

FAIRFIELD COUNTY

HOME



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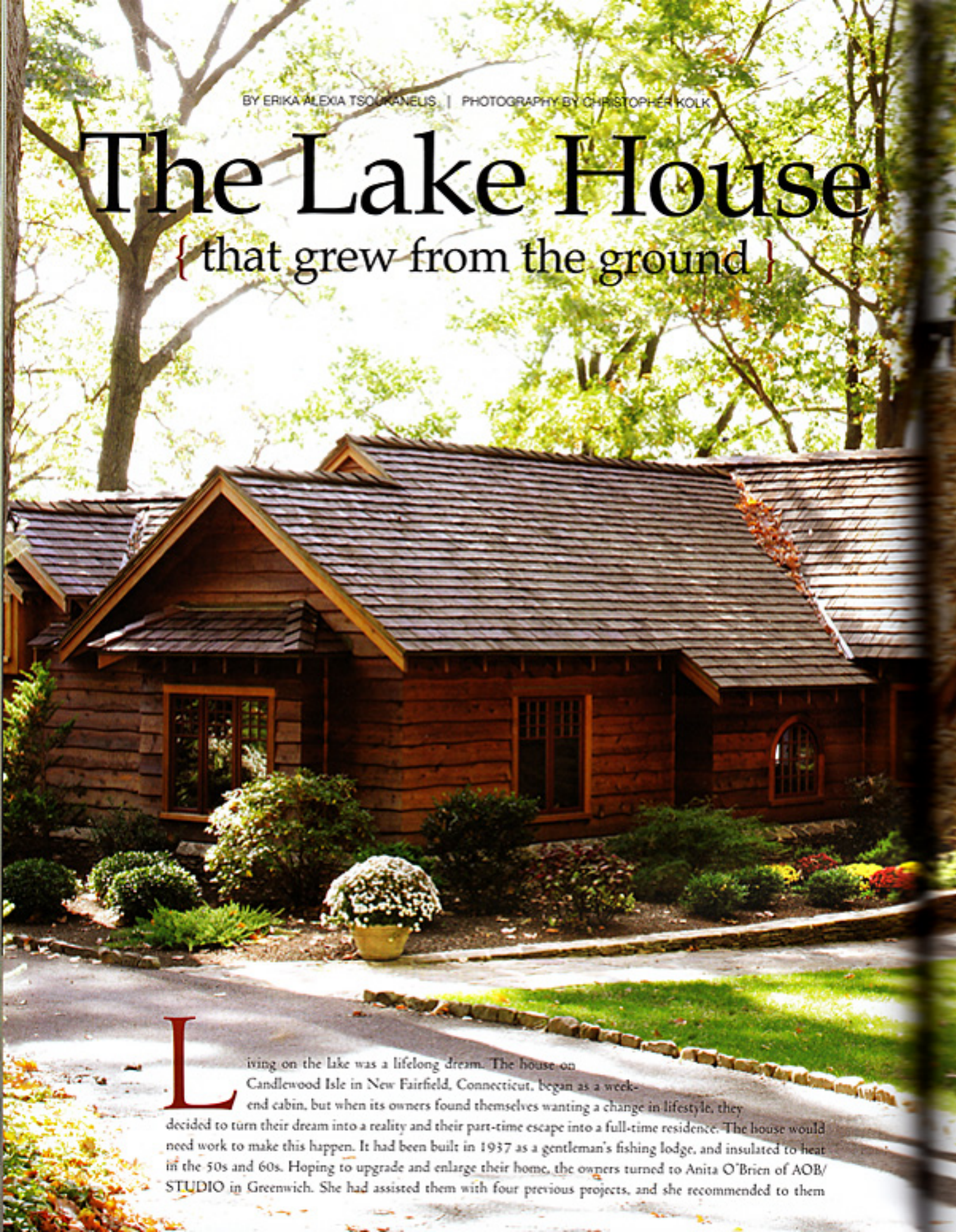


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BY ERIKA ALEXIA TSOUKANEUS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER KOLK

The Lake House

{ that grew from the ground }



Living on the lake was a lifelong dream. The house on Candlewood Isle in New Fairfield, Connecticut, began as a weekend cabin, but when its owners found themselves wanting a change in lifestyle, they decided to turn their dream into a reality and their part-time escape into a full-time residence. The house would need work to make this happen. It had been built in 1937 as a gentleman's fishing lodge, and insulated to heat in the 50s and 60s. Hoping to upgrade and enlarge their home, the owners turned to Anita O'Brien of AOB/STUDIO in Greenwich. She had assisted them with four previous projects, and she recommended to them

A photograph of a rustic stone and wood fishing lodge. The building features a prominent stone tower on the left with a crenellated top. The main structure has a dark wood exterior and a gabled roof with wooden shingles. A covered porch with a decorative wooden frame is visible. The lodge is surrounded by lush greenery, including a large tree in the foreground and various plants in the garden. Sunlight filters through the trees, creating a warm atmosphere.

