallis. (Today's open veranda and the rear entry hall were not part of Wright's original design; they are more recent additions.)

PENWERN

Penwern, the Fred B. Jones estate, was Wright's most ambitious undertaking on Delavan Lake. The largest of the five cottages, Penwern offers 6,552 square feet of interior space, with decks and porches totaling an additional 2,132 square feet. Wright also designed a boathouse (1900), stable (1903), and gatehouse (1903) at Penwern. (Wright's grandmother, whose own surname was Jones, lived in an estate named Pen-y-Wern in Wales.)

Wright incorporated fieldstone boulders into the porch columns and the foundations of the four buildings. Arches are a signature feature of Penwern: there is an arched porte-cochere at the entrance to the house, a dramatic arch spanning the central porch facing the lake and an arch on the front of the boathouse. The central porch is semi-circular, as were the two side porches originally. There is an attached tower across a walkway above the porte-cochere. Jones, a bachelor, is thought to have hosted card games for his business associates and friends in the tower. A porcelain urinal was built into the wall of the game room.

Jones built two additions to the house, probably in 1909. The one on the west side of the house covered some of the living room and dining room windows. Sue and John Major, who bought Penwern in 1994, and acquired its gatehouse in 2001, removed all of the later additions. The Majors also restored and rebuilt the front of the stable (now a garage) to Wright's plans. Sadly, the boathouse had lain in ruins since an arson fire in 1978, so in 2002, they also commissioned an historic reconstruction of the boathouse using Wright's original plans.

THE ROSS HOUSE

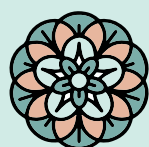
The cottage that Wright designed for Charles S. and Mary Ross in 1902 was greatly altered by one of its subsequent owners in the 1920s. Open porches were a distinctive feature of the house as Wright designed it, but they were enclosed when additional rooms were built on the second floor in the front



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and rear of the house. The new front room was built under what had been a dramatic porch roof. Today, the home bears little resemblance to Wright's original rustic design.

THE SPENCER COTTAGE

Next door to the Rosses' home, Wright built a small cottage on a narrow lot for the Spencers, who owned it for 61 years. (Mrs. Spencer was a daughter of Charles and Mary Ross.) Only two families have owned the cottage since, which has helped to maintain the architectural integrity of the house. Wright's design features a prow-shaped veranda, well-suited to a lake home. At the time it was built, the house had no indoor plumbing, but a half bath was added in the 1920s. Later, the Spencers added a guesthouse with a bathroom, though this was not designed by Wright. After the guesthouse burned down in an electrical fire in 1982, the current owners, who had purchased the cottage just four months earlier, built a prow-shaped addition on the rear of the house to mirror the design of the veranda, adding a family room on the first floor and a master bedroom and master bath upstairs. (Interestingly, an anecdote asserts that Wright denied authorship of this cottage when he saw vertical, rather than horizontal, board-and-batten siding on the second floor of the home. However, Wright's original plans show vertical siding.)

THE JOHNSON HOUSE

Designed in 1905, deeper into Wright's "Prairie-style" period, the symmetrical A.P. Johnson cottage represented a more transitional style: the house is sided in a stucco-like material, and features more design elements of the Prairie Style. The house remained in the Johnson family for 59 years. Today, it has been altered more than any of the cottages, and now serves as a year-round residence. The open verandas at the ends of the house have been enclosed. The east porch is now the dining room. The west porch now has stairs to the full lower level, built under the house in 2004. The lower-level family room faces the lake. Small balconies



The Spencer House, the smallest cottage, features a prow-shaped veranda.



The Ross House veranda was enclosed by an early owner.



Remodeling of the A.P. Johnson House included the addition of a lower level.

were built outside the upstairs bedrooms. The home's exterior is now light-colored synthetic stucco, further enhancing its appearance as a "Prairie-style" home. 🌿

Note: The homes that Frank Lloyd Wright designed on Delavan Lake remain private residences. Except for the Jones gatehouse, the homes are not

visible from the road. The privacy of the owners and their property should be respected.

Mark Hertzberg is the author and photographer of four books about Frank Lloyd Wright's work, including "Frank Lloyd Wright's Penwern: A Summer Estate." His website is www.wrightinracine.com.

