

Lakeside vision

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT TURNBULL



Alan and Lara Lever with their three children



Building on the lake was always part of Alan and Lara Lever's plans. They had spent every summer at their family cottages since they were children, and had dreamed of creating one of their own.

"We met while up at the cottage, and have been coming up to the lake ever since," says Alan, recounting the years of memories that led them to purchase their own cottage property.

How a family created their dream property in reverse

"We bought in 2009," says Alan. "It was a small cottage, but we knew we would build a bigger one in its place, one day."

The process of purchasing a cottage to rebuild on its lot is a familiar concept among cottagers, but the Levers admit their way of going about the build was a little unorthodox.

"Most people start by building a cottage, then using that design for the boathouse..."

but we did it the other way around," says Alan.

In order to build their dream property without stretching their finances too thin, Alan and Lara put their cottage-build on hold, focusing their sights on the boathouse instead.

"We wanted to build a boathouse that we could use right away. And then model our new cottage on its design."

Seven years spanned the

boathouse's completion and the cottage's construction, but that timeline created a unique challenge for the couple: "we were required to get a permit for the cottage and boathouse at the same time, which meant we had to design both the cottage and the boathouse at once, even though we wouldn't be building the cottage for another seven years."

Alan admits the situation wasn't easy, but it was doable, thanks to Normerica's design team.

Planning ahead

Working with Normerica was an easy decision for Alan and Lara. They had seen Normerica's work around the lake, and visited several friends' cottages that were Normerica designs.

"They were our inspiration," says Alan. "We put together the best ideas we had seen to modify the original Carleton cottage design."

Their changes included a large screened-in porch, including an octagonal screened three-season room with a large stone fireplace, and the addition of an outdoor dining area.

"My wife spends most of the summer up here with the kids, so we wanted the cottage to allow for them to maximize their time outdoors."

Another feature they needed was a bright basement with a large sleeping area and play space that could accommodate their growing family, with plenty of space for their friends and their kids.

"Although our family had grown since we created the design seven years earlier, it didn't need major modifications," says Alan. "We stuck to the original footprint, and only adjusted minor aspects."



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When it came time to build, Normerica provided the material and created the cottage shell, allowing Alan and Lara's family friend and local contractor, Ian Karn, to finish the project for them.

"We saw it as a huge benefit. He worked well with our interior designer, Jennifer Wellman, who was also a close friend. So we're thankful that Normerica was flexible with how the project was completed."

Walking through

Looking back on the project, Alan says he would not suggest their non-traditional building approach to anyone. "It was tricky to say the least.

We had to know what we wanted from the beginning."

In order to get a clear idea of what you want, Alan suggests visiting other cottages, and talking with cottagers who have recently built.

At Normerica, cottage walk-throughs are highly

encouraged, and are often arranged by their team.

"It allows you to see the design in proportion, and get a feel for how it would fit your family," says Alan. "It's just something you can't get from a rendering or printed design." **DS**

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