BUILT as a gentleman's fishing lodge in 1837, the new lake house has retained the warmth and character of its predecessor thanks to expert construction by Mark Olson and Anita O'Brien's inspired architectural design.

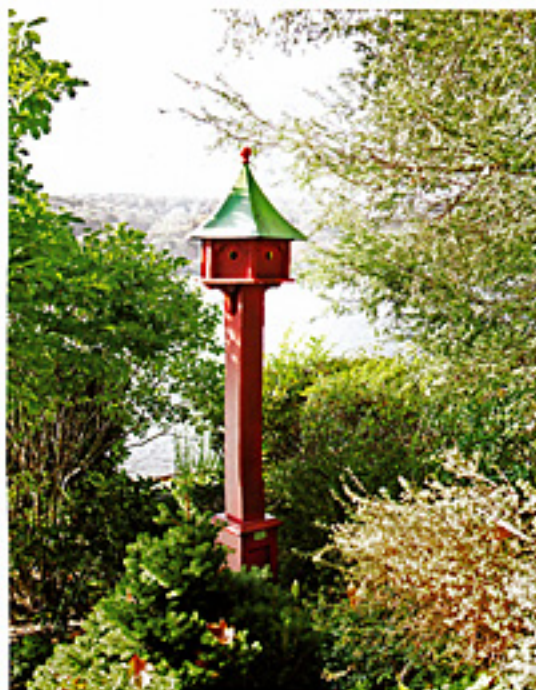


builder Mark Olson of Olson Development in New Canaan. At that time, Rick Deberadinis was a partner in the construction company. O'Brien, who has designed custom residences for over 25 years, had a prior working relationship with Olson Development and knew they would be perfect for the job. The team set to examine the cabin's existent condition.

It did not take long to discover the widespread water damage throughout the structure. Walls were crumbling, the foundation was virtually absent and the roof needed replacement. To transform the Candlewood Isle retreat according to the wishes of their clients, the professionals would need to dismantle the old and craft

something new. Yet the couple wanted the new to retain the appeal and character of what had stood for over half a century. O'Brien's premise was to respect the asymmetrical vernacular of the surrounding neighborhood and design a house that looked as if it had evolved over a period of years. Olson was confident that he was up for the construction challenge. Says Olson, "That's what drives me in home building. Matching an old look is what I'm all about."

Portions of the old house were salvaged. A piece of the original foundation was retained. The team also saved the old stone water table that surrounded the house as well as the cabin's charming front



OPPOSITE The front portico was made from white oak timber that underwent chip carving, a process that involved cutting the wood perpendicular to the grain.

ABOVE This red birdhouse matches the lake house's cottage red windows by Kolbe and Kolbe.

LEFT Great care was taken to replicate old stone work.





TOP Butternut paneling in master bath fabricated and installed by Stark Mountain Woodworking of Vermont. **ABOVE** Ceiling beams are Douglas fir with authentic mortise and tenon joints by Olson Development.

Quality design, construction and materials help make this Candlewood Isle home a much-loved part of the lakefront landscape

door. A cedar pergola and stone pillars out back were set to be reconstructed and reattached. These remnants served as building blocks and inspiration for the new cabin.

Original specifications in hand, O'Brien designed a home almost identical to the first in spirit. Horizontal in inclination and low to the ground, more Tudor-Revival inspired than Adirondack in style, the geometric angles of the house's roof replicate those of its predecessor. What might be considered additions flow from the back of the home and down toward the lake below. The interior architecture is both cozy and elegant, as the male client had asked that the rooms maintain their former fishing-lodge warmth, while the

female client requested more streamlined sophistication. Balancing these potentially contradictory directives was achieved through clever design, superior construction and smart use of materials.