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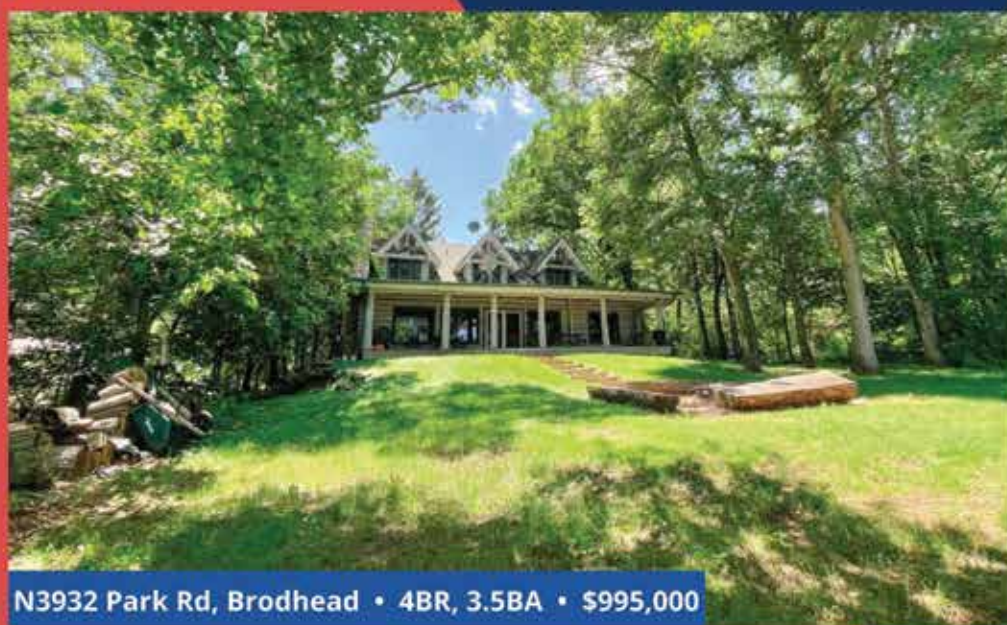
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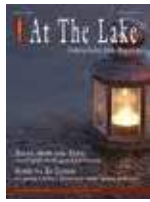
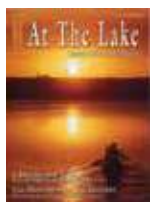


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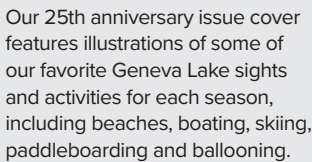


From Cover to Cover



In the past 25 years, *At The Lake* has published a total of 102 covers, presented here in the order they were published, including this special 25th anniversary commemorative issue, which features a custom cover illustration by artist Michael Crampton. Our very first cover in Autumn 1997 featured sailboats on buoys on a foggy morning. Over the years, we've sported three different logos, and generally tried to embrace the changing seasons in the Geneva Lake area. We've had 25 covers featuring boats, from a kayak to a beautifully restored yacht from the early 1900s. We've had seven covers featuring people, five with birds, four with dogs and, inexplicably, one prominently featuring a frog. Everyone on the staff has a personal favorite, from the beautiful shot of a wooden boat from our Summer 2011 issue (senior graphic designer Lauren Harrigan's favorite), to the striking bluebird on our Spring 2009 issue (advertising sales manager Deann Hausner's favorite), to the deer in a pastel-flowering field on our Spring 2020 issue (editor Anne Morrissy's favorite). Together, these covers create a beautiful pastiche of life *At The Lake* over the past quarter of a century.

P.S. For Publisher/CEO Barb Krause's favorite cover, turn to page 114.



