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House of *LIFE & STYLE*

In which a once-upon-a-time funeral parlor becomes one of Traverse City's finest homes.

TEXT BY ELIZABETH EDWARDS

Built in 1940, the tweed-colored brick building on the corner of Union and Sixth streets in downtown Traverse City was once a funeral home—complete with a somber entrance and a chapel with a wood-beamed vaulted ceiling. By the time Traverse City native Megan Madion took note of it, however, the building had been repurposed as the National Cherry Festival office. Megan, an avid runner, competed for years in the annual Cherry Festival running race—even after she had moved to Chicago to launch her marketing career. The race ended across from the office, and she recalls thinking that beneath the building’s benign appearance there was the makings of a fabulous home that might feel like an old brownstone or a commercial space converted into a hip residence—the kind of homes she admired in Chicago.

Fast forward some years and Megan, now moved back to her hometown with her adopted daughter, Mae, was the president and chief operating officer of fast-growing Hagerty Classic Car and Boat Insurance headquartered in downtown Traverse City. In a search to find a cool downtown space to make her home, she found that the old Cherry Festival office was for sale. And that’s when life started getting very, very full—even for a woman known for her boundless energy. In the span of several years, Megan purchased the old building, launched a renovation—and married Dr. Mike Nizzi. Suddenly the project turned into a home for a family of five: Megan, Mike, Mae and Mike’s two teenaged children, Lexi and Vinny.

To get it done, Megan assembled an A-list renovation team whose nucleus included three longtime friends: architect

Opening Spread: Matching Montauk Sofas flank the great room fireplace in what once was the funeral home chapel. The soft chairs are Sail Poufs by Hector Serrano from Orange Skin in Chicago. The linen drapes are custom. The dining room table was made by craftsman Larry Hammond II of Olive Creek Furniture in Traverse City. Megan found the chairs online. The dining room pendant lights are from the Italian company Luminaire. The master suite sits at one end of the upstairs bridge; the children’s area is at the other. Built-in shelving creates lineal harmony and space for eye candy.



MICHAEL POEHLMAN



ADAM JABLONSKI



MICHAEL POEHLMAN



This page: A homely add-on room was demolished off the Sixth Street alley side to create the manicured entrance and allow room for expansive windows in the great room. The fabulous sliding barn doors are stained barn wood made by Larry Hammond II of Traverse City's Olive Creek Furniture. Mae went with a Traverse City cherry theme for her bedroom—fitting given that the home once housed the Cherry Festival office. ▶



THIS PAGE: ADAM JABLONSKI. OPPOSITE: MICHAEL POEHLMAN.



The sectional in the family living area is from Chicago Merchandise Mart. The black coffee tables are Fat Poufs by Patricia Urquiola from Luminaire.

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Suzannah Tobin, builder Bradley Warren of 45th Parallel Construction and interior designer Stephanie Wirth of the Chicago-based Leo Designs. The overall vision, however, was Megan's—one that was inspired by the British interior designer Kit Kemp, renowned for outfitting the venerable old structures of the Firmdale Hotel chain that she owns with her husband, Tim, with a fresh, dramatic style.

As in a Firmdale Hotel, the Madion-home renovation retains much of what makes the prewar structure so appealing, including the foot-thick brick walls and the vaulted chapel ceiling and original woodwork. Two bold remodel strokes made those great old bones shine. The first was the addition of many expansive, black-trimmed (Marvin) windows that add a handsome architectural touch and usher in daylight once choked by a scattering of tiny windows. The next grand alteration was the removal of a wall that had separated the chapel from offices on the ground floor and had cloistered off the living quarters.

With the wall gone, the floor plan flows openly from the foyer into a great room that contains the formal living and dining areas, central kitchen and family space. Mahogany floors stained in ebony and Jacobean contrast with white painted brick walls—a surface that is repeated in the bases of the kitchen's two cooking islands. A fireplace visible from almost everywhere in the great room keeps the space feeling warm. "We have it lit all day long on the weekends," Megan says. The space is soothing, contemporary and extremely livable.

An open staircase, that flanks the central kitchen, leads to a loft-bridge that looks down on the great room and connects the master and children's suites. For the children's area, Megan opted for a large playroom and small bedrooms she calls pods—so that the children hang with the family instead of in their rooms. The rooms, outfitted simply with built-in desks and small closets, however, are so cozy, the kids love spending time in them. ▶

Marty Rhein of BAC Design Group designed the master and children's bathrooms. The playroom is a bright, open area for the kids to hang out.

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FROM TOP: ADAM JABLONSKI, MICHAEL POEHLMAN.

The renovation ended up taking 16 months. “In looking back, it’s almost surreal that it ended up working out better than the actual vision,” Megan says. “The project entailed very close collaboration with Suzannah Tobin, the architect. She was amazing. There were many frustrating periods but in my professional experience, anything good that you’re creating can be extremely frustrating. You just have to move through it, one foot in front of the other. All in all, it was a great life learning experience. It’s also fulfilling to know that we’ve creatively restored a historic downtown Traverse City building.”

Nowadays, the lights glowing in the home’s windows are visible from bustling Union Street—a scene that breathes warmth and energy into the streetscape. Inside the home, there is enough love and laughter to make the old structure live as it never has before. 🏡

Elizabeth Edwards is managing editor of Northern Home & Cottage. lissa@traversemagazine.com.
FIND RESOURCES FOR THIS HOME ON PAGE 19.




The orange chair in the foyer is called the Coralia by Fernando and Humberto from Luminaire. Marty Rhein of BAC Design Group designed the kitchen. The custom cabinetry is by Eyewood Design of Interlochen and the marble island tops are by Traverse City’s Stratus Marble and Granite.



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BUILDER
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INTERIOR DESIGN
Stephanie Wirth, Leo Designs, Chicago, 872.829.3172, leodesignschicago.com

KITCHEN AND BATH DESIGN
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BELOW: MICHAEL POEHLMAN.

From left: Stephanie Wirth and Megan Madion.



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