Inside, kitchen countertops were made from granite and leaded glass windows were placed within cabinet doors. Millwork was expertly crafted of butternut, chosen for its warmth and tone. Reclaimed butternut was also used in the paneling of the master bathroom, with its antique travertine floors and vaulted steam shower. The butternut pocket doors between the living and great rooms may slide open to generate a sense of spaciousness or be closed for privacy. The tremendous

ROOM WITH A VIEW

A picture window in the living room opens to a view of Candlewood Lake. The ottoman and paintings in Hudson River School style are from the Adirondack Store in New Canaan.



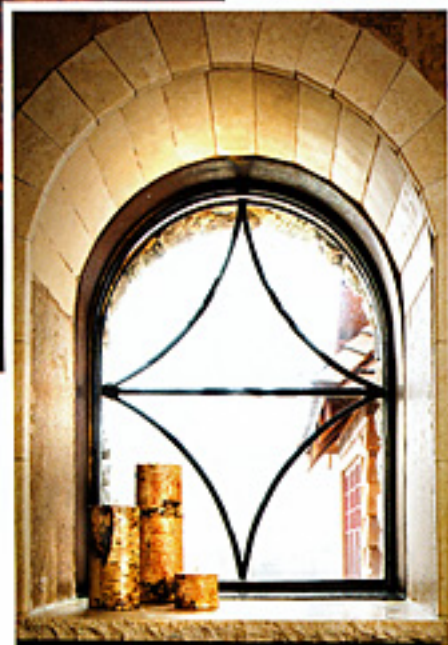


GREAT ROOM Anna O'Brien found the heartstone at O & C Industries, Inc. in Stamford and knew immediately it would delight her clients. It was part of the original foundation of the George Washington Bridge.



LEFT The wood paneling in study offers a cocoon of comfort. An unobstructed window lets in plenty of natural light.

INSET Window in antique travertine vaulted shower is cast in bronze. Leaded glass inhibits reflection and creates an antique patina.



hearthstone here was one of the original foundation stones from the George Washington Bridge. Ceiling beams are Douglas fir and held together with authentic mortise and tenon connections, which will become tighter as the fir turns, twists and swells over time. Floors are antique oak, as light in shading as the butternut and fir. These light woods were chosen to complement the clients' impressive collection of honey-colored American antiques.

On the façade, wavy-edge siding was fashioned of knotty cedar. It is a style typical of Candlewood Isle homes, although the mill that used to supply it has

long since gone out of business. To spare the clients the expense of sourcing antique reclaimed wood for the front portico, ten-inch-thick white oak timbers underwent chip carving, a process by which wood is hand-carved perpendicular to the grain and around knots to effect rippled edges. The cedar of the roof was hand-split, its shingles thick and rustic, and its appearance reflecting the lake-house building of the 1930s. Both the siding and roof were stained the same color



ABOVE Like all picture windows in the lake house, the master bedroom window has small muntins that form checker-like borders about a larger pane of glass.

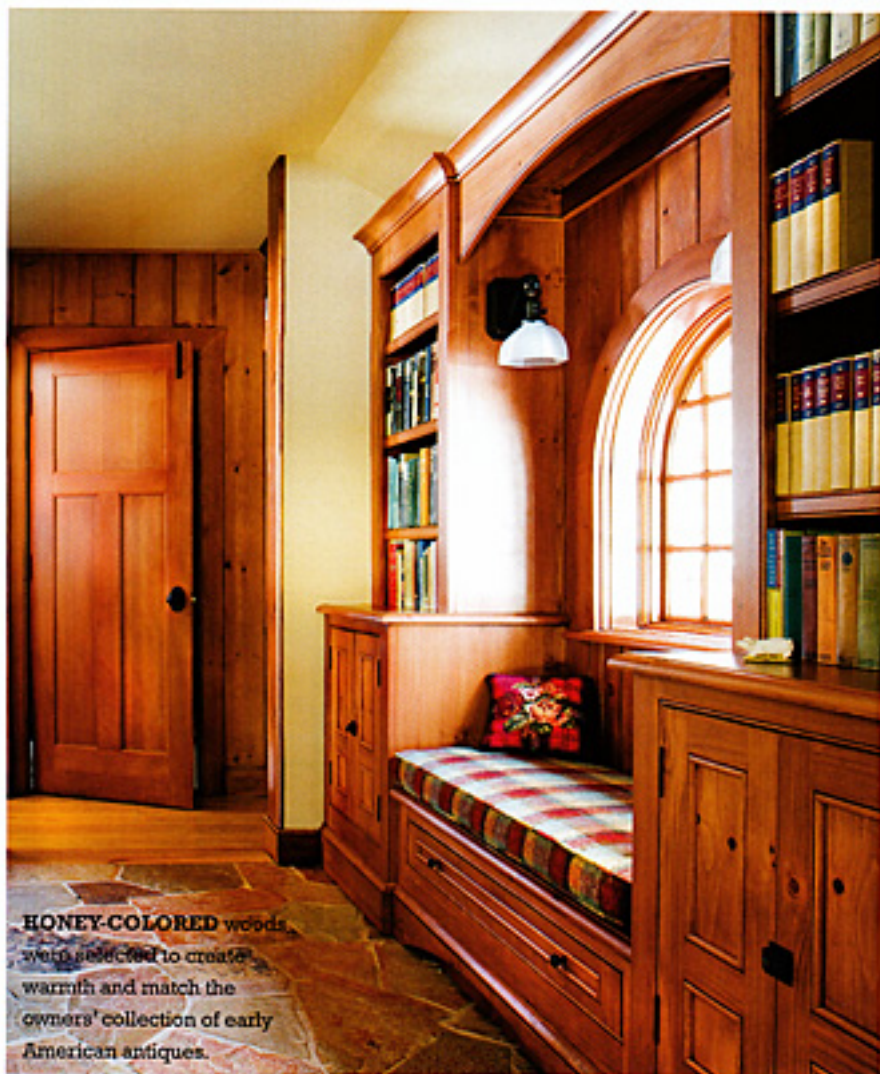
RIGHT Leaded glass in the kitchen cabinets and upper dog-house window is from Rohl's Studio. Countertops are made of granite, and the wood is butternut.