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How



Majestic



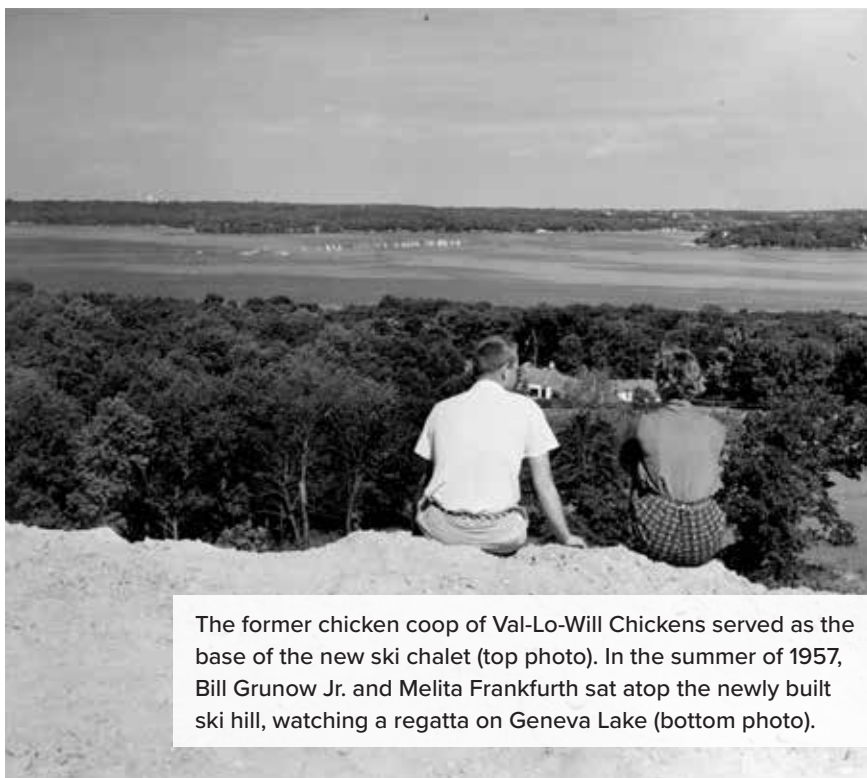
A look back at the hill with a view
and the man with a vision

BY BARB KRAUSE | PHOTOS PROVIDED BY THE
GRUNOW FAMILY



For many of us who spent time in Lake Geneva from the 1950s through the 1980s, Majestic Hills Ski Area is a fond memory. Many of us learned to ski there, spent our Saturdays with friends in the chalet or attended summer concerts at the bandstand. Many locals over the years worked the rental counter or taught ski school. For all of us who have fond memories of “Majestic,” as it was familiarly called, we have lifelong resident Bill Grunow Jr., (1931-2012) to thank.

As a young man, Grunow was passionate about skiing. He decided to turn his favorite activity into a business, so he set out with Melita Frankfurth, another avid skier who he happened to be dating at the time,



The former chicken coop of Val-Lo-Will Chickens served as the base of the new ski chalet (top photo). In the summer of 1957, Bill Grunow Jr. and Melita Frankfurth sat atop the newly built ski hill, watching a regatta on Geneva Lake (bottom photo).



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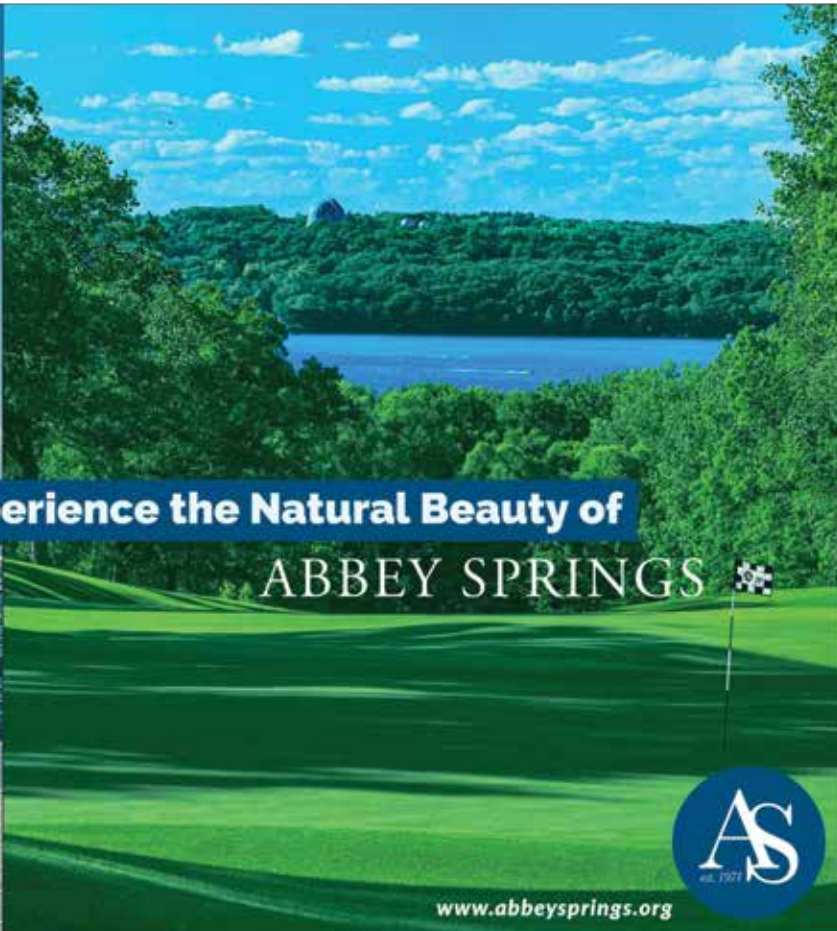
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and began scouting the entire region. They found the ideal place for a new ski hill in Grunow's own backyard. His father had owned Val-Lo-Will chicken farm, the world's largest supplier of fresh and rotisserie chicken, which closed in the mid-1950s, leaving the farm's site on the south shore of Geneva Lake unused. Grunow built the ski hill on this former Val-Lo-Will land; the ski chalet was constructed from a former chicken coop by adding A-frames to the exterior. When Majestic Hills opened in December 1957, the property contained a ski shop, a cafeteria, and a bar and lounge area with fireplaces.

