

cosy CABIN

STORY **MEGAN DUNN**
PHOTOS **SANDY MACKAY**

The Summers' family cottage, surrounded by a winter wonderland, is a modernized city escape that can host a growing clan. It holds rustic touches to assimilate the new construction with the family's classic log home encapsulated inside.



ABOVE: Nestled beside the wood-burning fireplace is the perfect spot to be when the winter wind is howling outside. **LEFT:** The exterior view from the lake allows you to see how the original cabin has been incorporated into the new expansion.

The tamarack log cottage was built in 1863 and has only ever been owned by two families. It was moved from the country to the shores of Port Elgin by the previous generation and has a history that could not be betrayed. Touches of the past adorn the walls and living space, including an antique telephone and a converted weigh-scale now used as a coffee table, keeping the theme of cosy comfort in a cottage built for a busy family, which includes five grandchildren under the age of six.

The process was a lengthy one. Homeowners Susan and Paul Summers worked with architect **John Rutledge** for 10 years on plans to improve the original log house and one year on the final design that would honour and incorporate the existing cabin, which has a long history in Paul's family. The new additional space offers modern-day living for future generations. And the result was worth the time and energy invested to get it right – a seamless blend of old and new.

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ABOVE: Task lighting is cleverly positioned to hang from the timber details. **TOP RIGHT:** Floral arrangements throughout by Cathy Fenton, owner of Cathy's Flowers 'N Treasures. **RIGHT:** The various textures in the space add a lot of visual interest.



Local designer **Carla Pavlov** of **CR Designs** was brought in during the project's early stages. "From the beginning, the inspiration throughout the cottage was to bring the outdoors in, to mimic the natural surroundings with the interior design selections and finishes," Carla says.

The construction was completed by local general contractor **Leo Al** of **Leo Al's Contracting**, which celebrated 40 years in business earlier this year. Leo and his wife Marg had a place close by, so Leo was able to closely watch over the construction. Sadly, Leo passed away in August 2017 after a courageous battle with cancer. The company continues to operate under their children Jan, Dave and Jim.

The focal point of the original cabin, affectionately called the log room, is a new gas fireplace with stone masonry (**Dave Al** of Leo Al's Contracting) flanked by candle-style wall sconces. The log room is home to both living and dining rooms and can host over 20 people for a holiday meal; a quintessential gathering space. The windows are draped with a neutral yet fun slub-yarn cotton fabric that complements the inherent textural quality of the log walls.

A second sitting area, accessed through an archway, has a stunning stone-clad wood burning fireplace positioned between beams and timber posts – a thoughtful reverence to the original log structure. Carla selected Maritime White by **Benjamin Moore** for the walls,

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LEFT: The beverage area is located for maximum convenience and provides overflow workspace for the kitchen. **ABOVE:** A bent-timber arch creates a welcoming vignette. **BELOW:** The various wood finishes work together to create perfect harmony.





ABOVE: Designer Carla Pavlov of CR Designs (standing) with homeowner Susan Summers in the log room. **RIGHT:** A stunning black-and-white winter landscape photo by Carol Norris greets guests upon arrival. **BELOW:** The washroom off the front entrance has been affectionately coined “the long tall John.”



a warm touch that provides a soft and subtle canvas so the stone and grain of the timbers take command of the space. All painting by **Rick Weiler Painting**. The sitting room and log room both enjoy a western view of Lake Huron (**Strassburger Windows and Doors**), whose winter winds create blustery snow wonders, an extreme contrast to the cosiness created inside. The adjacent kitchen is aptly positioned to encourage conversations during meal preparation and keep a watchful eye over tots and their toys. The two-tone shaker-style cabinets by **Battes Kitchens** create a light and airy feeling and the glass and stone mosaic backsplash and limestone counters were inspired by found objects when walking the shore. The kitchen and the neighbouring limestone bar open to a wide hallway with heated, engineered hardwood floors (**Complete Flooring**) that flow alongside the exterior of the old cottage, which has the original seeded glass windows remaining as a peek-a-boo from the entrance foyer. *Continued on page 34*



TOP: The log room embodies comfort and warmth and offers a view to the bunkie and Lake Huron beyond. **LEFT:** A display of an antique tea cart and a decorative mask that was collected on travels. **ABOVE:** The windows in the original log cabin were restored, which allows light to flow from old to new.



The walls are decorated with photographs by local photographer **Carol Norris**, owner of **The Light House Photo Gallery**, whose work is also displayed in the master quarters with exposed stone from the log room chimney. An expanse of windows in the principal bedroom faces Lake Huron. Custom drapes feature a classic striped fabric in watery blue and sandy hues with pinch pleats. The drapes insulate and darken the room, which, when closed at night, provide a much needed touch when dealing with high winds off of the lake. The bedding, called Ancient Damask, was designed and woven in Italy. These luxury linens coordinate beautifully with the draperies. All drapes and linens are custom and supplied by CR Designs. *Continued on page 36*

ABOVE: The principal bedroom is an elegant and serene main-floor retreat. **TOP RIGHT:** In the principal suite, mirror was inlaid into the windows of the original cabin, making it appear as though there are windows on all four walls. **RIGHT:** A fine balance is achieved by complementing the warm white walls and wood finishes with rich colours in the carpet runners.





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The second storey is home to bedrooms and a bathroom that suit young families. The split washroom features radiant heated floors and square, 18-inch porcelain tiles. Textured top-down-bottom-up blinds provide privacy while adding brightness to the space. Tree tops peek in from above.

The bedrooms have been customized by the Summers' adult children and Carla intentionally installed traditional, cottage-style drapery, ending just above the window sills. When the painters were on site, Carla popped in for a site visit and was struck with a moment of inspiration and called Susan on the spot. "Although we have the Cape Code panel detail upstairs, I felt the ceilings needed something extra," she explains. "I had recently returned from a trip to Key West, Florida where the porch ceilings were embellished in a soft light blue. I wanted to bring that soothing blue style into the upstairs bedrooms to

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ABOVE: Blue covers the ceilings in the upper level bedrooms. **TOP RIGHT:** Painted Cape Cod-style wall panelling adds another layer of warmth and character in the new portion of the build. **RIGHT:** A classic rocking chair in the children's bedroom is the destination for bedtime stories.





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Inspiration for the project was found in all four seasons of Mother Nature's palette. **BELOW & LEFT:** A cute little bunkie is sure to be the favoured location for summer night sleepovers for Paul and Susan's grandkids.

simulate the beautiful Port Elgin summer skies." Susan loved the idea and Benjamin Moore's Athabaska was applied to the ceilings in each bedroom. Traditionally-styled wooden doors and candle-style wall sconces are elements that help unify the new construction with the history of the original cabin.

The Summers' cottage brings history and charm to the forefront, and shows that family memories can stay alive, if you let them. **OH**





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