for continuity and to produce a weathered look. A chimney and stone walls were built with Connecticut stone that matched that of the water table. There was no need for the mason to manipulate the stone so that it looked like the old; it arrived covered with moss that simulated a comparable antique patina. The overall

manifestation suggests that this structure could have been standing for decades, growing from the ground on the edge of the smooth Candlewood Lake.

The clients wanted to take full advantage of the lake view from their dream home, and so the quality and nature of the windows were pivotal. Stained a care-





HONEY-COLORED woods were selected to create warmth and match the owners' collection of early American antiques.

fully selected cottage red for interest and beauty, with Douglas fir frames on the inside, the windows have panes of leaded glass that allow for admiration of the vista without reflective distortions. Leaded glass also lends an antique feel that prevents the windows from looking too new. Treatments have been avoided so that light may enter and the view not be obscured from indoors. The complex patterning of the windows may also be taken in without hindrance. Small muntins form checker-like borders about larger panes of glass in some cases, while in others rich detailing within smaller window frames lends visual zest. A window within the master bath's vaulted shower is particularly special. Cast in solid bronze and positioned for the utmost privacy, it allows one to

gaze out at the lake while bathing. The team also aided an appreciation of the house site by repositioning the original front door so that upon entering one may see clearly through the house and out to the water.

To achieve this commendable work, Olson employed his full staff of artisans. This is customary. By working with his own people, he can manage the quality of the results. Other gifted artisans were called to the scene by O'Brien and the client. The millwork of the kitchen and bathroom cabinets was fabricated and installed by Stark Mountain Woodworking of Vermont. The salvaged butternut was also from Vermont, a select grade supplied by Green Mountain Wildwoods. Kolbe and Kolbe manufactured





ABOVE Stone native to Connecticut was sensitively incorporated into the exterior walls and patio.





FROM CANDLEWOOD LAKE This exquisitely crafted home truly seems to grow from the ground and blend into the natural landscape. Anita O'Brien says, "My houses are not monuments, but rather expressions of stylistic respect."

all but the shower-stall window. Leaded glass came from Rohlf's Studio in Mt. Vernon, New York. Other resources included Paris Ceramics, Ceramic Design, Waterworks and O & G Industries, Inc. in Stamford, home of the George Washington hearthstone. Landscape design was by Diane Stendahl of South Salem, New York.

Anita O'Brien says that she will sometimes receive a call from her clients while they are sitting in their great room. "They tell me they love their house," she says. To her, this love is the greatest success.

Mark Olson is also proud of the work. "The craftsmanship looks the same as it did when completed four years ago," he says. "With Olson Development, it's all about lasting quality."

This design and building team worked diligently with their clients to create exactly what the clients wished for: a comfortable, attractive full-time home on the lake. The Candlewood Isle cabin offers all the charm of the old and all the integrity of the new. It is sure to be loved by its owners and their family for years to come. ■

RESOURCES

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