The aesthetic was rustic, yet romantic. Many an area couple can recount love blooming in front of a

Many area locals first learned to ski as children thanks to the Majestic Hills ski school.

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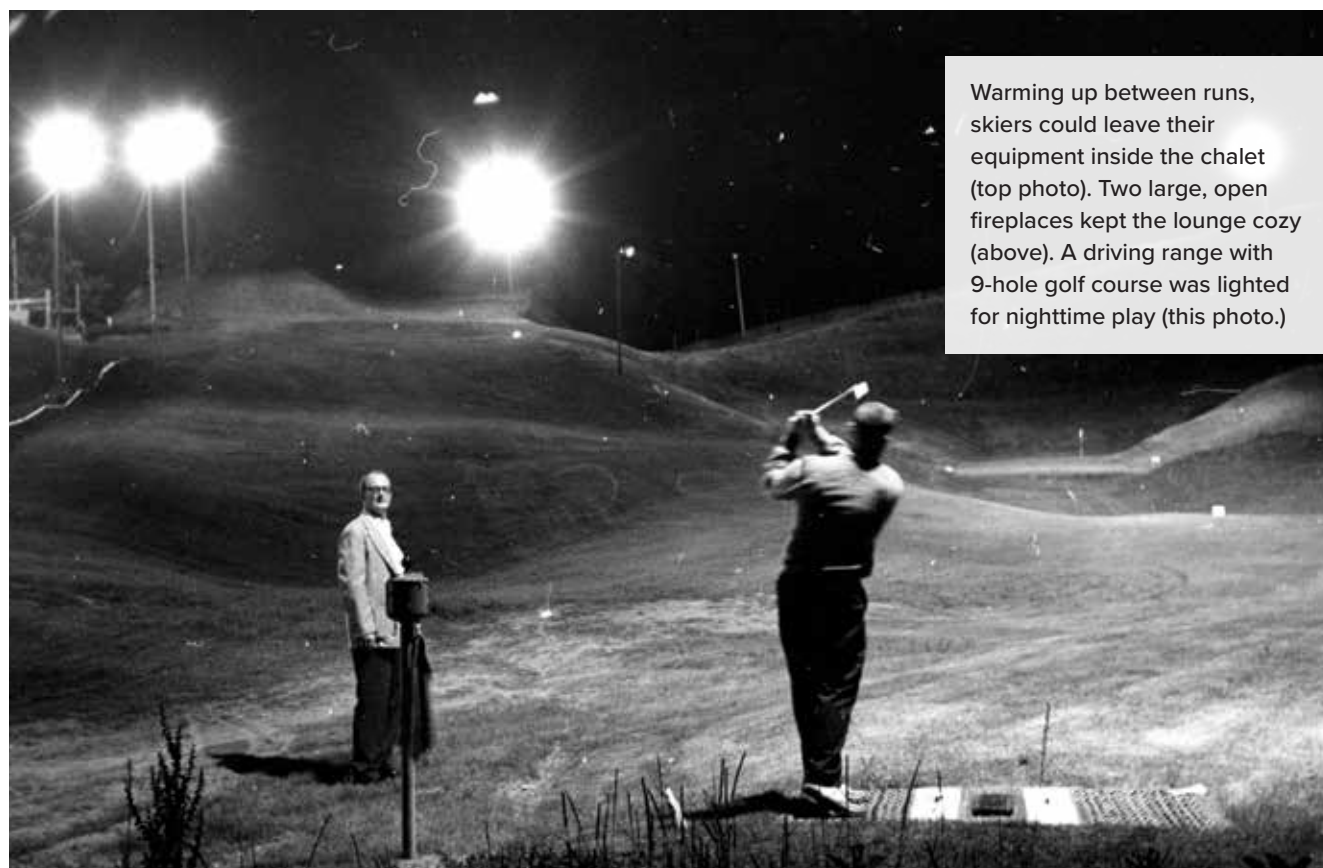
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blazing fire in the chalet. At least one local skier fell for, and later married, the ski instructor. And in 1958, less than a year after opening Majestic Hills, Grunow married his avid ski companion, Melita.

