



RIVER REVIVAL



Serenity and nature are the stars at this log cabin with a rich past.

BY PATTY LANOUE STEARNS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEFF GARLAND PHOTOGRAPHY

On a particularly verdant stretch

of the storied Au Sable River near Grayling, John and Jane Haggerty look out the big picture windows of their vintage log home and feel right with the world. Cozy. Warm. Comfortable.

Their sense of calm is no doubt enhanced by the 1930's embrace of the home. But fact is, some of the place is brand new. And visitors would be hard pressed to discern where the original ends and the new begins, because the addition's finish work, decor and scale are so authentic. Part of a compound on the Au Sable's South Branch that included a main lodge and several outbuildings, this formerly rundown guesthouse has all the modern conveniences yet retains the original outdoorsman-getaway feel. It's rustic yet aristocratic, in the spirit of automotive moguls like General Motors Chairman W. C. Durant and George W. Mason, president of Kelvinator-Nash, both of whom built hunting and fishing lodges along the rambling river banks nearby.

The Haggertys bought the property in 2001 and immediately went to work on the exterior problems, replacing all of the windows and woodpecker-ravaged logs, redoing the crumbled chinking and shoring up the bridges that conveyed them back and forth across the river. They also brought their friend who worked on their home in Birmingham, interior designer Julia Knevels, up to Grayling to see the place. She and architect Kevin Hart teamed up to transform this oddly arranged gem of a cabin into something more functional and spacious.

"It was impractical," says Knevels, who was the point person on the project. The kitchen was downstairs, the living room, small den and bedroom were on the top with a narrow, curved staircase in between and another on the outside. And there was only one small bathroom. "Everything was so tight and so steep," she recalls. "But the house had very good bones—it wasn't cheaply built."

BELOW: The old (left) and the new (right) blend seamlessly in this toasty Au Sable cabin.
OPPOSITE: The original structure, which the Haggertys added onto across the back.





SHELLAC-ED

To match the finish of the pine and cedar interior trim in the new addition with the look of the original interior, the Haggertys turned to the compound's longtime caretaker, Mike Graham, who doubles as a furniture maker. Graham chose to finish the new wood in shellac mixed with a bit of amber stain. Shellac is the natural and non-toxic (when dried) finish used in the original structure.—P.L.S.



THE HAGGERTYS' Up North Favorites

DINING OUT: The homemade menu at the Hungry Fisherman Dining Room at Gates Au Sable Lodge (989-348-8462, www.gateslodge.com). Fine dining at Garland Resort's Hildegard's (877-4-GARLAND, www.garlandusa.com) and Forest Dunes Golf Club in Roscommon (989-275-0700, www.forestdunesgolf.com).

SPORTS SCENE: Fly-fishing and kayaking the Au Sable, meeting up with other canoeists at the Fisherman's Chapel south of Smith Bridge. Snowshoeing and nature walks year round.

RIGHT: Interior Designer Julia Knevels found the perfect antiques and fabrics to match the vintage feel of this sportsman's retreat. **BELOW:** The setting shows one of the bridges the Haggertys repaired.



Click for more:

www.northernhomeandcottage.com

See this feature in our interactive edition for more on:

Au Sable • Grayling • fishing
chinking • Kevin Hart

Hart agreed. When he brought his team up to see the cabin, he said it looked "almost fake, like a painting, it was so peaceful and serene. We didn't want to leave." Knevels and Hart launched the project with the goal of keeping a minimal contrast between old and new. The result was a new addition behind the original house that includes an open, light-filled kitchen, pantry, two guest rooms and a bath. On the outside, the stick-built addition is faced with three-quarter logs to match the original structure. On the inside the team installed built-ins galore, a Knevels trademark. To combat the darkness inherent in log homes, overhead spotlights, table and countertop lamps and corner lights ooze warmth.

Those old tight steps were replaced, too, by a comfortably wide staircase. The Haggertys gave the cabin-sized kitchen downstairs a sprucing up and use it for extra storage. They also left the original upstairs living room virtually unchanged. Built to frame the rolling, sun-dappled Au Sable, it's hands down the best nature show around. 🏡

Patty LaNoue Stearns is a regular contributor to Northern Home & Cottage.

PATTYLANOUESTEARNS@CHARTER.NET.

FIND HOME & COTTAGE
RESOURCES FOR THIS HOME
ON PAGE 51.