Dr. Peter Arnold, a retired dentist, worked at Majestic Hills from 1958 to 1960. "I worked the rentals," he remembered. "People from the city ... came out by the busloads — anything to get out there and have the experience. Bill told me we had 1,000 sets of skis and sometimes we'd rent them out three times over in a day."

"The chalet would smell like burning wool because everyone was cold and wet, and sitting so close to the fire," Arnold recalls warmly. "Even though it was a chicken coop, it had quite a ski atmosphere when there was snow."

The ski hill was an almost immediate success, but Grunow didn't stop there. In 1960, he opened a driving range and a nine-hole golf course, which traversed the ski hill, and featured a rail car and lights for nighttime play.



Warming up between runs, skiers could leave their equipment inside the chalet (top photo). Two large, open fireplaces kept the lounge cozy (above). A driving range with 9-hole golf course was lit for nighttime play (this photo.)

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An advertisement for EMAG/NE Geneva Lakes. The background is a photograph of four people (two men and two women) sitting in a movie theater, smiling and looking towards the screen. They are holding popcorn and drinks. Overlaid on the bottom half of the image is large white text that reads 'EXPERIENCE the magic of MOVIES & MORE'. Below this, the text 'EMAG/NE GENEVA LAKES' is displayed in a bold, white, sans-serif font. At the very bottom, a line of smaller white text provides the address, phone number, and website: '2565 WI-120 | Lake Geneva, WI 53147 | 262-475-2300 | www.emagine-entertainment.com'. On the right side of the advertisement, there are three circular callouts. The top one shows a bowl of popcorn and a drink with the text 'ENHANCED CONCESSIONS WITH GOURMET SNACKS'. The middle one shows two orange leather recliner chairs with the text 'LUXURIOUS RECLINERS IN ALL 8 AUDITORIUMS'. The bottom one shows a loyalty card and a rewards card with the text 'EXCLUSIVE REWARDS PROGRAM'.



Large snow-making machines improved the runs and ensured Majestic Hills could stay open throughout the winter (this photo). Teenagers made the most of a spring thaw in the early 1960s (below).

And then there was the Majestic Bandstand. “I honestly think the bandstand was the highlight of the ski business,” Grunow said in a 2006 interview. Operating during the summers from 1960 to 1970, the bandstand hosted such national acts such as Stevie Wonder, The Who, Chicago, The Monkees and the Beach Boys.

Sadly, in March of 1988, the ski chalet burned to the ground. The \$500,000 loss was uninsured and that proved the end. The Grunows had other businesses to keep them busy, including Majestic Marine. Bill Grunow passed away in 2012, survived by Melita, three children, nine grandchildren and a legacy of memories for so many. As Fontana resident Ron Frankel recalled from his time spent at the ski hill, “It’s like everything good that you experienced when you were young... You have no idea what you had until it’s passed you by.” *about*



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“The summer 2001 cover photo is my favorite, of all 102 covers produced to date. It was our first official ‘shoot’ with a photographer we brought in from Iowa: Clint Farlinger. We met at Covenant Harbor before sunrise to stage the shot, and the resulting image far exceeded my expectations.”

— Barb Krause, Publisher/CEO



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